

05

Department of Education & Science
 Annual Report 2005

CONTENTS

Mission Statement	3
Foreword by the Minister	4
Statement from the Secretary General	5
<i>High Level Goal 1 - Meeting the needs of the individual</i>	
We will deliver an education that is relevant to individuals' personal, social, cultural and economic needs	6
<i>High Level Goal 2 - Supporting an inclusive society</i>	
We will support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunity for all	14
FOCUS ARTICLE - PENSIONS UNIT	23
<i>High Level Goal 3 - Contributing to economic prosperity</i>	
We will contribute to Ireland's economic prosperity, development and international competitiveness	24
<i>High Level Goal 4 - Improving standards and quality</i>	
We will seek to improve the standard and quality of education and promote best practice in classrooms, schools, colleges and other centres for education	30
<i>High Level Goal 5 - Developing our capacity to deliver</i>	
We will support the delivery of education by quality planning, policy formulation and customer service	38
Appendix 1 - Organisation Chart of the Department in 2005	44
Appendix 2 - Bodies Under the Aegis of the Department	45
Appendix 3 - Directory of Contact Details	46
Appendix 4 - Secondary Legislation	48
Appendix 5 - Education Statistics	49

Mission Statement

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

- enable individuals to achieve their full potential and to participate fully as members of society, and
- contribute to Ireland's social, cultural and economic development



High-Level Goals

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

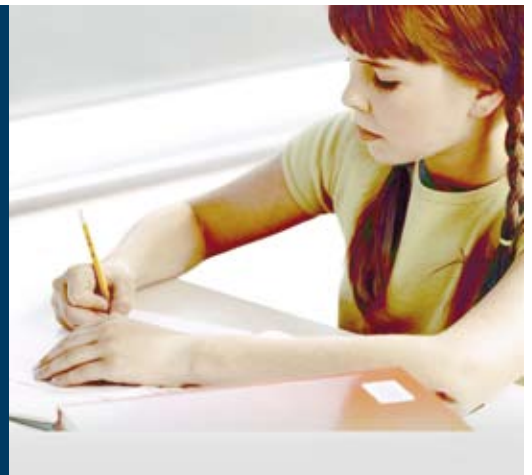
- We will deliver an education that is relevant to individual's personal, social, cultural and economic needs.
- We will support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunity for all.
- We will contribute to Ireland's economic prosperity, development and international competitiveness.
- We will seek to improve the standard and quality of education and promote best practice in classrooms, schools, colleges and other centres for education.
- We will support the delivery of education by quality planning, policy formulation and customer service.



Activities

Our mandate: In support of these high-level goals, the Department is engaged in a wide range of activities including:

- Policy planning and review
- Quality assurance
- Human and financial resource allocation
- Planning and provision of education infrastructure
- Enhancing education through co-operation



Foreword by the Minister

I hope that the information in this annual report will be of use to all the different groups – students, parents, teachers and others – with an interest in education. Improving our education system is a major Government priority and, as this report details, progress was made in a wide range of areas in 2005.



2005 was a very busy year in Irish education, with improvements made at all levels and exciting new ventures embarked upon across the whole spectrum of our education system.

Special education was a particular priority. There are now more than 13,000 adults working specifically with children with special needs and learning difficulties in our mainstream schools, in addition to the excellent services being provided in special schools. The application system for special needs resources has been made much more customer-friendly through the first full year of operation of the new network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers. A new system has also been put in place to ensure that every primary school in the country will have an allocation of resource teaching hours in line with their enrolment levels, replacing the need for an individual assessment for every single child.

2005 also saw a major strengthening of Government initiatives to tackle educational disadvantage with the launch of the DEIS (Delivery Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Action Plan. Under the new plan, children in schools serving the most disadvantaged communities will benefit from a range of extra supports, including smaller classes, school meals, homework clubs, improved funding for school books and better home-school links. There will also be a focus on ensuring quality pre-school education for children from these areas.

The formal establishment of the Teaching Council during the year marked an important milestone in the development of the teaching profession.

The functions of the Council include responsibility for the registration of new teachers and setting national standards of professional conduct for teachers.

Further and adult education was also a priority last year, with a €10m increase in non-pay expenditure for the sector helping to improve opportunities in a wide range of areas from adult literacy to vocational training and Post Leaving Certificate courses.

A major report published during the year highlighted significant increases in third level education in recent years, with 54% of 17-19 year olds entering a university or institute of technology in 2004, up from 44% in 1998. Most encouraging, however, was the fact that participation rates in areas such as Finglas, Ballymun and Darndale doubled in this time.

Further improving third level participation rates is a major Government priority for the years ahead, as are improving the quality of third level education and increasing investment in advanced research.

I hope that you will find the information in this report useful. On my own behalf, and on behalf of my colleagues, Síle de Valera and Brian Lenihan I want to take this opportunity to express our thanks to all who work in the Department and in the education sector as a whole for their ongoing commitment to improving education at all levels.

Mary Hanafin TD

Minister for Education and Science

Statement from the Secretary General

I am pleased to present the 2005 Annual Report of the Department of Education and Science. The report highlights the main achievements of the Department during this period and measures the progress in delivering on the Statement of Strategy, 2005-2007.



The mission, “to provide for high quality education”, is an ever evolving challenge with new demands on the system requiring new approaches. This involves strengthening the policy base within the Department in areas such as early childhood education while devolving operational activity to bodies such as the National Council for Special Education and the Teaching Council.

In addition to the ongoing resourcing of education, the Department has been developing a more strategic approach. In planning for schools, Area Development Plans are preparing the ground in areas of rapid population growth while more autonomy is given to schools with schemes such as the Summer Works Scheme.

To help address mild general learning disability in schools in a more planned way, the Department introduced a general allocation model for teaching resources. This means a permanent teaching resource is in place in primary schools from the start of the school year, based on the statistical incidence of disability.

In 2005, the Department launched DEIS - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, an action plan to address the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities. DEIS represents a more complete way to tackle problems based on identification, review and integration.

At the corporate level, the Decentralisation programme for the Department is on schedule with staff moves underway and building work in Athlone due to start in early 2007.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the staff in the Department without whom, the high-level goals and objectives would not be met.

Brigid Mc Manus

Secretary General

High Level Goal 1 - Meeting the needs of the individual

We will deliver an education that is relevant to individuals' personal, social, cultural and economic needs



Objective 1.1:

We will support the development and provision of quality early childhood education in line with the strategy set out in the White Paper on Early Childhood Education, *Ready to Learn*.

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

In December 2005, the Office of the Minister for Children was established by the Government to integrate functions previously carried out across Departments such as Health and Children, Justice Equality and Law Reform, and Education and Science. A new Early Years Education Policy Unit was established within the Department to oversee the development of policies and provision for early years education. Both these developments were designed to address the issues of fragmentation of policy development and service delivery in the sector.

POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Policy Developments

Síolta, the draft national quality framework for early childhood education was developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) in close consultation with the childcare and early education sectors over a three-year period.

Following consultation with stakeholders on the consultative document, *Towards a Framework for Early Learning*, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment published a final report in July 2005. This curricular framework will complement the development of the quality framework developed by the CECDE.

PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

The Department launched an integrated action plan in 2005 to deliver equality of opportunity in schools. The action plan, *DEIS* will build upon existing interventions in school with a concentrated level of disadvantage. The existing interventions include the Early Start programme which is a pre-school programme for 3 and 4 year olds in disadvantaged areas. In 2005, there were 1,680 pupils enrolled in 40 schools under this programme. In addition, there are 46 special Traveller pre-schools catering for approximately 500 Traveller children. In integrating the Early Start programme into the *DEIS* action plan, the findings of a number of evaluation reports prepared by the Education Research Centre will be taken into account.



Objective 1.2:
 We will enable schools at primary and second level to deliver a high quality education by providing a comprehensive range of provision, including financial, staffing and curricular supports.

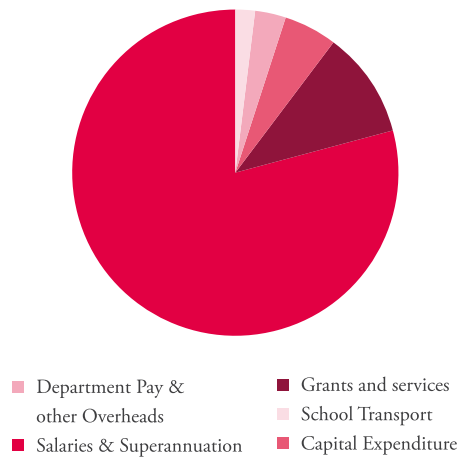
FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

Education And Related Expenditure

The education sector had a budget of €7.2 billion in 2005. First Level, Second Level and Third Level Education took up 97% of the overall total. Youth and cultural activities, residential schools redress and a number of smaller programmes make up the remainder. Expenditure by programme is set out below:

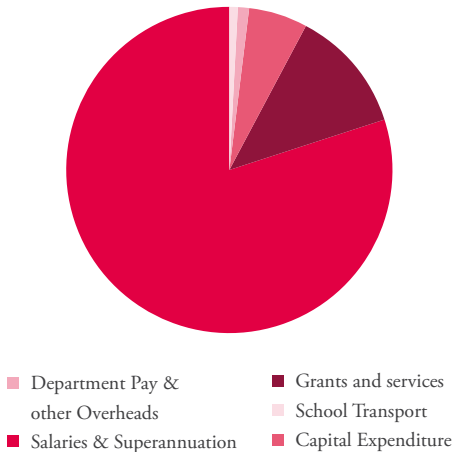
FIRST LEVEL	
Department Pay & Other Overheads	28.1
Salaries & Superannuation	2,036.2
Grants and services	245.0
School Transport	73.2
Capital Expenditure	271.3
Total First Level	2,653.8

First Level



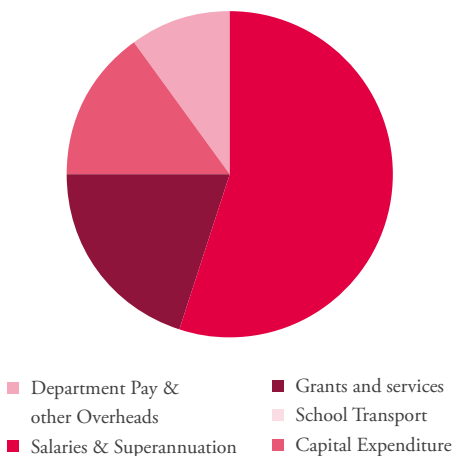
SECOND LEVEL	
Department Pay & Other Overheads	30.4
Salaries & Superannuation	2,023.7
Grants and services	359.4
School Transport	49.0
Capital Expenditure	238.5
Total Second Level	2,701.0

Second Level



THIRD LEVEL	
Department Pay & Other Overheads	4.9
Salaries	888.9
Grants and services	394.7
Student Support	231.0
Capital Expenditure	91.1
Total Third Level	1,610.6

Third Level



Expenditure per student over ten years at constant 2005 prices

Sector	1995	2005
Primary	€2,378	€5,300
Post-primary	€3,716	€7,347
Third level	€7,114	€9,563

PAYROLL SERVICE

The Department is responsible for managing the staffing requirements of primary and post-primary schools. While the Boards of Management of the individual schools employ staff directly and are the employers, the Department operates a payroll bureau service for over 70,000 school staff and retired staff.

- During 2005, three new payrolls were implemented for the following categories of workers:
- Casual and non casual teachers employed in primary schools. This ensures that teachers employed in this capacity are paid their correct entitlements in accordance with the terms of the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act, 2001.
- Special Need Assistants employed in Secondary and Community and Comprehensive schools.
- Childcare Assistants who were previously paid directly by the school.

STAFFING OF SCHOOLS

Supply of Primary Teachers

There were 27,297 teaching posts in primary schools in December 2005. The pupil/teacher ratio for the school year 2005/06 was 16.6 to 1*. There has been an increasing demand for trained primary teachers in recent years. This has been in response to initiatives to reduce class size, to provide for those with special educational needs and to cater for pupils in disadvantaged areas. In 2005, there were 3,500 students in the Colleges of Education. In addition, almost 400 students

* Provisional Data.

completed the Graduate Diploma in Primary Education in Hibernia College.

Teacher allocations for mainstream posts in primary schools are based on the number of pupils enrolled in the previous school year. The Primary Staffing Appeals Board adjudicates on appeals from Boards of Management for the allocation of additional teacher posts or the retention of existing posts. In 2005, the Board heard 95 appeals and additional teaching resources were awarded in 9 cases.

An Scrúdú le haghaidh Cáilíochta sa Ghaeilge (SCG)

is a mandatory Irish qualification for primary teachers trained outside the State, who wish to teach in mainstream primary schools. A teacher has five years to pass all modules of the SCG. Preparatory courses are held in Education centres with the Department providing funding of €65,000. In 2005, the Marino Institute of Education administered the SCG. 524 candidates sat the exam in the spring, with 83% passing; in the Autumn, 35 candidates sat the exam with 66% passing.

Supply of Second Level Teachers

There were 25,862 whole time equivalent (equivalent to full time teaching posts) teachers allocated to post primary schools and Vocational Education Committees for the 2005/06 school year. The pupil teacher ratio in this sector for 2005/06 was 13.2 to 1.

Staffing allocations are based on criteria that include the number of pupils enrolled and the school’s participation in programmes such as the Leaving Certificate Applied and the Junior Certificate School Programme.

A school may appeal its staffing allocation to an Appeals Committee. In the 2005/06 school year, there were 194 appeals of which 78 were successful.

TEACHER EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

Initial Teacher Education

The Department provides funding to the Colleges of Education and the University Education Departments through the Higher Education Authority to ensure the adequate supply of suitably qualified teachers.

The Department is responsible for the induction of new teachers, in-service training and the continual professional development of teachers. A National Pilot Project on Teacher Induction has been in place since 2002 to develop systematic support for newly qualified teachers in their first year of teaching. A network of thirty Education Centres provides in-service professional development and support for teachers and the wider education community.

Primary Level

A dedicated Primary Curriculum Support Programme team supports the continuing implementation of the revised Primary Curriculum. In 2005, staff in all Primary schools received in-service training in History, Geography and PE. They also took part in whole-school seminars on Learning Support Guidelines published by the NCCA. Support was also provided for an in-service programme in Music.

Second Level

The Second Level Support Service continued to provide in conjunction with some dedicated support services, programmes of in-service training in the following subjects:

SUBJECT	2005
English	
Physics	
Chemistry	
Transition Year Programme	
Leaving Certificate Applied	
Junior Certificate School Programme	
Civil Social and Political Education	
Biology	
Home Economics	
Junior Cert Maths	
Junior Cycle P.E	
Junior Certificate Science	
Leaving Certificate History	
Leaving Certificate Geography	

Leadership Development for Schools

Leadership Development for Schools (LDS) continued during 2005.

DECISIONS ON CURRICULUM CHANGE

Technologies

A €40m investment package for schools was announced in December 2005. This will enable schools to prepare for the implementation, from September 2007, of a new 'Technology' syllabus at senior cycle, together with a revised syllabus in 'Design and Communication Graphics', also at senior cycle. Technology will be a Leaving Certificate subject in 2009.

The investment package also provides for the implementation of revised syllabi in 'Engineering Technology and Architectural Technology'.

GUIDANCE

Guidance Provision in Second Level Schools

In September 2005, the Inspectorate published guidelines to assist schools in developing a comprehensive guidance plan as part of their overall school plan. To support guidance for students at junior cycle level, an additional 100 posts were allocated to guidance from September 2005. This enhanced provision means that in the case of schools in the Free Education/Block Grant Schemes, the level of allocation now ranges from 8 hours per week for schools with enrolments below 200 pupils to 47 hours per week for schools with an enrolment of 1,000 pupils or more. The allocation for schools participating in the *DEIS* Programme now ranges from 11 hours per week for schools with enrolments below 300 to 55 hours per week for schools with an enrolment of 1,000 pupils or more. There are currently a total of 683 whole-time equivalent posts allocated for guidance in post-primary schools.

QualifaX

The Institute of Guidance Counsellors' QualifaX website, which provides a range of guidance information, was expanded in 2005. QualifaX now provides up-to-date information on every course available at third level or in the further education or adult education sector.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT SCHEME

The Department set up the School Transport Scheme in 1967 to provide a basic, uniform level of transportation for school children who live long distances from school. Bus Éireann administers the scheme nationally. It involves:

- Transporting approximately 136,000 pupils including almost 8,500 children with special needs
- A network of 6,000 bus routes
- A fleet of over 2,500 school buses, using a combination of Bus Éireann and sub-contracted vehicles
- Expenditure in 2005 of €122m.

Safety Developments in 2005

To improve safety, the phased abolition of the "three for two" seating arrangement began in September, with all second level students seated on a one child per seat basis. This meant the delivery of new buses and the hiring of more than 200 additional vehicles. Any buses used for school transport services now have to be fitted with seat belts.

Objective 1.3:

We will provide for a range of supports and services for children with special educational needs to assist them fulfil their potential.

Special Education Provision

The 2005 provision to support children with special educational needs in primary schools included more than:

- 1,000 teachers in special schools
- 5,000 teachers at primary level dealing directly with children with special educational needs
- 600 teachers in special classes
- 6,200 special needs assistants
- €30m on school transport for special needs pupils
- €3m towards specialised equipment and materials.

In addition, 1,648 whole time equivalent additional teachers were in place to support pupils with special educational needs at second level. This compares to the approximately 200 teachers that were in place in 1998 for such pupils. There were also 532 whole time equivalent learning support teachers

and approximately 1,100 whole time equivalent special needs assistants (SNAs) in second level schools.

General Allocation Model – Primary Level

In 2005, the Department introduced a general allocation model for teaching resources to support pupils in the high incidence disability categories of mild and borderline mild general learning disability and dyslexia. The model is based on the fact that pupils in these categories are distributed throughout the education system. This is an improvement on the previous system as children with these needs no longer require an individual psychological assessment before being given resource teaching hours.

Instead, a permanent teaching resource is put in place in primary schools from the start of the school year, based on the statistical incidence of disability. Teaching allocations are based on pupil numbers, taking into account the differing needs of the most disadvantaged schools and the evidence that boys have greater difficulties than girls.

Staff are allocated on the basis of the following categories of school:

Allocation of Posts	Pupil numbers			
	Boys school	Mixed school	Girls School	Disadvantaged Schools
1st post	100-135	105-145	150-195	80
2nd	295	315	395	160
3rd	475	495	595	240
4th	655	675	795	320



In introducing this system, transitional arrangements were included to cater for children who had previously been allocated teaching resources. The transitional arrangements meant that no child would have a reduction in resource teaching support.

Home Tuition Service and July Education Programme

The Home Tuition Service provides for instruction to pupils with a continuing condition that disrupts school attendance. The scheme is also used to fund the extension of education programmes through the month of July, in schools catering for pupils with autism and severe/profound general learning disabilities. A total of 64 schools participated in the programme in 2005. There are approximately 1,000 children availing of the home tuition scheme at an annual cost in excess of €8m.

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

Although in place since 2004, the NCSE was formally established from 1st October 2005 under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004. The NCSE's role includes conducting research and providing advice to the Department on the educational needs of children with disabilities. With its national network of over 70 special educational needs organisers (SENOs) it provides a structure for the delivery of an effective and speedy education service to children and families coping with disability on a daily basis.

In January 2005, the NCSE took over responsibility for allocating additional teaching and other resources for children with disabilities. SENOs deal with the following resource allocation functions:

- Processing applications from schools at both levels for resource teachers for children with low-incidence disabilities such as moderate general learning disabilities, visual or hearing impairments, physical disabilities or autism, and deciding on the level of support appropriate to the school;
- Processing applications from second-level schools for resource teacher support for children with high-incidence disabilities such as mild general learning disability and deciding on the level of support appropriate to the school;
- Processing applications from schools and deciding on the

appropriate level of special needs assistant support for children with disabilities;

- Examining applications from all schools for special equipment/assistive technology;
- Examining applications from schools for transport arrangements for children with disabilities and making recommendations to the Department;
- Identifying the appropriate educational setting for individual children with special educational needs.

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

In 2005 NEPS employed 121 Psychologists. NEPS provides psychological services in both primary and post-primary schools.

The main work of NEPS includes:

- The assessment of individual children
- The provision a service to every school in the event of a critical incident regardless of whether the school already has a dedicated service from a NEPS psychologist. In the 2004/2005 school year, NEPS responded to almost 60 critical incidents
- The development of preventative strategies in relation to aspects of students' behaviour
- The encouragement of collaborative systemic change in schools.
- Dealing with queries in relation to individual children from other sections of the Department and from the specialist agencies
- Contributing to policy development in DES.

Psychologists also have a role where students sitting the Leaving Certificate examinations apply to the State Examinations Commission for special Examination arrangements to be made because of visual or hearing difficulties, or specific learning difficulties.



Scheme for Commissioning of Psychological Assessments

All primary and post primary schools have access to psychological assessments either directly through NEPS or through the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA) that is administered by NEPS. Under this Scheme, schools can commission assessments from a member of the panel of private practitioners approved by NEPS, and NEPS will pay the fees directly to the psychologists concerned. The number of assessments a school can arrange will depend on the number of pupils in the school.

NEPS Publications in 2005

A report for the period 2001-2004 outlining a summary of the work of NEPS was published.

An information leaflet which outlines the process of assessment and information for parents whose child is referred for assessment was published.

Objective 1.4:
We will provide for the effective operation of the State Certificate Examinations.

The operation of the State Certificate Examinations is now the responsibility of the State Examinations Commission (SEC). The SEC was established by statutory order under Section 54 of the Education Act, 1998 on 6 March 2003. The Department allocated €49.4m to the SEC in 2005.

High Level Goal 2 - Supporting an inclusive society

We will support, through education, a socially inclusive society with equal opportunity for all



Objective 2.1:

We will contribute, through education, to the implementation and development of the Government's Social Inclusion Policy and continue to provide and review targeted support programmes for children experiencing or at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving.

TACKLING EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

A key focus of education policy is to prioritise investment in favour of those most at risk and to optimise access, participation and outcome at every level of the system for disadvantaged groups. In 2005, the Department launched *DEIS*, an action plan to address the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities, from pre-school through to second-level education. *DEIS - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools*- will be implemented on a phased basis over five years.

The core elements of the plan include:

- A standardised system for identifying levels of disadvantage
- Regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage

- A new integrated School Support Programme (SSP).

The SSP will build upon existing interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with a concentrated level of educational disadvantage. The process of identifying educational disadvantage in schools for inclusion in the SSP began in 2005 with a survey by the Educational Research Centre.

The following programmes (as well as the Early Start programme) will be incorporated into *DEIS*:

Giving Children an Even Break

This programme, which tackles educational disadvantage in primary schools, continued in 2005 in 2,345 participating schools, with 250 teaching posts and 79 rural coordinators.

The School Completion Programme

The objective of this programme is to provide a range of interventions in disadvantaged areas that support the retention of young people in education.

Focused on students from 4 to 18 years, it is funded under the National Development Plan and with assistance from the European Social Fund.

Under *DEIS*, increased access will be provided for young people to a range of academic and non-academic supports both in and out of school, based on best practices identified through the School Completion Programme.



No. of schools participating	No. of posts	No. of pupils
302 Primary	1 National Coordinator	19,500
108 Post Primary	4 Assistant National Coordinators	
	82 Local Coordinators	
	One Programme Research and Development Officer	

Home School Community Liaison (HSCL)

A HSCL co-ordinator works with school staff, parents and community agencies to address the educational needs of children at risk of educational disadvantage.

The outcomes in the area of literacy included the delivery to parents of:

- 98 pre-school programmes
- 502 programmes in literacy at primary level
- 228 programmes in literacy at post-primary level
- 525 adult literacy programmes in order to enable parents to stay close to their own learning and that of their children.

Over 3,500 parents are now trained to deliver the Mathematics for Fun programme which involves pupils, parents and teachers working together with mathematical concepts. This maths

programme spans from Early Start to Junior Certificate level and has been particularly successful in post-primary schools.

School principals involved in the scheme were surveyed in 2005. They were asked about literacy and numeracy initiatives and the effect that HSCL has had on student behaviour, attendance and school-community relationships. The response was overwhelmingly positive with 89% agreeing that pupil behaviour and attendance had improved.

No. of schools participating in HSCL	No. of posts
310 Primary	1 National Coordinator
	2 Assistant National Coordinators
	177 Primary Coordinators
194 Post Primary	193 Post Primary Coordinators

Support Teacher Project

The Support Teacher Project operates in a small number of schools in the Dublin and Cork areas. Teacher posts were assigned to individual schools or were shared between schools to assist in supporting pupils with very disruptive behaviour. There are 41 such Support Teachers working with 47 schools. This programme will be integrated into the SSP on a phased basis over the five-year implementation timeframe of *DEIS*.

Youth Encounter Projects

Youth Encounter Projects provide educational facilities for

children who either become involved in minor delinquency or are at risk and have become alienated from the mainstream school system. There are five such project schools, three in Dublin, one in Cork and one in Limerick. Each caters for approximately 25 pupils aged between 10 to 16 years. A pupil may be referred to one of these schools by a number of agencies or by the court system. The schools have additional resources to provide a comprehensive life-skills programme in addition to the normal curriculum.

Children Detention Schools

There are five special schools under the aegis of the Department providing services for children up to age 16 years who have been convicted or placed on remand by a court. In December 2005, the Government approved youth justice reforms in which overall responsibility for four of the detention schools will transfer to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Responsibility for the fifth school will transfer to the Health Service Executive.

Task Force on Student Behaviour

The Task Force on student behaviour in Second Level Schools was established in January 2005 and completed its work within the year. Its remit included an analysis of disruptive student behaviour as it impacts upon teaching and learning and following the analysis, to recommend ways of promoting an improved climate in schools.

The Task Force received over 150 submissions from interested individuals and groups. It held 19 plenary sessions with parents, students, teachers, unions and representative bodies and held 10 consultative fora across the country. It published an interim report in July and completed its final report in January 2006.

School exclusions - Appeal System for Students/Parents

2005 was the fourth full year of operation of the appeals system under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. Section 29 allows parents (and students over 18) to appeal exclusions, suspensions totalling more than 20 days in any one school year or refusal to enrol.

The National Educational Welfare Board, the agency with responsibility for school attendance, can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place and will prioritise cases where an appeal under Section 29 has been unsuccessful.

There were 270 appeals processed in 2005, a small increase on 2004. A breakdown of appeals in 2005 as below:

	Withdrawn	Local Resolution	Facilitation	Upheld at Hearing	Not Upheld at Hearing	Total
Post Primary						
Permanent Exclusion	7	1	6	8	37	59
Refusal to enrol	16	39	11	28	32	126
Suspension	3	0	0	3	4	10
Primary						
Permanent Exclusion	4	0	2	2	3	11
Refusal to enrol	7	10	15	18	13	63
Suspension	0	0	0	0	1	1

Traveller Education

There are 40 teachers employed as Visiting Teachers to provide a service to support the full participation of Travellers in the mainstream educational system. The Visiting Teacher works with families and schools to maximise participation and attainment and promote intercultural education for all. The Department continues to support Traveller pre-schools.

By the end of 2005, there were 530 resource teacher posts sanctioned to support the education of Traveller children in about 400 primary schools. At second level, 149 whole-time equivalent posts were sanctioned to support traveller education. Information on Traveller education is collected annually by the Visiting Teacher Service and collated by the National Education Officer for Travellers. It indicates that almost all Traveller children in primary schools are in age appropriate classes as recommended by the National Anti-Poverty Strategy. In mainstream post-primary schools, there are approximately 1,850 Traveller students out of a possible 4,000.

Newcomers to Ireland

In June, the Department established a Steering Committee to co-ordinate the response to the educational needs of newcomers to Ireland. The Committee is chaired by the Director of Regional Services and includes representatives from all of the relevant divisions/units of the Department.

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)

The NEWB provides locally based services for school attendance, for children educated outside of recognised schools and early school leavers. Attendance in the areas where the NEWB is working intensively improved by 4% in 2004/2005 (the first full year of the service) over the 2003/2004 school year.

ACTION ON LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Reading Recovery Programme

This school based early intervention programme started in Monaghan in 2000 before being extended first to Dublin and then to disadvantaged schools in Galway, Cork and Limerick. Preparation for further expansion of this programme under DEIS began during 2005.

The number of schools taking part in this programme in the 2005/2006 school year is as follows:

Location	No. of Schools
Monaghan	12
Dublin	12
Limerick	12
Galway	8
Cork	12

Support for literacy and numeracy in primary schools

The Primary Curriculum Support Programme, while responsible for providing assistance in the area of implementing curricular change, is also responsible for the implementation and co-ordination of literacy and numeracy strategies under DEIS. These include:

- Reading Recovery
- First Steps
- Maths Recovery
- Ready, Set, Go Maths.

These programmes have all been identified as areas for expansion under the DEIS action plan.

Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)

The JCSP Literacy Strategy includes a National Demonstration Project for the Provision of Libraries for JCSP Schools. The project began in 2001, initially for three years and has now been extended. Libraries staffed by full-time qualified librarians have been set up in 11 participating JCSP schools. The project is set to expand under DEIS by a total of 50 libraries, 10 per year until 2010.

Objective 2.2:

We will promote the development of a high quality inclusive further education and vocational training system for young people and adults, which is relevant to social and economic needs

FURTHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Further Education describes education and training which occurs after second-level schooling but which is not part of the third level system. Further Education programmes are delivered locally by VECs and by second level schools.

In 2005, the Department funded a range of Further Education Programmes, including:

- **Youthreach:** These programmes are delivered in VEC out-of-school centres and Community Training Centres and receive additional funding from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the European Social Fund. The target group are unemployed people, aged 15-20, who left school early with few or no qualifications. A range of certification is available, including FETAC, Junior and Leaving Certificates. 72% of students who completed the programme in 2005 went on to employment or further education or training.
- **Senior Traveller Training:** This programme operates on a similar basis to Youthreach but without an upper age limit. 49% of students who completed the programme in 2005 went on to employment or further education or training.
- **Post-Leaving Certificate Courses (PLC):** These are full-time, one and two year courses offering integrated general education, vocational training and work experience. Certification is provided through FETAC Levels 5 and 6. Colleges also supplement this with certification from private/professional bodies in certain disciplines. 95% of

students who completed the programme in 2005 progressed to employment or further education or training.

Further Education Programmes	No. of Centres	No. of Participants	2005 Expenditure
Youthreach	90	3,292	€45.2m
Senior Traveller Training	33	1,084	€20.2m
Post-Leaving Certificate Courses (PLC)	213	29,354	€107.6m

Back to Education Initiative.

This initiative provides an opportunity to combine a return to education and training with family, work and other responsibilities. The emphasis is on part-time provision. Tuition is free for most students. The initiative is run through the VECs but 10% of the provision is set aside to support projects proposed by community education groups.

BACK TO EDUCATION			
No. of Participants - 2005		Expenditure - 2005	
VEC	Community	VEC	Community
20,396	1,623	€12.3m	€1.61m

ADULT EDUCATION

Adult Literacy: Funding of €22.8m was provided to the VECs for the delivery of adult literacy services. The services provided include a number of targeted literacy programmes, such as literacy for deaf people, family literacy, literacy for immigrants, and literacy for native Irish speakers in Gaeltacht areas (Breacadh). In 2005, nearly 40,000 adults, including almost 10,000 immigrants took part in adult literacy classes.

Community Based Education: VECs received over €9.4m to support local community based education groups for educational activities outside the formal education sector. Funds were provided to support Special Initiatives for Disadvantaged

Adults at local level to assist towards the cost of attendance at courses.

Education Equality Initiative (EEI): As part of the National Development Plan and with the assistance of the EU Community Support Framework, €0.65m was allocated in 2005, to support projects dealing with the learning needs of educationally disadvantaged adults.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS): This scheme allows unemployed people who have been on the Live Register for at least six months to access education and training with a view to progression to employment. Ten per cent of places may be allocated under certain conditions to a wider category of unwaged people including lone parents and people in receipt of Disabled Persons' Maintenance Allowance, who are seeking employment. In all cases, the minimum age for participation in VTOS is 21 years.

A range of certification is available, including FETAC, Junior and Leaving Certificates. 71.75% of students who completed the programme in 2005 progressed to employment or further education or training. In 2005, there were 5,414 training places in 113 centres at a cost of €57m.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Guidance Services

The Adult Education Guidance Initiative (AEGI) started in 2000 with 10 pilot projects designed to support the objectives for lifelong learning set out in the White Paper on Adult Education: *Learning for Life 2000*. By 2005, there were 35 pilot projects, all supported by the local VEC. The AEGI is managed by the National Centre for Guidance in Education on behalf of the Department. Participants in the Youthreach Programme and Senior Traveller Training also receive Guidance/Counselling and Psychological Services.

Service	No. of Participants	2005 Expenditure
Adult Guidance	20,340	€4.5m
Guidance/Counselling and Psychological Services	7,950	€1.02m

Childcare

The Department provided funding of €5.45m to VECs in 2005 to assist with the childcare expenses of participants in VTOS, Youthreach and Senior Traveller Centre programmes.





Objective 2.3:

We will promote the personal and social development of young people through non-formal education, having particular regard to the youth work needs of young people aged 10-21 and those who experience social or economic disadvantage.

The Youth Work Act 2001 defines youth work as a planned programme of education for young people which is complementary to formal education and training and which is provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations.

The National Youth Work Development Plan, 2003 - 2007, sets out proposals for the development of youth work in Ireland. In 2005, the Department provided funding of €41m for a number of youth work programmes and schemes including:

- **Youth Service Grant Scheme:** This grant is made available on an annual basis to national and major regional voluntary youth organisations. Thirty one organisations received a total of €11m in 2005.
- **Special Projects to assist Disadvantaged Youth:** Grants are allocated to organisations and groups for specific out-of-

school projects which seek to address the needs of young people who are disadvantaged. 177 projects, 10 of them new in 2005, received almost €16m. Twenty single-worker projects were up-graded to two workers.

- **Youth Information Centres:** These centres provide young people with easy access to information on rights, opportunities, benefits, health, welfare and other matters. 32 centres received almost €2m in 2005.
- **Young Peoples' Facilities and Services Fund:** This fund is used for programmes or projects aimed at young people in disadvantaged areas who are at risk of substance misuse. 80 projects in 2005 received almost €7m.
- **Local Youth Club Grant Scheme:** This grant scheme prioritises disadvantaged and marginal groups. The fund is administered by the VECs who received €1.27m in 2005.
- **A Development Fund:** This fund of over €300,000 was established in 2005 to assist youth organisations with the cost of preparing for the roll out of the Youth Work Act, 2001.

A North/South Committee.

This Committee was established in October 2005 to develop a framework for the professional endorsement of courses, programmes of education and training in youth work provided by Higher Education Institutions in Ireland, North and South.

Objective 2.4:

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

The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse was established in May 2000. In July 2005, the principle Act was amended by the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Amendment) Act 2005. These changes will ensure that the Commission can undertake a comprehensive inquiry, within a more reasonable timeframe and at much lower legal costs than previously estimated. The Act also provides for a number of largely technical amendments to the Residential Institutions Redress Act 2002 and provides a statutory framework for the operation of an Education Fund for former residents of certain institutions and their families.

During 2005 the Investigation Committee of the Commission held both public and private hearings into seven institutions and conducted individual interviews with a large number of complainants. The Confidential Committee, who provide a forum for those victims who want to speak of their experiences but who do not wish to become involved in an investigative procedure, continued with their work. The Commission employed a number of experts to assist the inquiry on issues that span across all institutions.

The Residential Institutions Redress Board was established in December 2002 to provide financial awards to victims of child abuse in residential institutions. To facilitate their work, the tenure of the Board has been extended to the end of 2007. During the year, the Board completed the process in 2,208 cases bringing to 4,633 the total number of applications processed. Over €194.5m was paid by the Department for awards and related costs in 2005.

Objective 2.5:

We will promote greater equity of access to third level education, particularly for disadvantaged and mature students and students with disabilities, through improved targeting of student support/access initiatives.

Free Fees Support to Students

The Department pays the tuition fees on behalf of eligible students attending third level institutions. An amount of approx. €280m was provided in 2005 for this purpose.

Student Support Provision

Students in Third Level and Further Education receive support from the Department through means-tested financial assistance. There are four schemes, three at third level and one Post Leaving Certificate:

- Higher Education Grants Schemes
- VEC Scholarship Scheme
- Third Level Trainees Maintenance grant scheme
- Post Leaving Certificate Maintenance grants.

Expenditure under the 4 Maintenance Grant schemes (excluding the Special Rate of Maintenance grant) in 2005 was €192m for 57,126 grant holders.

Third Level Access Fund

This fund was set up under the National Development Plan 2000 to 2006. This fund targets the following groups:

- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Mature students
- Students with disabilities.

Access measures accounted for almost €38m in 2005. This included the Special Rate of Maintenance Grant (Top-Up), Fund for Students with Disabilities, Student Assistance Fund and the Millennium Partnership Fund.

The Special Rate of Maintenance Grant (Top-Up) is designed to benefit students from the lower socio-economic group. The rate was increased by over 22% for the 2005/06 academic year. The higher, *non-adjacent rate was increased to €5,355, equivalent to the maximum personal rate of Social Welfare Unemployment Assistance. The adjacent rate was increased to €2,145. These rates represent “top-ups” on the ordinary grant of €2,335 and €935, respectively. 12,500 students benefited under this scheme in 2004/05.

National Action Plan 2005-2007 for Achieving Equity of Access to Higher Education

The objective of this Action Plan is to increase the number of mature students and students from disadvantaged schools and communities taking part in higher education.

The National Office began by mapping existing links between Higher Education Institutions and local/ regional primary and second-level schools, community education centres and further education and training centres. The Office also completed a review of access funding and an evaluation of the Millennium Partnership Fund.

* The adjacent rate of maintenance grant applies to a grant-holder whose normal residence is 15 miles or less from the college which s/he is attending. The non-adjacent rate is paid in all other cases, including the case of all mature candidates who qualify.

Objective 2.6:

We will promote gender equality in services, actions, programmes and measures for children and adults at all levels of education.

The Department supports gender mainstreaming across all areas of the education system. The Department has commissioned research on gender issues in education at every level from pre-school to third level and further education. Two policy committees were set up in 2005. The Women into Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) Committee was established to recommend strategies and initiatives aimed at increasing the number of females studying the physical sciences at Leaving Certificate level and also to increase the number of females choosing SET courses at third level. The SET Committee published its Interim Report in 2005.

The Primary Education Committee was established to recommend strategies and initiatives to increase the number of males entering primary teaching. The Committee’s final report, *Males into Primary Teaching*, was published in November, 2005. The Department also published a revised edition of *Schools and the Equal Status Acts* after consultation with the Equality Authority and taking account of changes to the Equal Status Act in 2004.



Focus Article

Pensions Unit

The pensions' area has seen rapid changes in recent years, with changes resulting from family law legislation, various directives of the European Commission regarding equality of provision as between permanent workers and temporary workers and, most significantly, the Report of the Commission on Public Service Pensions.

The Commission was set up in 1996 because of the Government's concern at the rising cost of public service pensions. The Commission noted that public service pension schemes had their origins in the 19th century and matters such as compulsory retirement at age 65 and voluntary retirement from age 60 dated from that time. The Commission also noted that, with increasing longevity, public servants could now expect to draw their pensions for many years more than their 19th century counterparts.

In 2004, in the light of the Commission's Report, the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 was passed which raised the minimum pension age to 65 in the case of most new entrants to the public service, including civil servants and teachers, and also abolished the requirement to retire on grounds of age in the case of most new entrants. A new entrant is a person who begins employment in the public service on or after 1 April 2004 or who, after a break of more than 26 weeks, returns to employment in the public service on or after 1 April 2004.

The Government announced a further package of reforms in 2005. The most significant is the introduction of cost-neutral early retirement. This will allow public servants to retire voluntarily from age 50 (55 in the case of new entrants) with actuarially reduced superannuation benefits. A civil servant who resigned at age 58, for example, would formerly have had to wait until age 60 to receive his or her preserved pension. The civil servant will now have the option of waiting until 60 as before or of accepting an actuarially-reduced pension at age 58. Under the Scheme, cost-neutral early retirement at 58 would result in pension being reduced to 90.1% and lump sum reduced to 96.1% of the amounts, respectively, which would be payable at 60.

Arising from European directives, the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act, 2001 and the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act, 2003, were passed into law some time ago but the details are still the subject of discussions between public service unions and management. It is already clear that implementation of these Acts will involve the admission, with retrospective effect to 2001, of many employees in the education sector who are currently, or have until recently been, excluded from pensionability. Arrangements have already been made to admit more than 6,000 Special Needs Assistants (who are on the Department's payroll) to pensionability.

The Pensions Unit in the Department was set up in June 1997, with responsibility for Primary and Secondary Teachers' Pensions. It was set up to implement a range of pension reforms including the Early Retirement Scheme for Teachers, admission of part-time teachers to ongoing membership of the pension schemes and conversion of the Secondary Teachers' Scheme into a compulsory scheme from a current date - with provision for reckoning whole-time and part-time service given before that date.

The regulation of pension schemes applicable to vocational teachers and all Institute of Technology staff and VEC staff other than teachers was added to its remit in recent years.

The Pensions Unit has policy, regulatory, advisory and operational functions for the pensions of teachers and other education sector staff. These functions include:

- calculating and awarding pensions to primary, secondary, community and comprehensive school teachers on retirement and, on the death of teachers in service or after retirement, calculating and awarding pensions to spouses and children of these teachers;
- calculating and awarding pensions to Special Needs Assistants, their spouses and children;
- the development, review and amendment of superannuation policy in co-operation with the Department of Finance;
- the provision of a pension policy, regulatory and guidance service to VECs, Institutes of Technology, Colleges of Education and the other bodies which the unit is responsible for.

There are 41 members of staff working in the unit. The unit deals with 42,000 teachers (18,000 at second level and 24,000 at primary level) and 6,000 Special Needs Assistants.

Expenditure on pensions came to €484m in 2005. About 1,000 primary and secondary teachers, in aggregate, will retire in any one year. There are about 15,000 pensioners on the payroll who are paid directly by the Department. VECs, Institutes of Technology, Colleges of Education and other education sector bodies calculate and award pensions to their own staff.

Finally, the oldest pensioner on the Department's payroll is a female primary teacher, aged 108, who retired in June 1963 on compulsory age grounds.

High Level Goal 3 - Contributing to economic prosperity

We will contribute to Ireland's economic prosperity, development and international competitiveness



Objective 3.1:

We will promote the contribution of the third level sector to economic and social development in the context of changing needs and arrange a supply of qualified and skilled personnel to support Ireland's competitiveness and economic and social development.

The OECD Review of Higher Education in Ireland, published in September 2004, made a number of recommendations regarding structural and institutional reform in the higher education sector. The Government approved the broad thrust of these recommendations in April 2005.

The OECD pointed to the need for cross-departmental strategic thinking at a national level if Ireland was to become a major player in the global knowledge economy. A high-level interdepartmental committee was set up in 2005 to prepare an action-based Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy to 2013.

The Strategic Innovation Fund for the higher education sector was set up in 2005.

This will support the institutions in the development of a strong, modernised third level sector and the creation of a fourth level system.

Meeting Skills Needs

The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs has identified the areas of ICT, and the Chemical and Biological Sciences as particularly important. Additional third level places to meet skills shortages have been provided as part of the ICT Ireland Undergraduate Internship Programme. This programme, which is being run in association with the Higher Education Authority, is an ICT industry-wide programme involving a two-day week placement for undergraduates in the third and fourth year of degree courses across a range of specified ICT disciplines.

The Postgraduate Skills Conversion Programme is specifically targeted at meeting the skills shortages in the ICT area and all areas identified by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs. Approximately 1,700 students took part in these courses in 2005/06.

Apprentices

Apprenticeships involve on-the-job training and formal class based training. FÁS Training Centres or educational colleges provide the class based training.

There were a total of 11,200 apprenticeship places in 2005. In line with recent trends, there was greater demand in building-



related trades, while there was reduced demand in other trades, such as fitting. The Department provided for 29 summer courses during 2005 to reduce backlogs in construction related trades and maximise use of existing infrastructure.

On successful completion of training, apprentices are awarded National Craft Certificates by FETAC at level 6 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

38th WorldSkills Competition

Ireland sent a team of 20 competitors to the 38th WorldSkills Competition in Helsinki in May 2005. We also provided 21 examiners and six technical support persons. The team achieved 7th place overall winning three gold, one silver, one bronze and nine medallions. 600 competitors from 37 countries competed in 40 skill areas such as Mechatronics, Carpentry, Welding, Cookery and Beauty Therapy.

The purpose of the Skills Competitions is to keep up to date with international standards, develop the quality of Irish competitors and to reward skill excellence.

Objective 3.2:

We will promote the use of ICT in schools and encourage pupils to achieve computer literacy and acquire the necessary skills for participation in the Information Society.

ICT IN SCHOOLS

The major focus during 2005 was the roll out of broadband connectivity to all recognised schools. This project is being undertaken in partnership with industry following the establishment of a three year €18m joint Government/TIF (Telecommunications and Internet Federation) Fund.

In July 2004, a competitive public procurement tender process was put in place for the provision of broadband access to over 3,900 Primary and Post-Primary schools. The results of the tender process were announced in January 2005 and contracts were finalised with six companies by June 2005.

Roll out of the local connectivity and installation began in June 2005. As of the end of 2005, 2,894 schools have had local connectivity installed and of these, some 2,269 have router capability installed and tested. It is envisaged that all schools targeted in the initial roll-out phase will be installed by 2006. Schools connectivity is being routed to the Internet through

a National Broadband Network, which was developed by HEAnet and became operational in 2005. The Network provides centrally managed services for schools such as security, anti-spam/anti-virus and content filtering.

The National Centre for Technology in Education set up a National Service Desk to interface between the Network, Broadband Service Access Providers and schools in the roll-out phase and thereafter in providing schools with on-going advice and assistance.

The Broadband Access Programme builds on the investment by grant aiding schools to develop their internal networks. Since December 2004, over 3,700 schools have received grants to develop their networking facilities at a cost of some €20m.

The development of internal networking facilities in schools is critical to supporting schools' full exploitation of the potential offered by broadband connectivity and the efficient use of computer software.

In 2005, over 11,300 training places were provided to Primary and Post-Primary teachers across a range of ICT training courses. Advice and support was provided to teachers and schools through the ICT Advisory Service. There is a range of on-line, teaching resources available to teachers, via the Scoilnet Portal, to support ICT usage at school level.

Objective 3.3:

We will contribute to the development of education in Ireland through co-operation and decision making in the European Union, international organisations and bilaterally and through participation in programmes and initiatives in the education, scientific and training areas assisted by the European Union and other international organisations.

EUROPEAN UNION

Launch of Europass

The Europass initiative, which was agreed under the Irish EU Presidency in 2004, was launched in 2005. The Europass documents have been designed in such a way as to assist individuals to chronicle their skills and competences in a coherent manner, whether they are planning to enrol in an education or training programme, to look for a job, or to gain experience abroad. In 2005, a network of National Europass Centres was established throughout Europe to coordinate the initiative. The Irish centre is based in the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.



European Framework of Qualifications (EQF)

In July 2005, the European Commission published a discussion document proposing the development of a European Framework of Qualifications (EQF). The framework provides for 8 levels of award, from basic literacy to post doctorate level, has the potential to cover all awards including those in the school system, is based on the achievement of learning outcomes, and will be implemented on a voluntary basis. It is a meta-framework into which awards in Member States could be included on a best fit basis, and does not require Member States to change their existing award structures. Participation in the EQF is voluntary but Member States must commit to common principles in regard to quality assurance, recognition of formal and non formal learning, and accumulation of credit. The EQF proposal builds on the Copenhagen and Bologna processes.

EU Directives

Directive 2005/36/EC consolidates and replaces existing directives on the recognition of professional qualifications. This includes Directive 89/48/EEC of 21 December 1988 which provides the basis for the recognition of teaching qualifications.

The Department has responsibility for co-ordinating the actions under Directive 2005/36/EC and represents Ireland on an EU Council working group. Ireland is required to bring into force, the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive, by 20th October 2007.

Lisbon Strategy

The principal policy focus for EU initiatives in the area of education and training continued to be the Lisbon Strategy which seeks to make the EU the ‘most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world by 2010’. As part of this strategy, the EU initiated a process of peer learning in 2005 in the areas of education and training. The Department organised one of the first peer learning activities for policy makers and practitioners in the area of continuous professional development of teachers.

OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe proclaimed 2005 as the European Year of Citizenship through Education, during which countries were invited to take part in activities to strengthen policy and practice related to citizenship education. Ireland’s activities in this European Year were coordinated through the Curriculum Development Unit of City of Dublin VEC with direct support from the Department. Several activities were supported including a Young Citizen Award.

OECD

An OECD Ministerial seminar was held in Dublin in January 2005 on developing strategies on business/education partnerships. Delegates attended from 20 OECD countries and were representative of senior education and business interests.

UNESCO

UNESCO’s International Institute for Education and Planning chose the Irish education system for a detailed case study for its 2005 cohort of senior education planners from over thirty countries.

BILATERAL RELATIONS

International Recognition of Qualifications

In July, a new guide for comparing qualifications in Ireland and the United Kingdom was launched. The guide provides information on the ways in which qualifications are recognised in Ireland and the UK and makes it possible to draw comparisons between qualifications and their levels in each country.

Education cooperation with China was intensified in 2005 as part of the Government’s Asia Strategy. An agreement was reached on the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications between Ireland and China. Several Irish third level institutions signed agreements during the year with some of China’s most prestigious academic institutions.

INTERNATIONALISATION OF IRISH EDUCATION

The development of the internationalisation services sector and the promotion of Ireland as a destination for students from overseas was the subject of extensive consultation between the Department and the relevant stake holders during 2005. This consultation followed the publication of a report on the future of the sector in late 2004 which identified the international education services area as one of the fastest growing business sectors in the world. To encourage overseas students, there is now a register of approved courses in place. Education providers who wish to have their course approved, apply for inclusion on the register. Overseas students attending an approved course have access to part time employment. The measures were aimed at protecting the reputation of Irish education.

Objective 3.4:

We will contribute to maintaining international competitiveness by developing Ireland as a leading knowledge-based economy.

SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLTI)

The PRTLTI has as its main objectives the promotion and development of high quality research capabilities in third-level institutions. The emphasis is on assisting institutions to enhance and develop research capabilities.

Research in a wide range of areas is eligible for support including humanities, science, technology and the social sciences. The funding awarded to institutions involves capital and current expenditure. Funding under the PRTLTI is provided for:

- Postgraduate and postdoctoral research
- Research centres, including multi-site, collaborative centres
- Additional purpose-built research space including new library space
- State-of-the-art equipment and technology.





There have been three cycles of funding since 1999. The current cycle was announced in 2001 and included funding of €320m for 23 third level institutions.

Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology

This Council promotes excellence in research in science, engineering and technology. In 2005, €17m was allocated to the Council. New awards in 2005 were as follows:

Scheme	No. of New Awards
Scholarships	209
Fellowships	50

Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences

The Council promotes excellence in the humanities and social sciences. The Department allocated €8m to the Council in 2005. New awards in 2005 were as follows:

Scheme	No. of New Awards
Scholarships	91
Fellowships	23
Research Fellows	9
Senior Research Fellows	10
Project Grants	13

The Department also provided recurrent funding of €4.8m for research in the Institute of Technology sector, €6.7m to support HEAnet and €2m for North/South research.

The Scientific and Technological Education (Investment) Fund

This fund was set up in 1997 to develop technology education at all levels . Total expenditure under the Fund to the end of 2005 was just over €307m.

High Level Goal 4 - Improving standards and quality

We will seek to improve the standard and quality of education and promote best practice in classrooms, schools, colleges and other centres for education



Objective 4.1:

We will work to improve the quality of education provision through regular inspection, evaluation and planning.

- An extensive programme of subject inspection at post-primary level
- Inspection of more than 1,600 teachers on probation at primary level
- An in-depth evaluation of the teaching of Irish in 40 primary schools.

School and system evaluation

In 2005, the Inspectorate continued to broaden the range of its evaluation work in schools and centres for education. This was done in accordance with its legislative remit:

- To evaluate schools
- To advise and support teachers, schools and centres for education
- To provide advice in support of policy development by the Department.

The main evaluation activities in schools focused on:

- Increased whole-school evaluation work in primary and post-primary schools

Inspections in Primary Schools 2005

Inspection of Probationary Teachers	1611
Individual School Reports (Tuiriscí Scoile)	90
Whole-School Evaluation Reports	163
Assessment of Private Primary Schools for the NEWB	9

Inspections in Post-Primary Schools 2005

Subject Inspection Reports	676
Whole-School Evaluation Reports	53

Whole-school evaluation

In 2005, the whole-school evaluation model became the standard mechanism for school evaluation in both primary and post-primary schools. The Tuirisc Scoile model which had been used in primary schools for over 20 years was phased out.



Whole School Evaluation	2004	2005
Primary Level	53	163
Post-Primary	12	53

Post-primary Subject inspection

Subject inspection in post-primary schools continues to be a major component of the annual inspection programme. The number of subject inspection reports provided in 2005 increased to 676 from 336 in 2004. Subjects were evaluated under the headings of whole-school provision and support; planning and preparation; teaching and learning and assessment and achievement.

Newly Qualified Teachers

Inspections were carried out on 1611 primary teachers on probation in 2005. An in-depth study, involving inspectors’ and beginning teachers’ views on the probationary process, was completed and a report on the study *Beginning to Teach: Newly Qualified Teachers in Irish Primary Schools* was published in December 2005.

Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13(9) of the Education Act, 1998

A teacher or the board of a school may request the Chief Inspector to review any inspection that affects an individual

teacher or the school. The review procedure applies to all evaluations and reports other than those required under existing procedures for teachers experiencing professional difficulties. In 2005, four reviews were completed. The inspection was upheld in three cases and amended in the other case.

Focused evaluation projects

Focused evaluations are designed to investigate the quality of specific services or programmes provided by schools and centres for education. A detailed evaluation of curriculum implementation in Irish was undertaken in 40 primary schools in 2005. This evaluation was designed to assess the extent to which the revised Irish curriculum programme, introduced in 2001, was being implemented in schools. The evaluation also encompassed a review of pupils’ achievement in Irish. During the 2004/5 academic year an evaluation of the teaching and learning of Irish in the junior cycle was conducted in 10% of post-primary schools. Each of the 75 schools involved received a report which acknowledged good practice and made recommendations for improvement. Inspectors visited 320 classes and observed the teaching of 276 teachers during this process.

An evaluation project was also initiated during the first term of the 2005/2006 school year to investigate the impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) on teaching and learning in both primary and post-primary

schools. The evaluation will examine the impact of ICT on teaching and learning, assess the views and ICT skills of pupils at selected points in the education system and assess the extent to which ICT is used to support students with special educational needs. The methodology included a postal survey and evaluation of a sample of 32 primary and 20 post-primary schools. By the end of 2005, Inspectors had evaluated ICT provision in 13 of the primary schools and 12 of the post-primary schools. A national evaluation report will follow the work undertaken in 2005.

Linking evaluation with school development

Evaluation reports by inspectors to individual schools include a summary of key findings and recommendations for further development. These recommendations are intended to guide school management and staff in identifying priorities for school planning and development that will improve the quality of education provided for students.

Inspectorate Customer Survey

In December 2005, the results of an independent customer survey on the work of the Inspectorate were published. Conducted by MORI Ireland, the survey provided an opportunity for teachers, members of boards of management, school principals and parents to contribute their views on the quality of the services provided by the Inspectorate. The survey found a high level of satisfaction with the Inspectorate, and inspectors were described as “highly professional”, “courteous” and “efficient.” Over 90% of principals and teachers expressed

satisfaction with various facets of the work of inspectors in schools.

Inspectorate Publications

The Inspectorate published a number of summary reports and specialised evaluations on the quality of schools. The Chief Inspector’s Report 2001-2004 provided an overview of the work of the Inspectorate in that four-year period. A number of publications examined specific aspects of the educational system including:

- *Literacy and Numeracy in Disadvantaged Schools: Challenges for Teachers and Learners*
- *An Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools: English, Mathematics and Visual Arts*
- *Beginning to Teach: Newly Qualified Teachers in Irish Primary Schools*
- *Succeeding in Reading*
- *Olltuairisc ar na Coláistí Gaeilge 2004.*

The Inspectorate also published guidance for teachers and schools in Guidelines for Probationary Teachers and Guidelines on Appropriate Guidance for second-level schools.



During the summer, the Minister announced her decision to publish school inspection reports arising from the general programme of school inspections. An extensive consultation process was undertaken with the education partners on the best arrangements for publication and draft guidelines on the publication process were prepared and circulated to the education partners.

Objective 4.2:

We will support the development and implementation of a national framework of qualifications as provided for under the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999 and the co-ordination of the recognition of qualifications.

National Framework of Qualifications

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, established through the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, has responsibility for developing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

The Framework has 10 levels that provides for recognition of all learning in the formal and non-formal sectors, whether gained at school, through Further Education (FETAC awards) or through Higher Education (HETAC awards). For example, the Junior Certificate is at Level 3 in the Framework, apprenticeship qualifications are at Level 6, the Honours Bachelor Degree is at Level 8 and a Doctorate is at Level 10.

133,000 people received awards under the Framework from FETAC and HETAC in 2005.

The NQAI has established Qualification Recognition Ireland for enquiries on recognition of awards from other countries. Responsibilities for the regulated professions under various EU

Directives remain unchanged, but all queries are co-ordinated through NQAI for ease of public access.

The Higher Education Links Scheme (HELs)

The HELs scheme offered places in 17 Higher Education Institutions to FETAC award holders, subject to students having completed a particular PLC course and achieving minimum academic standards.

About 2,000 places were allocated on over 250 courses on the basis of students FETAC awards. It is, therefore, possible to progress from certificate to diplomas, to degrees, to postgraduate qualifications. It means that there is an alternative path, other than the Leaving Certificate, to accessing Higher Education. Students apply through the CAO.

Objective 4.3:

We will work to support excellence in the quality of academic teaching and learning in higher education.

The first formal review of Quality Assurance procedures jointly commissioned by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Irish Universities Quality Board was carried out by the European University Association (EUA) in 2004. The EUA report was published in April 2005.

The findings of the EUA report indicate that the universities have surpassed the legislative requirements set out in the Universities Act, 1997, in putting in place strong, functioning quality assurance procedures.

The HEA supports Higher Education Institutions through a number of dedicated funds allocated on a competitive basis to allow them to implement best practice in teaching and learning and to meet student needs.

Under the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 and the Dublin Institute of Technology Act, 1992 the Academic Council of each Institute of Technology is responsible for the

educational work of the college and the academic standards of its courses and activities.

Under the Qualifications Act 1999, Institutes of Technology are required to establish procedures for 'the purpose of further improving and maintaining the quality of education and training which is provided, organised or procured by that provider....' All of the Institutes governed by the Act have these procedures in place.

Objective 4.4:

We will promote teaching as a profession and maintain and improve the quality of teaching by the establishment of a Teaching Council.

TEACHING COUNCIL

Following elections held in late 2004 under the Teaching Council Act, 2001, the Teaching Council was officially launched in February 2005 with initial start up funding of €800,000.

The functions of the Council are:

- To promote teaching as a profession
- To promote the continuing professional development of teachers
- To establish and maintain a register of teachers
- To develop Codes of Professional Conduct and Practice which include teaching knowledge, skill and competence
- To regulate the teaching profession and the professional conduct of teachers and
- To maintain and improve standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence.

Objective 4.5:

We will contribute, in the context of the Good Friday Agreement, to the development of North/South co-operation and common action in the field of education and to the development of co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and the United States.

Universities Ireland

Universities Ireland was set up to promote co-operation and collaboration among nine of the universities on both sides of the border. Research has been carried out on:

- The opportunities for e-learning programmes
- Harmonising regulations
- Awarding joint degrees
- Developing credit transfer arrangements
- The feasibility of an all-island technology transfer and intellectual property service.

North South Programme for Collaborative Research

The programme supports collaborative research and development between third-level institutions on the island and is funded under NDP. The programme is managed by the HEA with the Department providing funding of some €5.5m.



Objective 4.6:

We will plan for and provide suitable cost-effective accommodation to underpin the delivery of quality education.

Area Development Planning

The planning model for educational infrastructure, first introduced in 2004, was designed to ensure that school provision would be decided after a transparent consultation process. Parents, sponsors of prospective schools and all interested parties from a locality have the opportunity to have their voices heard in the process.

Following publication of each Draft Area Development Plan, the Commission on School Accommodation conducts a public engagement process to which all interested parties can make submissions. All of these submissions are published.

The process in each case culminates in the publication of a Final Area Development Plan against which all capital funding decisions will be made over the next decade.

Since the introduction of the new planning model, Area Development Plans have been published for Mountmellick and Mountrath, for the N4 / M4 corridor and for Westport /

Newport. The Plans will be implemented, as appropriate, in the context of the 2006 - 2010 School Building Programme.

School Building Programme

A record school building programme is being delivered under the 5 year capital envelope for the Education Sector. The 2005 building programme listed over 120 large scale projects that will proceed to tender and construction over the next twelve to fifteen months.

In recent years, the Department has piloted approaches whereby delivery of school building projects is devolved to a local school management level. Since the start of 2004, all small-scale projects, and in an ever increasing way a number of the large-scale projects, are now delivered in this manner. School authorities have responded positively to the devolution of control and their improved autonomy.

Summer Works Scheme

The purpose of the Summer Works Scheme is to devolve funding to individual school authorities to undertake small scale building works which can, ideally, be carried out during the summer months. Under the terms of the Scheme, school authorities manage these works with guidance from and minimal interaction with the Department.

Funding is allocated to projects in accordance with pre-published criteria. In 2005, the funding came to €70.5m with 763 schools carrying out work, 470 at primary level and 293 at post primary level.

Small Schools Initiative

This initiative allows local management to modernise school accommodation in small primary schools. During 2005, 84 schools were approved. 70% of these were either completed or were on-site during the year.

Permanent Accommodation Initiative

This initiative reduces the reliance on prefabs as a means of dealing with the immediate accommodation needs of schools. During 2005, 66 schools were approved, the majority of which were either completed or on-site.

Generic School Designs

Standard/generic designs have been developed by the Department’s Building Unit, for 8 and 16-classroom schools. The first such primary school in Balgaddy, Lucan was opened in September 2005. A further six generic schools were included in the 2005 school building programme. It is expected that use of these designs, wherever possible, will yield a substantial savings in terms of design team fees as well as reducing the time taken to bring projects to completion.

Standard/generic designs have also been developed for PE Halls for post-primary schools. Four of these halls are completed with another two scheduled to go to site in 2006. The use of the generic design will speed up the delivery of PE halls and reduce design costs.

Health and Safety

In 2004, the State Claims Agency in co-operation with the Department conducted a risk review to assess occupational health and safety standards in post-primary workshops -subjects covered were Materials Technology (wood), Construction Studies, Metalwork, Engineering and Technology. The objective of the review was to assess existing standards and to publish a report and guidelines which would outline any deficiencies identified. The report, which issued in December 2005, recommended that equipment should either be upgraded to meet the relevant Health and Safety standards or replaced. The report also recommended that all redundant machinery and equipment must be removed from the workshops and be disposed of in compliance with Health, Safety and Environmental requirements.

The Department responded immediately by issuing the report to all schools and advising the School Management Authorities of their legal requirement to provide safe working environments for staff and students. €40m was allocated in grant aid to facilitate the replacement and modernisation of existing equipment in line with guidelines and approved equipment lists. €22m was issued in 2005 with the balance to issue in 2006.

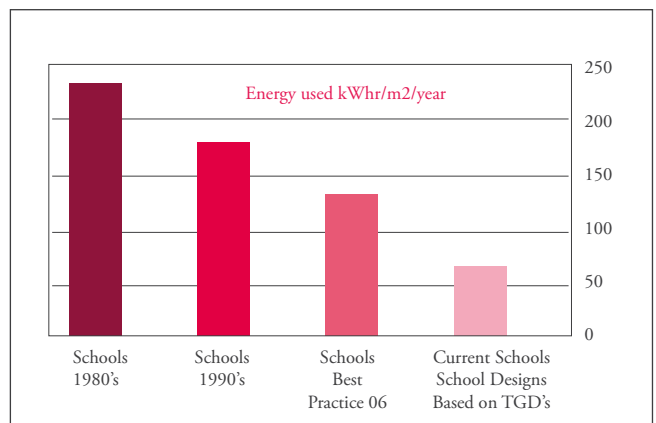
Remediation Programmes

Progress continued in 2005 on the asbestos, radon and dust extraction remediation programmes.

Energy Policies

The Planning and Building Unit within the Department continues to improve energy conservation in Educational buildings using its energy policy DART (Design, Awareness, Research & Technology). This policy is supported by the Department’s technical guidance documents. Schools designed and built in this manner have been demonstrated to have an energy performance that is twice as good as international best practice as can be seen in the graph below. Research projects currently under development are the Dundalk energy zone project, the Biomass wood pellet / wood chip boiler projects and the Tory Island wind turbine project phase 2.

Energy Usage in Primary Schools



THIRD LEVEL BUILDING

During 2005, a number of high priority projects were either completed or reached advanced stage of delivery. These projects included a number of new facilities to support the provision of additional health skills places and the expansion of teacher training places.

Facilities that were completed during 2005 include the following:

Third Level Institution	Facility Provided
National University of Ireland, Cork	Speech and Language Therapy/ Occupational Therapy
National University of Ireland, Dublin	Relocation of Physiotherapy and Radiography
National University of Ireland, Galway	Social Workers and Speech and Language Occupational Therapy
Royal College of Surgeons	Pharmacy
Trinity College Dublin	Radiography
University of Limerick	Engineering Design Centre

The following projects reached an advanced stage of construction:

Third Level Institution	Facility to be Provided
Mary Immaculate College of Education	Campus Development Phase 1a and Infrastructure
National University of Ireland, Cork	New Pharmacy School Therapies Building
University of Limerick	

Additional capital projects have been carried out under The Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL) with a budget of €403m. Further information on this is given under Objective 3.4

Devolved Grant Scheme

The devolved grant scheme for minor capital works enabled Institute of Technologies to undertake necessary improvement works at a cost of €15m in 2005.

Public Private Partnership Programme (PPP)

A major expansion of the Government’s Public Private Partnership Programme from 2006 to 2009 was announced in 2005 with €300m being provided for the provision of 23 new post-primary school and 4 new primary schools in 22 locations around the country. An additional €270m was allocated for the provision of 17 new Third Level projects in 9 locations.

First and Second Level Programme:

The first post-primary PPP project bundle consisting of St. Mary’s CBS and Scoil Christ Ri, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, Banagher College, Banagher, Co. Offaly and Gallen Community School, Ferbane, Co. Offaly was announced in November 2005.

Third Level Programme:

Background:

On the 11th December 2005 the Minister announced a €270m Third level PPP package.

17 projects in 9 colleges will be procured using the public private partnership model. Criteria for selection of these projects were worked out in consultation with the Higher Education Authority.

Cork School Of Music:

The contract for the construction of the Cork School of Music was signed in September 2005. Following the signing of the contract construction commenced immediately and is due to be completed by mid 2007.

High Level Goal 5 - Developing our capacity to deliver

We will support the delivery of education by quality planning, policy formulation and customer service



Objective 5.1:

We will create a greater capacity within the Department to concentrate on our core functions, especially that of strategic planning.

At the core of the Department's work is the provision of a high quality education service for the country. The programme of structural reform, implemented in the past few years had a number of objectives, including the focused movement of operational functions from the Department and the putting in place of a regional office structure.

Through our Regional Offices Network the Department is represented on regional and local bodies, provides other educational services that are best undertaken at a local level.

Transfer of responsibility

In 2005, additional areas of responsibility were transferred to the National Council for Special Education and the Teaching Council. Further information is available under the appropriate objectives.

Objective 5.2:

We will recruit, deploy, develop and support staff to enable them to contribute to their fullest in a well-managed, performance-driven culture and in an open and positive working environment.

Performance Driven Culture

Under the Social Partnership agreement, Sustaining Progress, the Department is committed to the full implementation of a Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) and to the full integration of PMDS with HR policy and processes. The mechanisms for full integration were agreed at General Council in June 2005.

The Department continued to provide training for upward feedback as part of the PMDS process and also started to run information sessions for staff on the implications of full integration.

Sustaining Progress provides for a verification process with Departments reporting regularly to the Civil Service Performance Verification Group on the commitments given under the agreement. During 2005, the Group considered that



there was sufficient progress to allow payment of benchmarking and the general round pay increases to all staff members.

Positive Working Environment

The Department’s HR Strategy includes a commitment to ensuring a positive working environment for all staff, to enable each person to work with dignity and respect, free from harassment, bullying or discrimination on account of gender, race, sexuality, etc.

In 2000, procedures for the investigation of complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment were agreed between Civil Service management and unions. Following a review, revised procedures came into effect from 1st September 2005 and were circulated to staff. The revised procedures include provision for formal mediation as an alternative to a formal investigation.

Staff training/development

In excess of 4,500 training days were provided in 2005, in areas that included business process mapping, Irish language training and management development. As a percentage of payroll costs, expenditure on staff training and development in 2005 was 4.1%.

Irish language training

To support the Department’s commitments to deliver services through Irish, an intensive Irish language training programme for staff was piloted in October 2005. Sections with the

most dealings with Irish speaking customers were prioritised. Training targeted at the needs of the sections was provided, to 30 members of staff, one day per week, over an eight week period.

Refund of fees

The Department continued to provide support for staff attending further education courses in their own time. In 2005, €168,480 was refunded under this scheme representing an increase of 30% over 2004. Full refunds of fees were made to 62 members of staff in respect of the 2004/05 academic year.

Objective 5.3:

We will support managers and staff in effectively delivering high quality services within a strategic and value-for-money framework.

Customer Service

Implementation of the Department’s Customer Charter (2004-2007) and Customer Service Action Plan continued in 2005. The preferred means of communicating with the Department continues to be by phone. In 2005, the Department received just under 1.04m calls from our external customers. Of these calls, 81.7% were answered within 20 seconds, meeting the target set in the Customer Charter.

There are complaints procedures in place for customers who are dissatisfied with a service and consider that it was not delivered in line with agreed quality service commitments set out by the Department or with generally accepted principles of equity and good administrative practices. There were 6 such complaints in 2005, all of which were satisfactorily resolved. A dedicated telephone line for customer service complaints was set up in early 2005.

Official Languages Act

The Official Languages Act 2003 provides a statutory framework for the delivery of services through the Irish language. A feature of the legislation is that public bodies, once requested to do so by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, have to prepare a scheme under Section 11 of the legislation setting out the services provided:

- Through the medium of Irish
- Through the medium of English
- Through the medium of Irish and English.

The Department was one of the first 25 public bodies requested to draft a Scheme in accordance with Section 11. A public consultation process on what services should be prioritised for delivery through Irish concluded in January 2005. The 2005-2008 Scheme was agreed with the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and came into effect in December 2005.

Expenditure Reviews

The Expenditure Review Initiative began in 1997 across all spending Departments/Offices. Its objectives are to analyse Exchequer spending in a systematic manner and to provide a basis on which more informed policy and expenditure decisions can be made. It is one of a range of modernisation initiatives aimed at moving public sector management away from the traditional focus on inputs to concentrate more on the achievement of results.

The following reviews are taking place and will be reported on in 2006:

- Supply Teacher Scheme for Primary Schools
- Review of the Small School Initiative and the Permanent Accommodation Initiative.

Objective 5.4:

We will provide IT services within our organisation, which support policy formulation, policy evaluation and modern, effective service delivery to our clients.

Support and Enhancement of IT Services

An integrated Primary Teacher payroll system was implemented to pay Primary substitute teachers their statutory entitlements under the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act, 2001. A project to rationalise the Department's main databases was initiated to improve operational efficiency and data reliability. An enhanced Intranet model was also implemented during 2005.

Education Services Interactive (ESI) Project

The purpose of this project is to develop a web based portal and applications to deliver on-line services to schools. Design and development of an On-Line Claims System continued in 2005. This system will enable schools to complete pay claims on-line for days/hours worked by part-time or substitute school employees. This in turn will generate direct salary payments to the individuals.

Objective 5.5:

We will provide a range of financial functions and supports to underpin improved financial management in the provision of education services, including monitoring and reporting on progress of educational measures that are part-financed by the European Union, which are incorporated in the National Development Plan for 2000–2006.

Improved Financial Accountability and Governance

Work has continued in progressing the Management Information Framework (M.I.F.) project to improve the Department’s processing of financial transactions, improve decision making regarding the allocation of resources and generally improve the overall financial management of the public funds for which it is responsible.

The Financial Management System, a key element of the M.I.F., has brought about a more efficient processing of payments as well as improved arrangements for financial management and reporting. Increased use of Electronic Funds Transfer has also improved service to the Department’s customers. During 2005, further progress was also made on improving the presentation of the Department’s financial allocations in the published Estimates Volume by additional thematic consolidation in the areas of Student Support and Capital Expenditure, to complement similar ongoing consolidation in 2004 and 2003.

Internal Audit

The Department’s Internal Audit Unit is an independent unit reporting directly to the Secretary General. It is responsible for appraising the efficiency of the Department’s internal control systems.

The unit carries out its work in accordance with an Annual Audit Programme. Its activities covers all sections of the Department, as well as, schools in the Community and

Comprehensive sector, Education Centres and certain other bodies under the aegis of the Department. It is also responsible for conducting audits of EU funded programmes, as agreed with the European Commission.

In 2005, the IA unit issued a total of 8 final audit reports. The unit also engaged in compliance and follow-up work on the implementation of recommendations in the audit reports issued.

The work of the unit is reviewed and monitored by the Department’s Audit Committee. Its key function is to advise the Accounting Officer on the system of internal control, the risk management environment and any other audit issues of importance to the Department.

National Development Plan (NDP)/ Structural Funds

The NDP includes provision of €7.7billion for the education sector. This includes €401m from the European Structural Fund and €55m from the European Regional Development Fund.

In 2005, the NDP/Structural Funds Unit:

- Supported the delivery of education services by ensuring maximum drawdown of assistance from the European Structural Funds. Claims for drawdown of financial assistance from the ESF and ERDF were lodged by the relevant EU deadlines in 2005. Site visits were conducted in accordance with EU Regulations to verify the veracity of returns being made;
- Monitored and reported on progress of educational measures in the NDP with particular emphasis on those aided by European Structural Funds. Comprehensive progress and financial reports on all NDP measures were provided for half yearly Monitoring Committee Meetings in April and October 2005;

Promoted compliance with NDP/EU requirements. This involved the dissemination of information/guidelines, information seminars and facilitation of audits/control visits.

Objective 5.6:

We will promote good industrial relations practice throughout the education sector and encourage and support the modernisation of the sector through a partnership process.

The Social Partnership agreement Sustaining Progress provides for the maintenance of stable industrial relations and co-operation with flexibility and ongoing change and modernisation. The agreed modernisation agenda for the Education sector included:

- A standardised school year
- The holding of staff meetings and parent meetings in schools at times more convenient to parents
- Curricular and legislative change in schools
- Introduction of Performance Management and Development Systems for all staff in Institutes of Technology, Universities and VECs
- Delivery of courses by way of modularisation and semesterisation in third level institutions
- The enhancement of Quality Assurance procedures in Institutes of Technology
- Reform of governance and management structures in the university sector
- An increased number of posts being filled by open competition.

The pay increases provided for in Sustaining Progress are dependent on verifiable improvements being made across the sector. The Education Sector Performance Verification Group assesses the progress reports prepared on foot of modernisation

plans. On the basis of these assessments, pay increases were sanctioned for all grades in the Education sector in 2005.

Objective 5.7:

We will support improved administration and forward planning by developing policy and legislative proposals and by collecting and analysing relevant education statistics

ENACTED LEGISLATION

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004 was enacted in July 2005. The Act sets out the overall policy approach of the Department for the provision of education services to children with special needs arising from a disability. It also allows for the provision of such services on the basis of assessed need and, insofar as appropriate, in an inclusive setting. The Act provides for the involvement of parents/guardians, the availability of an appeals process, co-ordination between health and education services, as well as providing for the National Council for Special Education in primary legislation.

While many sections of the Act have already commenced, the remaining sections relate mainly to the statutory assessment and education plan process for which the Act provides. These cannot come into effect without the National Council for Special Education having an opportunity to present an implementation report to the Department, which it must do before 1 October 2006. The Act will be implemented on a phased basis within a period of five years.

Objective 5.8:

We will implement that part of the Government's decentralisation programme involving the relocation of the Department's Dublin offices to Mullingar and Athlone.

Under the Government's decentralisation programme, approximately 300 posts in the Department's offices in Dublin will be transferred to Mullingar and 100 posts will be transferred to Athlone. The process of assigning staff, both internal and external, who have indicated a willingness to decentralise to Athlone and Mullingar, took place throughout 2005.

To provide accommodation in Athlone, the Department's existing campus will be extended. In June 2005, tenders were invited by the Office of Public Works for the design and build of the new accommodation.

In Mullingar, the Department's offices will be provided on a green-field site, which has yet to be procured.

Objective 5.9:

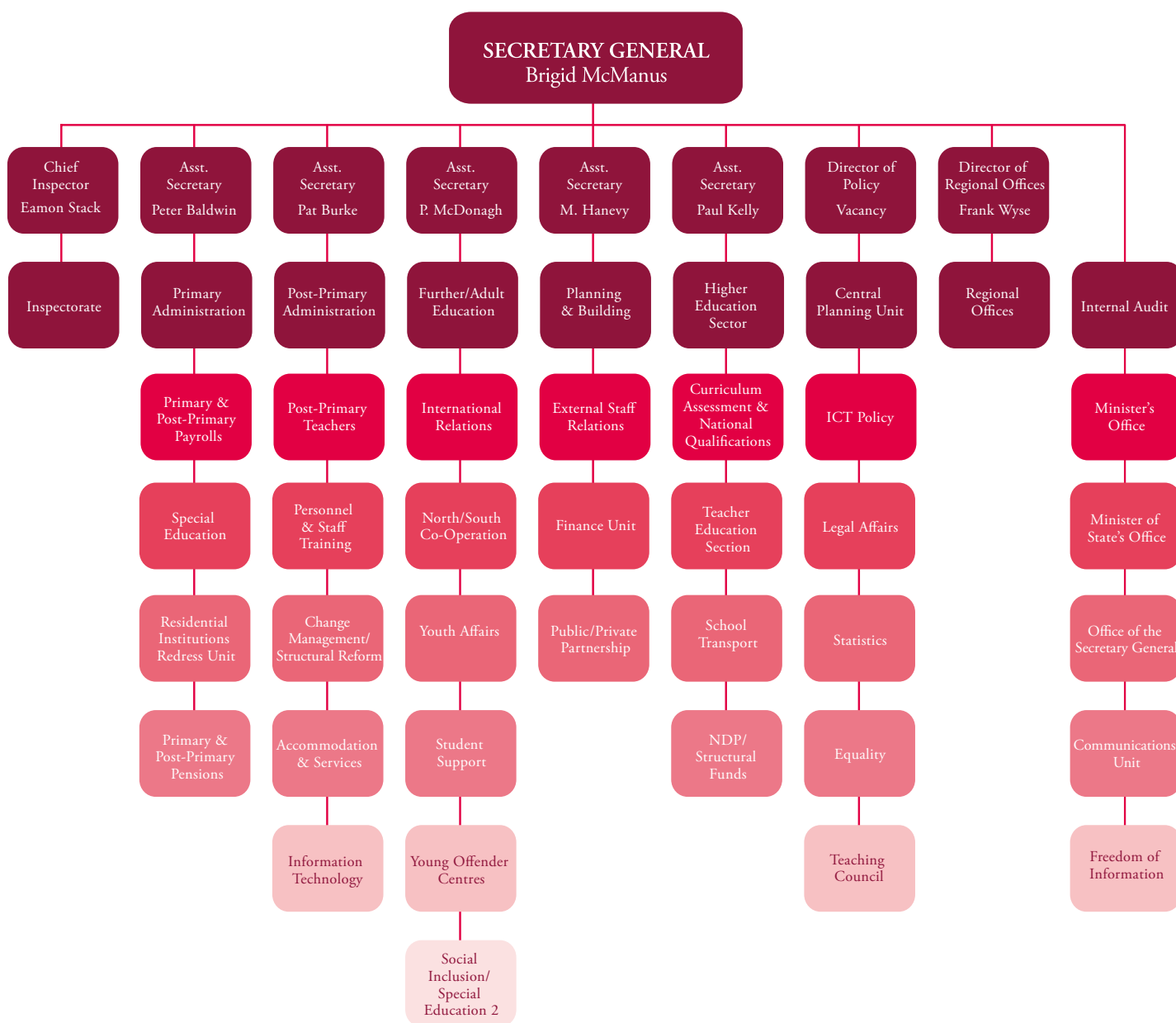
In the context of achieving better value for money, to promote procurement management reform by developing policies, process and practices in support of a more strategic approach to procurement within the Department and bodies for which it is responsible.

The National Public Procurement Policy Unit was established in the Department of Finance as a result of an April 2002 Government decision. The primary purpose of the NPPPU is to develop public sector procurement policy and practice through a process of procurement management reform. The NPPPU intends to develop a template for use by Government departments and public bodies in the production of an annual Corporate Procurement Plan and will engage consultants to assist with the production of the template.



Appendix 1

Organisation Chart of the Department in 2005



Appendix 2

Bodies Under the Aegis of the Department

**An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus
Gaelscolaíochta**

22 Plás Mhic Liam, Baile Átha Cliath 2
(01) 6340831

Commission on School Accommodation

Floor 3, House 28, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1
(01) 8892347

Further Education and Training

Awards Council (FETAC)

East Point Plaza, East Point Business Pk., D 3.
(01) 8659500

Gaisce - The Presidents Award

State Apartments, Dublin Castle, Dublin 2
(01) 4758746

Higher Education Authority

3rd Fl., Marine House, Clanwilliam Court,
Dublin 2.
(01) 6612748

Higher Education and Training

Awards Council (HETAC)

26-27 Denzille Lane, Dublin 2
(01) 6314567

Léargas-the Exchange Bureau

189-193 Parnell Street, Dublin 1
(01) 8731411

National Centre for Guidance in Education

1st Floor, 42/43 Prussia St., Dublin 7
(01) 8690715

National Centre for Technology in Education

Dublin City University, Glasnevin, Dublin 9
(01) 7008200

**National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
(NCCA)**

24 Merrion Square, Dublin 2
(01) 6617177

National Council for Special Education

1-2 Mill Street, Trim, Co. Meath
(046) 9486400

National Educational Welfare Board

16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7.
(01) 8738600

**National Office for Equity of Access to
Higher Education**

Fl. 1, Brooklawn House, Crampton Place,
Shelbourne Rd,
Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
(01) 6612748

National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

5th Floor, Jervis House, Jervis Street, Dublin 1
(01) 8871500

State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
(090) 6442700

Teaching Council

Block A, Maynooth Business Campus,
Maynooth, Co. Kildare
(01) 6517900

Appendix 3

Directory of Contact Details

REGIONAL OFFICES OF THE DEPARTMENT

County Hall, Belgard Sq Nth, Town Centre, Tallaght, D 24
(01) 4635500

Kildare / Wicklow Region

Block A, Maudlins Hall, Dublin Rd., Naas, Co Kildare
(045) 848500

Midlands Region (Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath)

Friars Mill Road, Mullingar, County Westmeath
(044) 37000

Mid Western Region (Clare, Limerick, Tipperary NR)

Rosbrien Rd, Punch's Cross, Limerick
(061) 430000

North Eastern Region (Cavan, Louth, Meath, Monaghan)

7 Trimgate St., Navan, Co Meath
(046) 9067410

North Western Region (Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo)

Kempton Promenade, Bridge Street, Sligo
(071) 9135700

South Eastern Region

(Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary SR, Waterford, Wexford)

Johnstown Business Park, Waterford
(051) 310000

Southern Region (Cork, Kerry)

Heritage Business Pk, Bessboro Rd, Mahon, Cork
(021) 4536300

Western Region (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon)

Victoria Place, Galway
(091) 864500

Regional Offices Directorate

Marlborough St., Dublin 1
(01) 8896726

NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE (NEPS)

HEAD OFFICE

24/27 Nth Frederick Street, Dublin 1
(01) 8892700

EASTERN REGION

Clondalkin Regional Office

50 Tower Road, Clondlakin, Dn 22
(01) 4614824

Naas Local Office

Maudlins Hall, Dublin Road, Naas, Co Kildare
(045) 848504

Blackrock Regional Office

3rd Floor, Trident House, Blackrock, County Dublin
(01) 2833028

MIDLANDS REGION

Mullingar Regional Office

Friars Mill Road, Mullingar, Co Westmeath
(044) 9337004

NORTH WESTERN REGION

Sligo Regional Office

Westward Centre, Bridge St., Sligo
(071) 9141322

NORTH EASTERN REGION

Navan Regional Office

43 Canon Row, Navan, Co Meath
(046) 9093310

Drogheda Local Office

Donore Rd. Industrial Estate, Drogheda, Co Louth
(041) 9876940

SOUTH EASTERN REGION

Waterford Regional Office

108 The Quay, Waterford
(051) 850358

Clonmel Local Office

C/O Vocational School, Raheen Rd,
Clonmel, Co Tipp
(052) 25833

SOUTHERN REGION

Cork Regional Office

Block C, Heritage Business Park, Mahon, Cork
(021) 4536358

Tralee Local Office

Clounalour, Oakpark, Tralee, Co Kerry
(066) 7180671

WESTERN REGION

Galway Regional Office

Victoria Place, Eyre Square, Galway
(091) 864518

Castlebar Local Office

Castlebar, Co Mayo
(094) 9028310

OFFICES OF THE INSPECTORATE

Irish Life Buildings, 1a South Mall, Cork

(021) 4906011

Marlborough Street, Dublin 1

(01) 8896553

Floor 3, Ross House, Merchants Rd, Galway

(091) 568922

Rosbrien Road, Punch's Cross, Limerick

(061) 430004

Kempton Promenade, Bridge Street, Sligo

(071) 9143218

Appendix 4

Secondary Legislation

Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Act 2000 (Specified Period) Order 2005 (SI No. 779 of 2005)

The purpose of this statutory instrument was to extend the life of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse to 8 years from the Commission's establishment day to ensure that it has sufficient time to complete its work and publish its final report. As is required by the 2000 Act, a draft of the Order was approved by both Houses of the Oireachtas and was subsequently made by the Government on 20 May 2005.

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (Commencement) Order 2005 (SI No. 507 of 2005)

On 14 July 2005 the Minister signed an order to appoint that day as the day on which sections 1, 2, 14(1)(a), 14(1)(c), 14(2) to 14(4), 19 to 37, 40 to 44, and 50 to 53 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004 came into operation. The provisions which were commenced relate to the placing of certain obligations on schools, the organisation and structure of the Council itself and certain technical matters.

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (Establishment Day) (Section 19) Order 2005 (SI No. 508 of 2005)

On 14 July 2005 an Order was also signed appointing 1 October 2005 as the day on which the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) will be established in accordance with section 19 of the EPSEN Act. Prior to this date the Council has been established and was operating under an Order made pursuant to the provisions of section 54 of the Education Act 1998.

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (Establishment Day) (Section 36) Order 2005 (S.I. 509 of 2005)

Also on 14 July 2005 an Order was made appointing 3 April

2006 as the establishment day for the Special Education Appeals Board. The Board itself will become operational upon commencement of a number of provisions of the EPSEN Act 2004 that are currently the subjects of an implementation report being drafted by the NCSE.

Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (Commencement) (No.2) Order 2005 (SI No. 636 of 2005)

On 20 September 2005, the Minister made this Order under section 53(2) of the EPSEN Act 2004. It appointed 1 October 2005 as the day upon which sections 45 to 49 of the Act come into operation. The effect of these provisions is to dissolve the National Council for Special Education as established under the provisions of section 54 of the Education Act 1998 and to transfer responsibilities to the Council as established under the provisions of section 19 of the EPSEN Act.

Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (Section 28) (Prescribed Bodies) Regulations 2005 (SI No. 639 of 2005)

On 6 October 2005, the Minister made regulations in exercise of her powers conferred under section 28 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. The purpose of the regulations is to allow professionals who will be making decisions affecting the educational welfare of a child to share relevant information concerning that child.

Secondary Legislation

Secondary legislation promulgated in 2005 included:

- Composition of Vocational Education Committee Regulations 2004
- Delegation of Ministerial functions
- Commencement of a number of statutes.

Appendix 5

Education Statistics

Over the last 25 years (1980-2005), the number of students at primary level has fallen by 17%, reflecting the changing demography in Ireland. However, numbers have been rising since 2001 in line with rising births and inward migration from the mid-1990s. Second level students increased by 12% reflecting the increased participation rate in post compulsory education. At third level the number of full-time students more than tripled from 41,000 to almost 136,000 over this period.

Based on recent birth data, the increase in enrolment at primary level is set to continue and may reach the 1980 level by the year 2014. At second level, enrolment increased up to 1996/97 and has declined since. This decrease is set to continue until 2007/08 when enrolment should increase, in line with the increase in primary enrolment.

	1980	1990	2000	2005
1st level	551,319	543,744	439,560	458,114
2nd level	297,747	343,045	345,384	332,407
3rd level	40,613	68,165	119,991	135,891*

In May 2003, the European Council set 5 benchmarks in exemplary areas of education policy. Targets for 2010 are:

- At least 85% of 22-year-olds in the EU should have completed upper-secondary education.
- The percentage of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading literacy in the EU should have decreased by at least 20% compared to the year 2000.
- The total number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology in the EU should increase by at least 15%,

* Provisional figure

while at the same time the level of gender imbalance should decrease.

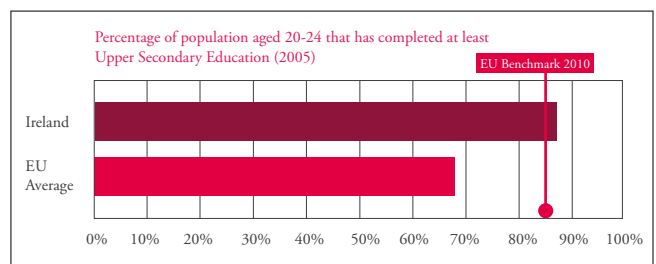
- The EU average level of participation in lifelong learning should be at least 12.5% of the adult working age population (25-64 age group).
- The EU average rate of early school leavers should be no more than 10%.

Percentage of population aged 20-24 that has completed at least upper secondary education (2005)

Completing upper-secondary education (Leaving Certificate or equivalent) is increasingly important not just for successful entry into the labour market, but also to allow students access to the learning and training opportunities offered by higher education. The 2005 level for the EU is 76.9% while that for Ireland is 86.1%, just above the EU Benchmark for 2010.

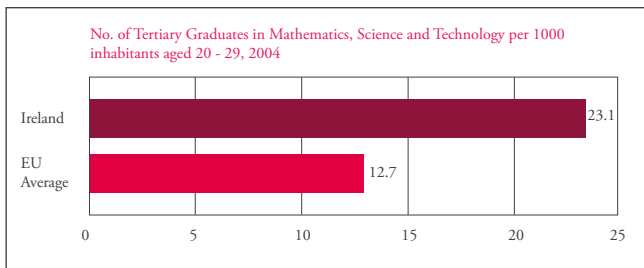
Percentage of pupils with reading literacy proficiency

All individuals need a core set of competencies and skills for employment, social inclusion, lifelong learning and personal fulfilment. The latest data, from 2003, show that 19.8% of 15-year-old pupils in the EU countries participating in the OECD PISA survey were found to be low achievers in reading literacy, Ireland was the 2nd best performing EU country with only 11% of 15 year olds categorised as low achievers.



Number of Tertiary Graduates in Maths, Science and Technology (2004)

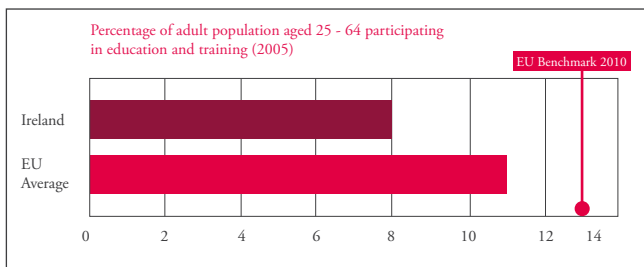
An adequate supply of scientists is crucial for a knowledge-based economy. The average number of tertiary graduates in mathematics, science and technology per 1000 of population aged 20-29 in the EU was 12.7 in 2004. Ireland is the EU leader with 23.1 graduates per 1000 of population in this age group.



Source: Eurostat

Percentage of population aged 25 - 64 participating in education and training

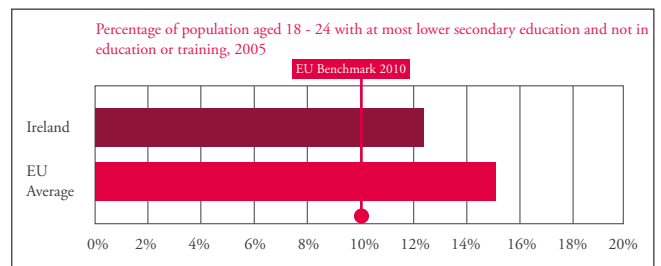
In a knowledge society, individuals must continuously update and complement their knowledge, competencies and skills for personal and professional development. The Labour Force survey in 2005 showed that, in the EU, the average percentage of the population aged 25-64 participating in education and training is 11.0%. Ireland's percentage is 8.0%. Both figures are below the EU Benchmark for 2010 of 12.5%.



Percentage of population aged 18 - 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in education or training (2005)

Encouraging young people to participate in post-compulsory education is vital for their social and labour-market integration, since those who leave school without qualifications are in danger of being left behind in today's increasingly competitive society.

The average rate of early school leaving in the EU is still high but decreasing steadily. In 2005, the EU average was 15.2%, while the figure for Ireland was 12.3%. However, both figures are still in excess of the EU Benchmark for 2010 of 10%.



Department of Education & Science: *Annual Report 2005*

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