



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

DEIS Programme

Department of Education and Youth, Ireland
October 2025

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Background – Irish Education System

Demographics

Ireland's population reached **5.1 million** (2022 Census) for the first time since 1851 Census

2.2 million people (43.2%) live in the Greater Dublin Area (Dublin, Louth, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow)

387,274 more people since April 2016 (8.1% increase)

631,785 non-Irish nationals (12.4% of the total usually resident population)



One of 18 government departments



Minister for Education and Youth

Department of Education and Youth Management Board

- Secretary General
- Assistant Secretary Generals
 - Chief Inspector



Helen McEntee
Minister for Education and
Youth



Department of
Children,
Equality,
Disability,
Integration and
Youth
(DCEDIY)



Department of
Education and
Youth
(DEY)



Department of
Further and
Higher
Education,
Research,
Innovation and
Science
(DFHERIS)

Supporting the Learning Journey for Children and Young People

Universities,
Technological Universities,
HEIs, Further Education,
Apprenticeships etc



Compulsory education
6 -16 years

Care and Early Learning –
Home, Family,
Community

Pre-school
Early Years
Services – ECCE

Primary
School –
Infant Classes
to Sixth Class

Post-primary
School –
Junior Cycle

Post-primary
School –
Transition Year
and Senior Cycle

A Lifelong Learning Journey....

The young person engages with many transitions during each phase of learning also.

The Department's Vision, Mission and Goals

Goals:

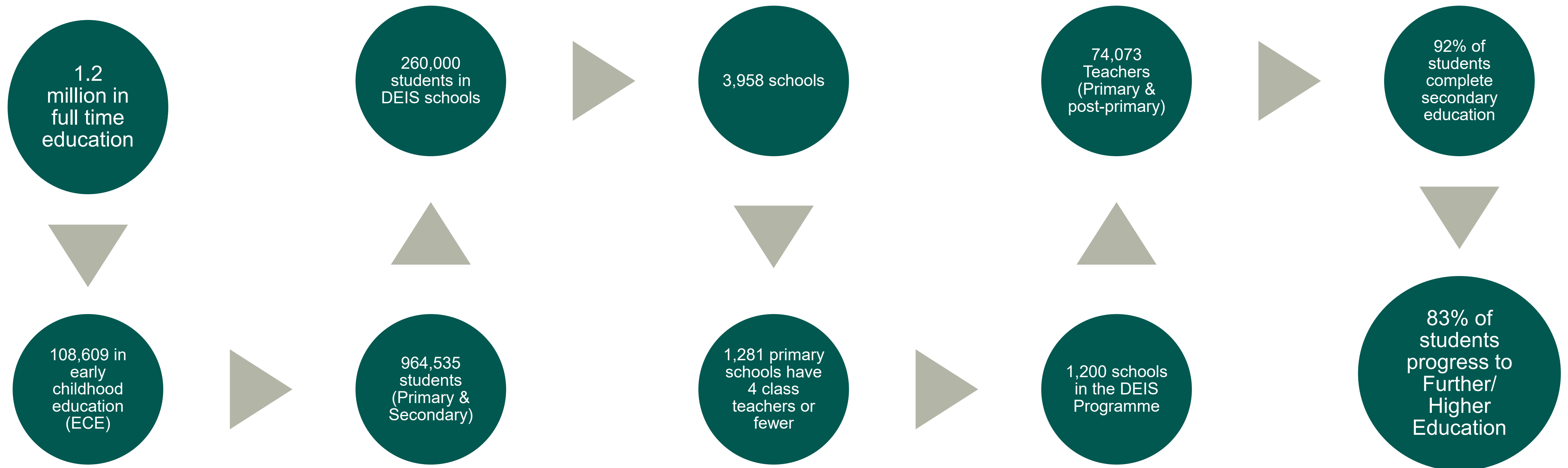
1. Enable the provision of **high-quality education and improve the learning experience to meet the needs of all** children and young people, in schools and early learning and care settings
2. Ensure **equity of opportunity** in education and that all children and young people are supported to fulfil their potential
3. Together with our partners, **provide strategic leadership and support** for the delivery of the right systems and infrastructure for the sector
4. Organisational **Excellence and Innovation**



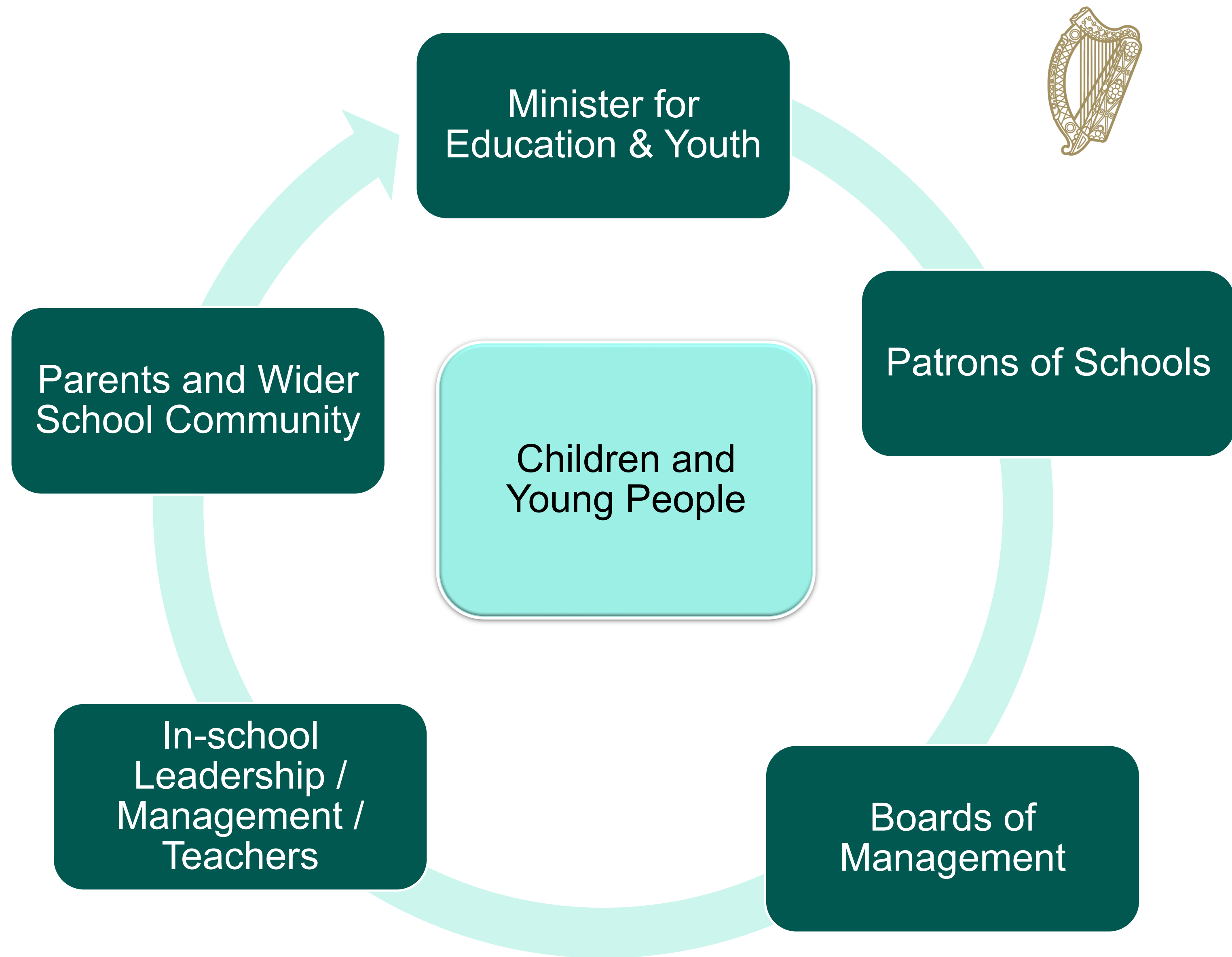
Vision: An education system where every child and young person feels valued and is actively supported and nurtured to reach their full potential

Mission: To ensure that all children and young people have access to a positive learning experience and to facilitate them, through learning to realise their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, economic and cultural development.

Some interesting Department of Education and Youth Statistics



Structure & Governance of Schools



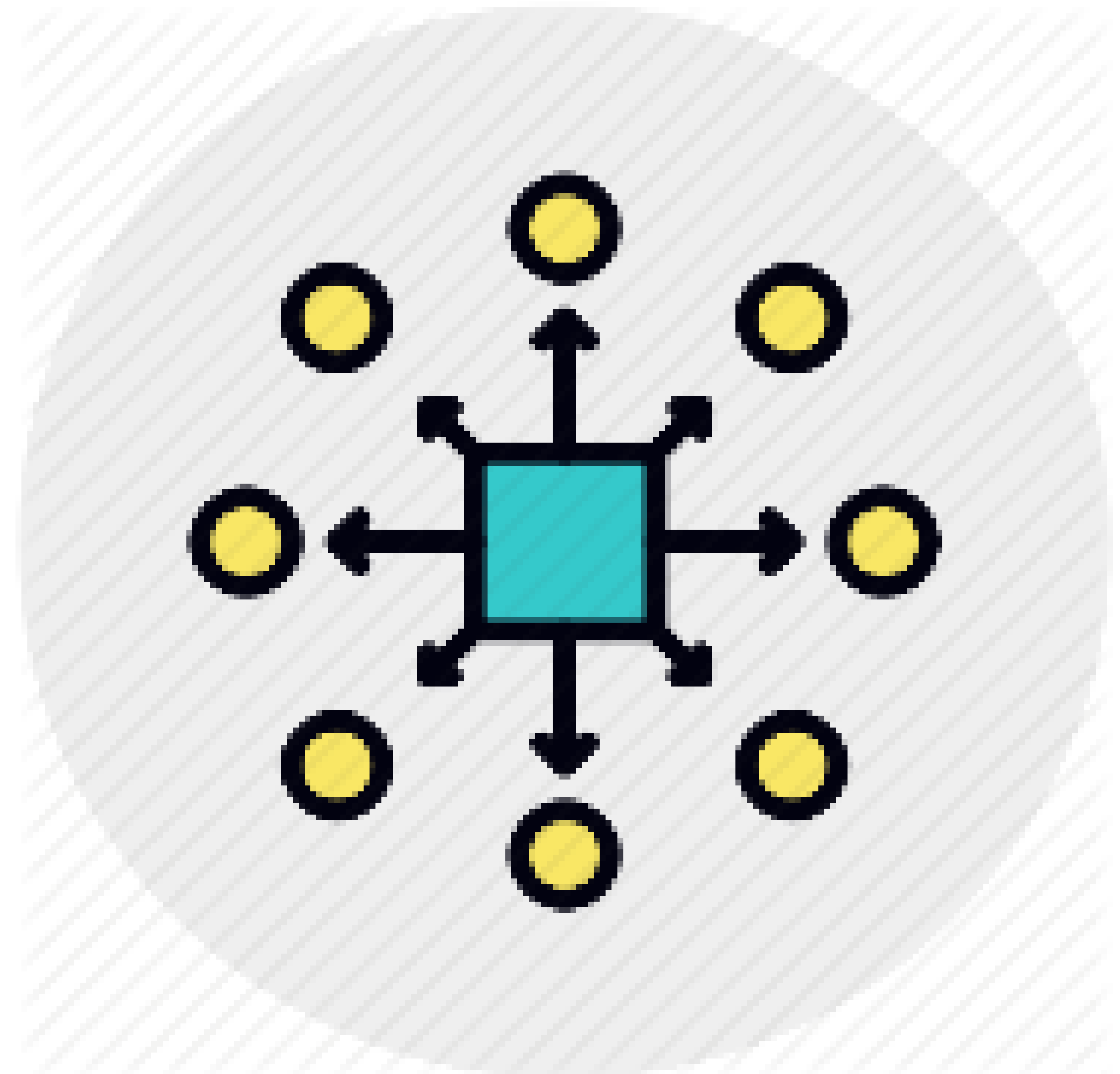
Governance of Schools



- **Centralised education system** governed by the Department of Education (policy making, allocation of resources, administration, and quality assurance)
- 3 models of school patronage - denominational, inter-denominational & multi-denominational
- Most students in state-funded schools (Only 7.8% boys & 5.8% girls in fee-charging schools (2021))
- Range of national management bodies (7 primary & 3 second-level)
- Schools managed by independent, voluntary boards of management established by founding patron (89.2% of primary pupils and 49.4% post-primary students attend Catholic ethos schools)
- No regional structures, municipalities or local education authorities, with the exception of **16 regionally-based Education and Training Boards (ETBs)**

Policy Development and Implementation

- Partnership and consultation
- Stakeholder involvement from the outset & throughout the process
- Parent and student voices
- Evidence-based and research informed
- Use of pilots
- Provision of advice and supports to guide implementation
- Measuring quality and impact





DEIS Programme

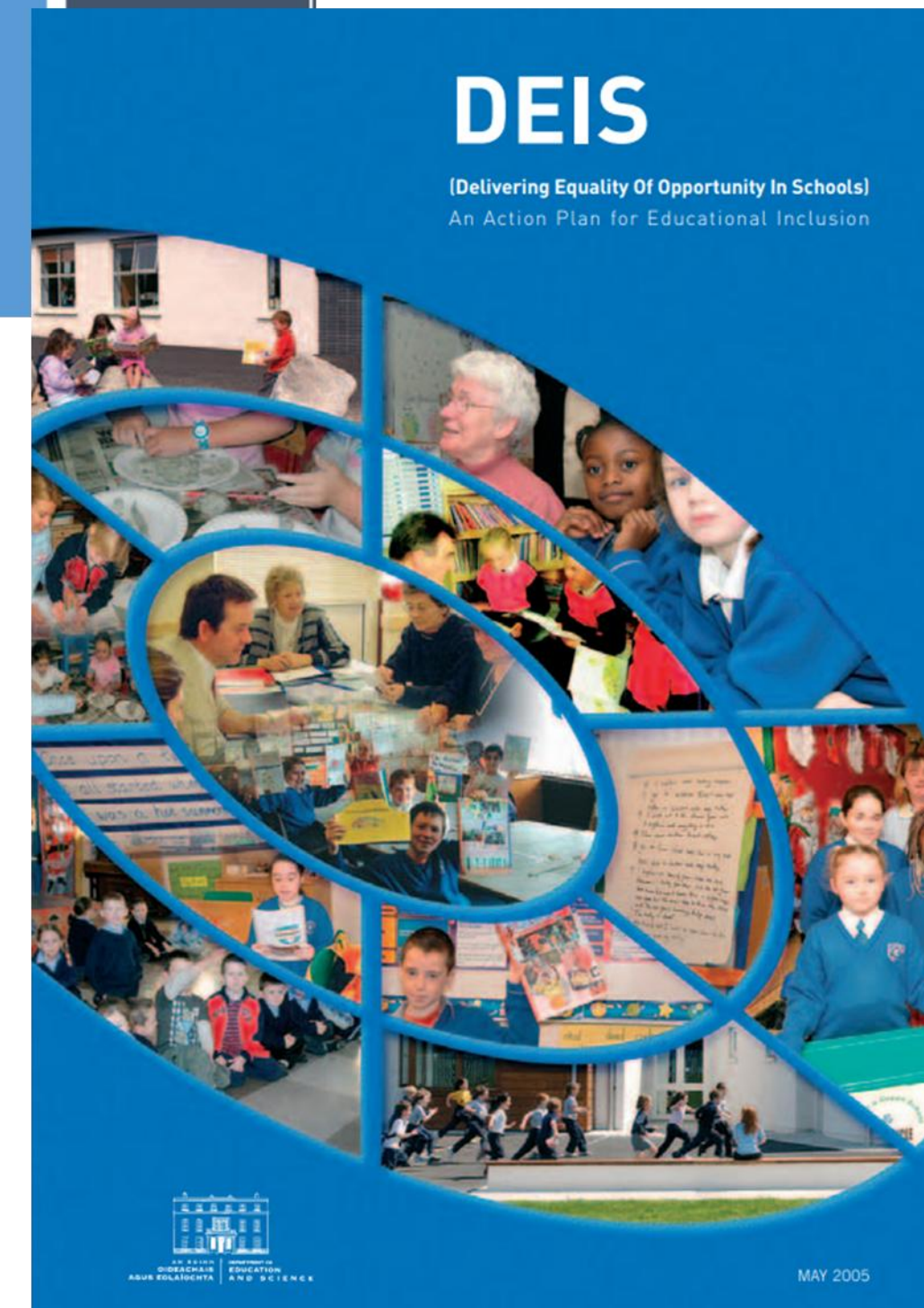
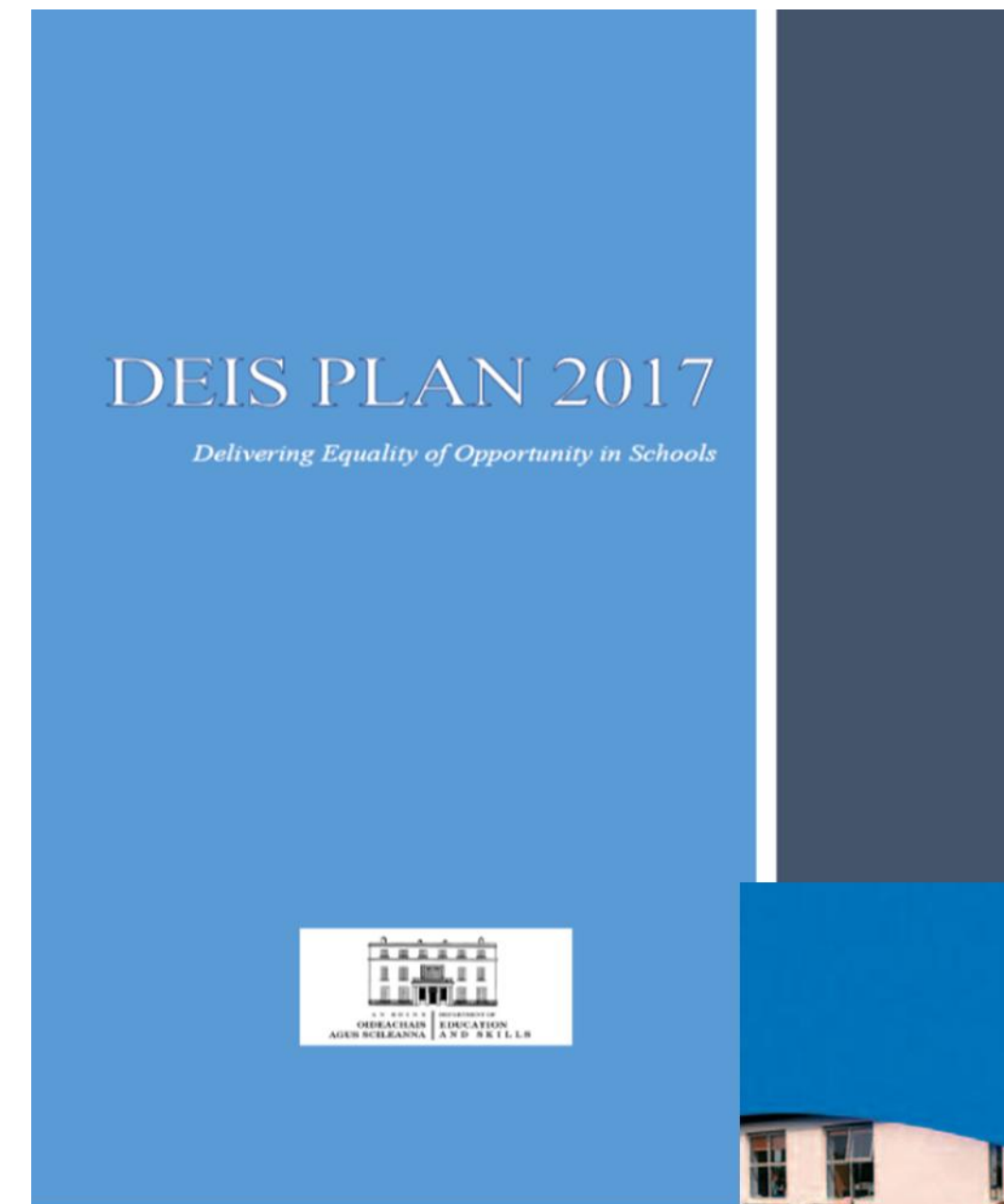
DEIS Programme

DEIS means:

**Delivering Equality of
Opportunity In Schools**

or in the Irish Language
translates to

OPPORTUNITY



Policies to address educational disadvantage



- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice
- National Educational Psychological Service
- Migrant Integration Strategy
- National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS)
- Education for children with special educational needs
- Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018
- Funding for School Books
- School meals
- Reduction in class sizes

Applied universally to all schools



DEIS Programme



First established in 2006 – integrate existing programmes and supports

DEIS Review 2015 and 2016

New DEIS plan published in February 2017

DEIS programme has been extended to new schools in 2017 and 2022

361 schools benefited (incl. 322 new schools added) in September 2022

Now supports 260,000 students in 1,200 schools

Budget in excess of €180m

- <https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4018ea-deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/>

Identifying schools for inclusion in DEIS



- Refined DEIS Identification model 2022
- Used student enrolment data and National Census data as represented by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index
- Took into consideration disadvantage experienced by
 - Traveller and Roma students
 - Students residing in direct provision
 - Students experiencing homelessness
- Schools were included based on their 'concentrated disadvantage'

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a3c9e-extension-of-deis-to-further-schools/#how-schools-were-selected-for-inclusion-in-deis>



Supports for schools in the DEIS Programme



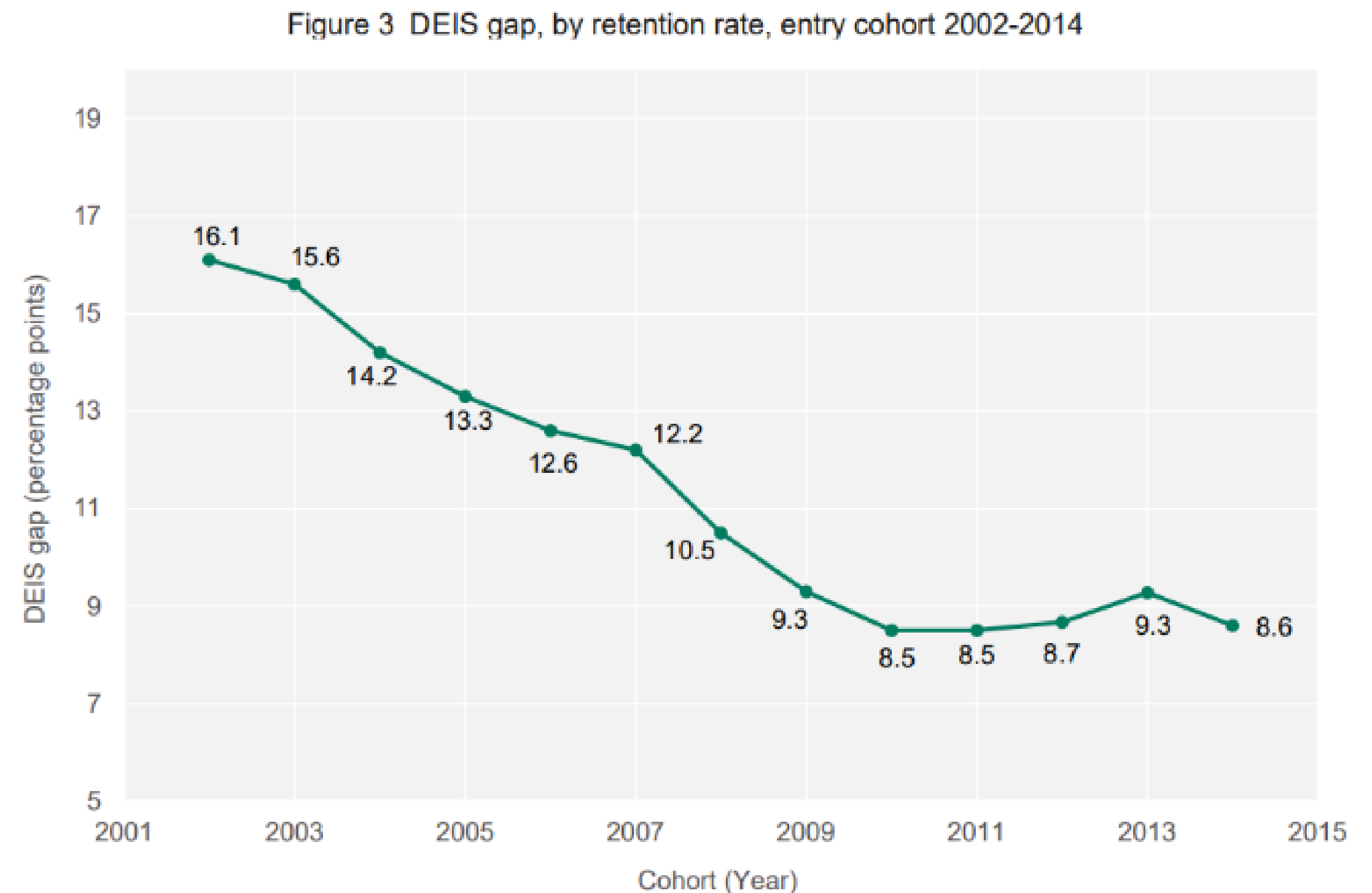
- DEIS grant based on level of educational disadvantage
- Reduced class sizes
- Access to Home School Community Liaison coordinator services (HSCL)
- Access to the school completion programme
- Access to literacy/numeracy supports
- Access to planning supports from the Inspectorate
- Priority access to range of professional development and educational psychologist supports
- Additional leadership teacher posts
- Enhanced access to National Educational Psychological Service
- Access to enhanced allocation of guidance teachers at post-primary



Is the DEIS Programme working?



- Schools participating in the DEIS programme have seen school completion rates improve since the introduction of DEIS.
- The gap in completion rates between DEIS and non-DEIS schools has narrowed from a gap of 16.8% for the 2001 entry cohort to approx. 8.6% for the 2014 cohort.



Is the DEIS Programme working?



- International tests such as TIMMS, PIRLS and PISA show an educational system that is both high performing and comparatively equitable.
- The recent review by the OECD Education for Inclusive Societies Project on Resourcing School to Address Educational Disadvantage in Ireland found an education system that consistently outperforms many other OECD countries and also exhibits relative socio-economic fairness, making it one of the stronger performers globally.
- The Evaluation of DEIS at post-primary level: Closing the achievement and attainment gaps published by Educational Research Centre (2019) narrowing of the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools at Junior Cycle



Is the DEIS Programme working?



- Only 3.3% of Ireland's population aged 18 to 24 were early leavers from education and training
- Among the lowest in Europe
- EU2030 headline target is 9%

Early leavers from education and training in this instance are defined as young people who had completed at most a lower secondary education and were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding surveying.



New DEIS Plan



- A new long-term DEIS Plan, to address educational disadvantage in all schools will be published before the end of this year which will
 - articulate a long-term strategy (ten years) to tackle educational disadvantage
 - Include measures to tackle educational disadvantage in all schools through the development, implementation and evaluation of a more agile and dynamic resource allocation model based on better data.
 - Place a focus on increased collaboration across Government departments and agencies
 - Place a renewed focus on tackling educational disadvantage across all strategies, policies and implementation plans of the Department of Education and Youth and its agencies.
 - include strategic initiatives in education to support the Government commitment to lift more children and young people out of poverty.
- Budget 2026 has committed an additional 16m in 2026 and 48m in 2027 for the implementation of the new DEIS plan and DEIS plus scheme.

Focus of DEIS Plan 2025



- To improve the opportunities and achievement levels for those at risk of educational disadvantage in all schools
- To work towards a more flexible system of supports to ensure that the needs of children and young people are met
- To improve equality of opportunity for young people, with an emphasis on retention to Leaving Certificate
- To focus on school attendance and tackling the rate of absenteeism in both DEIS and non-DEIS schools
- To better align the range of cross-government supports which are available and bring the various support services together
- To better align with the variety of strategies and policies already in the system
- Continue the work on the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework with the ESRI

What will inform the DEIS Plan?



- The new DEIS Plan will be evidence-informed based on the findings from a range of studies, research and consultation events including the most recent OECD review of resource allocation within the DEIS programme.
- It will also be informed by recent consultations conducted with school communities and other key education stakeholders – reports on these will be published in the coming months.
- Outcomes of the work undertaken by DEIS Technical Group, DEIS Programme Steering Group and DEIS Advisory Group

Rationale for DEIS Plus Scheme



Programme for Government 2025:

‘Establish a new DEIS Plus Scheme to support schools with the highest level of educational disadvantage to improve educational outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy.’

Rationale:

HP Index 2022 Census shows while overall Ireland is more affluent widening deprivation gap:

In 2016, 576 (3%) small areas were classed as very or extremely disadvantaged, this now applies to 751 (4%) small areas (out of 18,919). Based on the Index findings, 195,734 people are living in very or extreme disadvantage compared to 143,506 people in 2016.

Deprivation is concentrated in Ireland



- Consultations with school communities in these areas reported acute poverty, hunger, substance abuse, domestic abuse, parent incarcerated, eviction, homelessness

In just a small fraction of schools, a large majority of marginalised pupils are enrolled:

- **11.5%** of primary schools serve **80% of Traveller pupils**
- **8.7%** of schools serve **80% of Roma pupils**
- **14.5%** of schools serve **80% of pupils in extreme deprivation** (HP score ≤ -20)

Data: Rationale and identification

DEIS Plus Design Advisory Group: Defining needs



home-support lateness pathways
tired abuse stress hunger
suicide gangs jail housing lost-potential
addiction carer early-school poor-literacy disability time
speech-issues costs support sexual-abuse
parental intergenerational poverty
absenteeism crime poor-numeracy
violence leaving access trauma
no-sleep behaviour anxiety ambition
unemployment drugs fear



Name: Clara
Age: 5
School: UB1 Primary, Tallaght

Teacher Quote:
“Children come to school with the baggage of what has happened at home, unable to process it. It may take the whole day to deal with that, no learning is done, and then the child goes home again.”

The Early Learner, Left Behind

Clara's Story:

- Clara comes from a low-income family that have experienced recurring unemployment and health issues.
- This cycle of disadvantage has affected her family's educational and economic opportunities.
- She started school at 4, was not fully toilet trained and still continues to develop her speech.
- She struggles with her schoolwork and is often late.
- She is often frustrated and embarrassed and doesn't want to go to school, but she doesn't want to be at home either.
- Clara finds it hard to sit down during class, she is often tired or hungry.
- There are 17 other pupils in Clara's class with similar needs.



Name: Tommy
Age: 14
School: Post-Primary Limerick City

Teacher Quote:
“We want all the kids in the school to have ambitions but when poverty and trauma is all you know, today is such a struggle that the future becomes a luxury.”

The Silent Striver

Tommy's Story:

- His family faces financial struggles, his father works multiple jobs to make ends meet and his mother is currently incarcerated.
- Tommy feels pressure to support and care for his family, which can affect his focus and motivation in school. He has been approached by local gangs to work for them, his brother has gotten involved.
- He is an average student who has the potential to excel but due to his circumstances he often feels disengaged from school and faces issues with attendance.
- He experiences anxiety and stress about his situation, this is leading to withdrawal from friends. He cannot see how his life could be different.

‘wide variety.....large volume.....compounded’

Priority groups under the DEIS Plus scheme



- Children and young people experiencing intergenerational disadvantage
- Children and young people experiencing homelessness
- Children and young people residing in IPAS accommodation
- Traveller and Roma children and young people

Analysis is ongoing to ensure it is as accurate as possible with the data available at this time.



Defining the parameters for DEIS Plus



- DEIS Technical Group – Statistics Section, Social Inclusion and Special Education Section, ERC, IGEES, ERC, Pobal
- Focus on schools with very highest concentrations of educational disadvantage
- HP deprivation index small area data and POD/PPOD
- Other data considered but needs to be consistent, objective and usable
- Validate output with Central Statistics Office



Monitoring and Evaluation

OECD: Need better measurement and monitoring



- Implement more comprehensive data integration and analysis in education policy making
- Promote research, including methods such as regression discontinuity design & synthetic cohort matching, that could provide more information on the causal effects of the DEIS programme
- Strengthen the use of data at the school level

Purpose



Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to understand the effectiveness and impact of particular policy interventions deployed under the DEIS Programme:

- Need a coherent structure for describing, monitoring and evaluating inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, including up to date demographic and socio-economic contextual data
- More timely information on whether or not the targets set out in the DEIS Plan have been achieved
- To provide evidence that Departmental and other national policies are embedded, implemented and used to inform actions and strategies implemented in DEIS schools (for example, Looking at Our School, Wellbeing Policy Framework, Digital Learning Framework, Literacy & Numeracy Strategy, National Access Plan)
- To capture inputs and activities from stakeholders including principals, teachers, parents and students, Tusla, and Department funded support services

Mapping of Existing DE Data



- Range of data at system level –
 - How and where data are held
 - What data is gathered, from whom
 - Whether shareable/usable in current format
 - Potential for further use
 - Potential for further development

Assessment of Data Outside DE



- What evidence available from international data sources like PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS
- National longitudinal datasets – Growing Up in Ireland; Children’s School Lives; Review of Junior Cycle
- National surveys – like Survey of students in Voluntary Secondary Schools

International Practice



- **Case studies:**
 - Targeted programmes to support schools
 - Practices in monitoring disadvantage
 - Indicators
 - Measuring policy impact
 - Data sources

Assessment of Data at School Level



- How are schools collecting data?
- Are there models of good practice?
- How might the lessons be incorporated?
- How might this inform M&E work?
- How might it inform school level data collection?

Development of Indicators



- Baseline indicators: student, school/community, system levels, measuring disadvantage and impact of policies
- Include data held by the Department such as Primary online database; Post-Primary online data base; Tusla Education Support Service – Attendance data, progression data,
- Indicators that can be developed, based on new initiatives being introduced (quantitative and qualitative)
- Stakeholder engagement/views
- Indicator Reference Sheets for complex indicators
 - Defining, measurement
 - Ensuring consistency in collection and reporting of data

M&E Document



- Key baselines, measures, variables
- Regular measurement against these baselines
- Evolving needs over time
- Key principles underpinning
- Key activities

Programme Logic Model



- A logic model including:
 - Inputs, activities
 - Outcomes, outputs
 - Indicators
 - Frequency of collection
 - Means of verification/data sources
 - Risks/assumptions to achieve the above objectives and goals

M&E Framework



- Draft framework
- M&E Committee Review
- ESRI Internal and External Peer Review
- Publication of DEY/ESRI Report
- Dissemination – June 2026
- Use



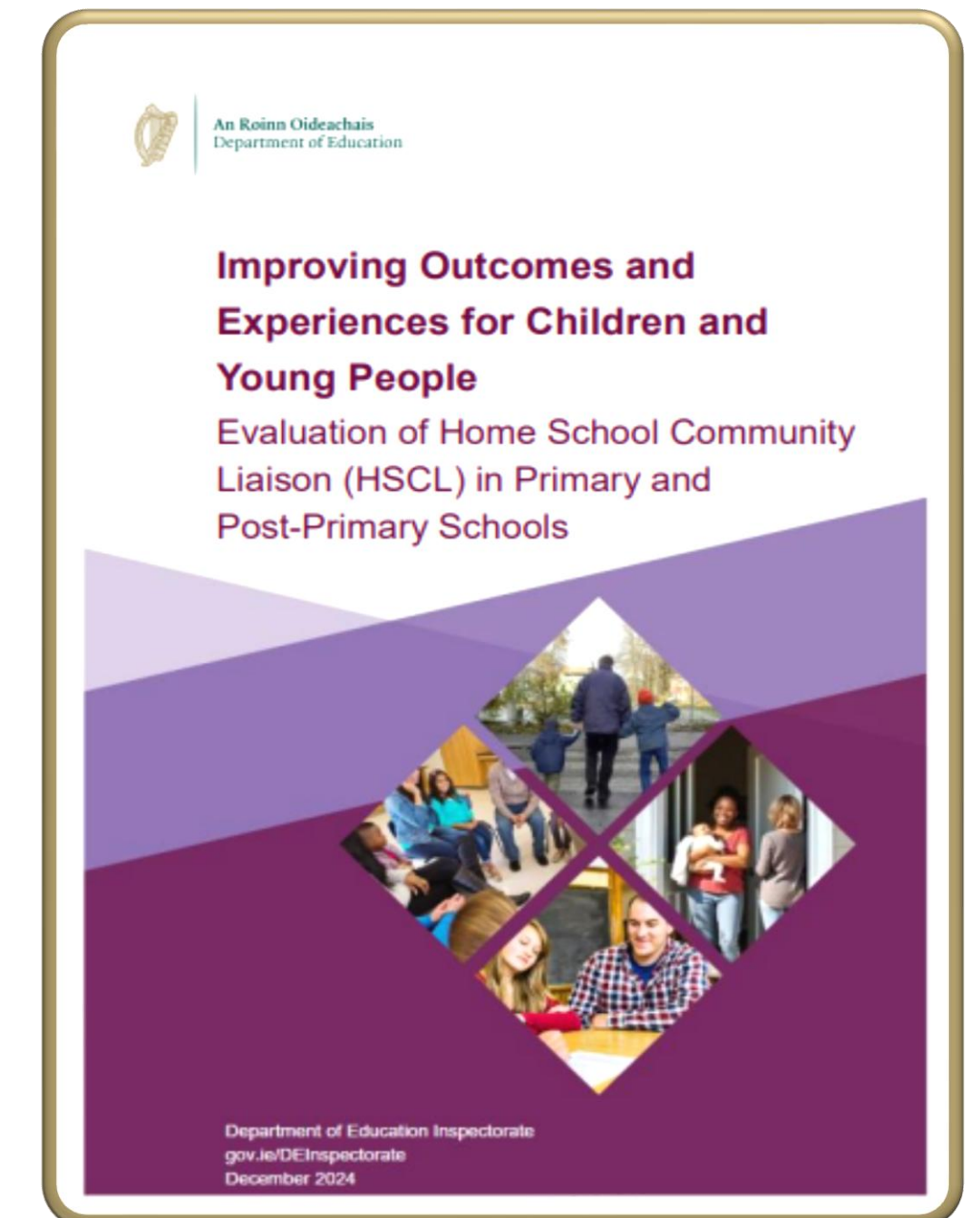
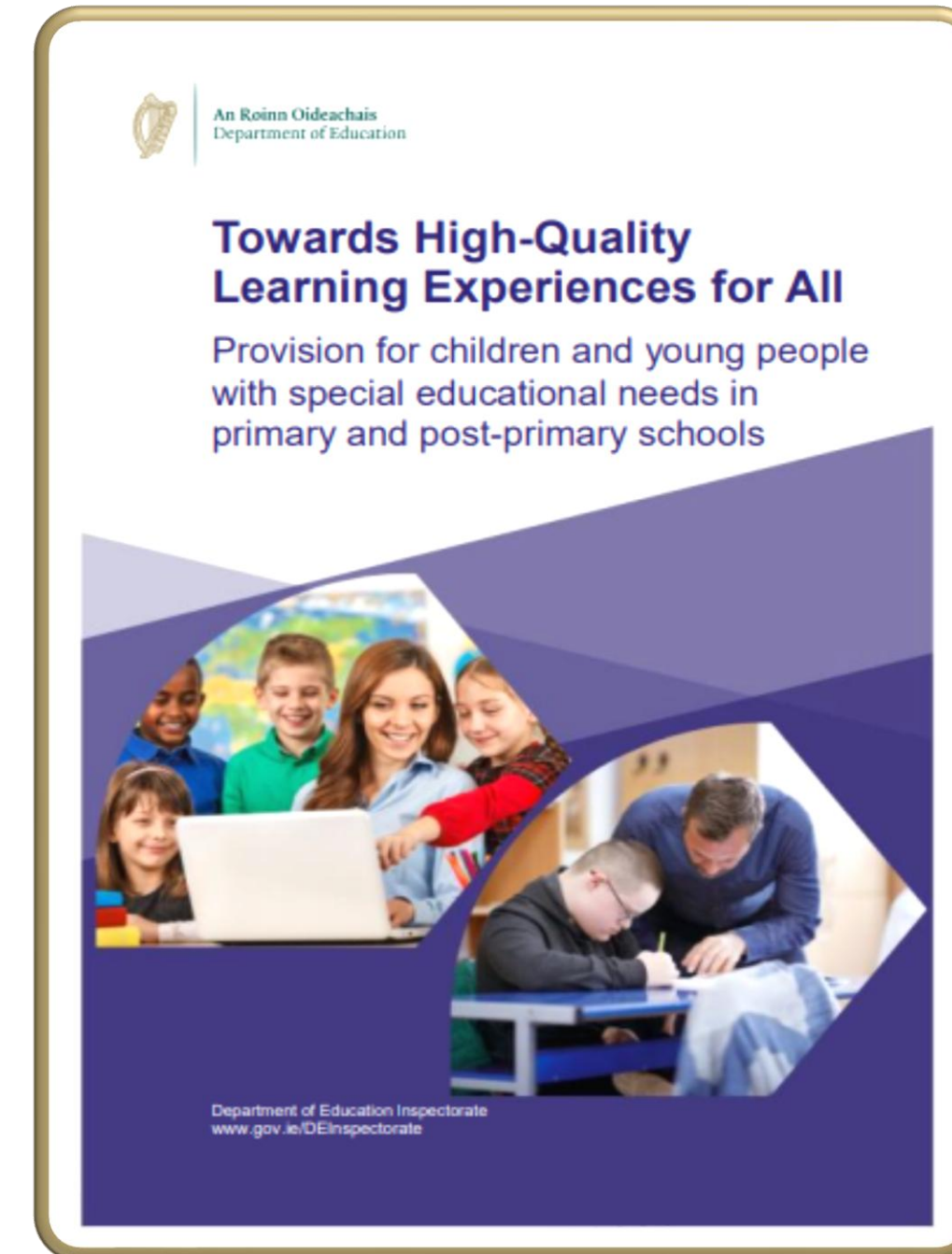
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Evaluation of learning and planning for improvement: Schools in the DEIS programme

Inspectorate
October 2025

Context: Developing inspection approaches

- ✓ Composite inspection reports on aspects of provision in schools highlight **strengths** and **areas for development**
- ✓ The **process** highlighted advantages to thematic-based inspections **for schools** and **for the system**



OECD 2024 Review of resourcing to address educational disadvantage

‘some schools face challenges in... the use and analysis of data and the monitoring and evaluation of the targets set.’

Highlighted

- ✓ Real need to support **planning for improvement**
- ✓ The need to **complement self-evaluation processes**



The key principles of the approach



Focus

The quality of learning

- ✓ Does the school implement effective teaching strategies to ensure that pupils/students attain good quality outcomes?
- ✓ Do the experiences of children and young people support their engagement, progression and success in learning?

Planning for improvement

- ✓ A focus of specific aspects of provision
- ✓ Selected in consultation with the school



A focus on learning

The DEIS programme is designed to improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people:

- ✓ Sense of belonging in their learning environments – they are seen, heard and known
- ✓ Learning interests, strengths and challenges are identified
- ✓ Responsive, tailored teaching and learning
- ✓ Challenge and success in learning activities
- ✓ Effective assessment and monitoring.



Emerging findings

Insight into excellent practice in one post-primary school

- ✓ A clear vision of high-quality teaching and learning
- ✓ Highly effective whole-school teaching, learning and wellbeing strategies
- ✓ Tailored teaching approaches and learning activities
- ✓ A professional learning culture
- ✓ Sharing of teaching and learning strategies among teachers.

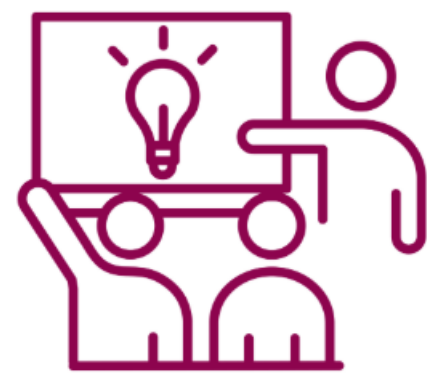


Emerging findings: Strengths



Enjoyment of learning

Positive and welcoming learning environments



Responsive teaching and learning

Challenging learning activities and applying learning



Promoting agency of children and young people

Teaching and learning based on strengths, interests and needs of children and young people



Emerging findings: Areas for development



Consistency in teaching

Opportunities for active learning



Inclusive teaching approaches

Provision of feedback to children



Use of evidence to monitor and review progress



A focus on planning for improvement

- ✓ Evidence gathered from a range of sources
 - ❑ *Hard and soft information*
- ✓ Analysis of data to identify trends and patterns
 - ❑ *What is working well and where improvements are required*
- ✓ Clear actions for improvement
 - ❑ *Universal and targeted actions*
 - ❑ *Implemented consistently by all*
- ✓ Monitor and review
 - ❑ *How do we know it is working?*



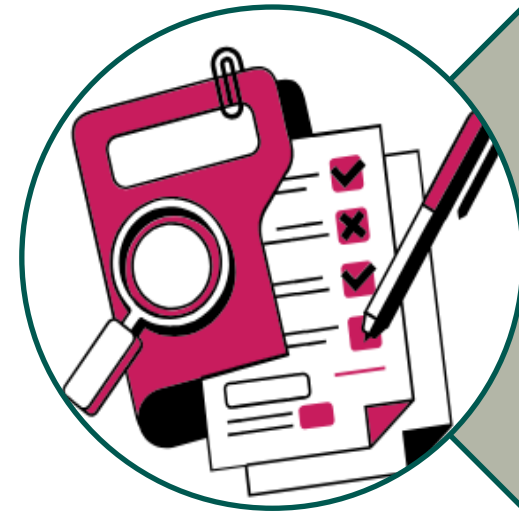
Emerging findings

Insight into excellent practice in one post-primary school

- ✓ A clear vision for improvement across the DEIS themes
- ✓ Use of 'hard' and 'soft' data
- ✓ Teachers knew the young people and their interests and needs extremely well
- ✓ Teachers implemented the agreed whole-school approaches very consistently and in a pre-emptive and timely manner
- ✓ A culture of responsiveness to young people
- ✓ Young people noted that when teachers raised issues with them, they did it in a 'very helpful manner'.



Emerging findings: Strengths



Evidence-based
planning and
monitoring of targets



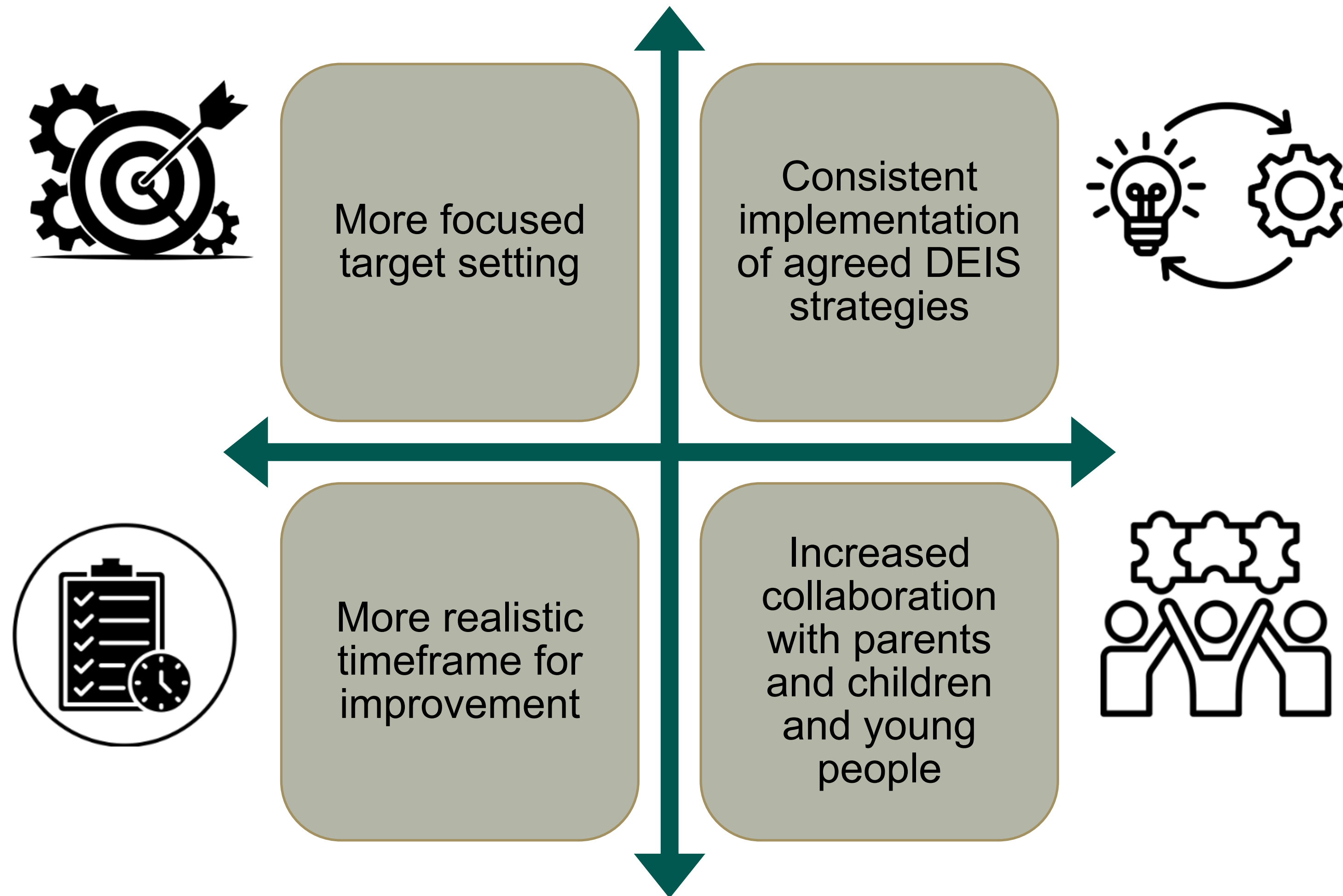
Whole-school
collaboration



Effective home-school
communication



Emerging findings: Areas for development



A focus on evidence of improvement

Evidence template sent to school in advance of the evaluation



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Department of Education and Youth

Evaluation of learning and planning for improvement – DEIS

Request for evidence

Theme: Attendance

This form is designed to inform discussion between the inspector and members of the school's leadership team. It is designed to record evidence that the school has about the success of actions taken to improve attendance in the school. The evidence can include, for example:

- figures relating to overall school attendance / absenteeism¹
- data relating to one targeted action implemented to improve the attendance of a prioritised group of pupils/students
- data relating to one universal/school-wide action implemented to improve the attendance of all pupils/students
- views on school attendance, from engagements with pupils/students, their parents and their teachers, such as
 - feedback from focus group meetings
 - information from surveys of pupils'/students' attitudes to attendance
- information on pupils/students learning experiences in the school
- outcomes from case studies

If the school has this evidence, or other similar evidence in any other format, these formats can be used at the meeting between the inspector and the school's leadership team.

¹ Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) defines absenteeism in schools:

- chronic absenteeism as being absent 10% or more of the time (both explained and unexplained) in the year to date
- problematic absenteeism as being absent between 5% and 10% of the time.

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i. Overall attendance in the school:

How many pupils/students are there in the school? _____

How many pupils/students in the school are prioritised for attendance actions? _____

If possible, provide attendance figures using the following table where the % attendance is considered for all pupils/students and for some/those prioritised for attendance actions.

	Universal	Targeted
Group	All pupils/students in the school	Some/those pupils/students prioritised for attendance action(s)
% overall attendance for the school year to date		
% attendance for the current month (or the last 4 weeks)		
% attendance for the previous month (or the previous 4-week period)		
% overall attendance for the previous school year		

ii. Targeted attendance action(s):

Has the school implemented targeted action(s) for prioritised students/pupils to improve their attendance? Yes / No _____

If yes, please select one targeted action and provide the information below. The data will support discussion during the attendance meeting where the chosen action will be explored as an example of the school's improvement planning process.

What group was prioritised for this action? _____

(Such as those with emerging/significant school attendance problems, those prioritised for attendance actions, certain cohorts, certain year/class groups, etc)

Name the action implemented: _____

If a target was set for this action, please describe the target: _____

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Please provide a breakdown of the attendance for the pupils/students prioritised for this action during the term/period prior to the start of the action.

% Attendance prior to action	10% or less	11-40%	41-70%	71-90%	91-100%
The number of prioritised pupils/students in the attendance band					

Is the action ongoing (including ongoing with elements of review) or is it concluded at the time of the inspection? _____

Please provide a breakdown of the attendance for the pupils/students prioritised for this action during the last month (or the last 4 weeks) in the table below:

% Attendance during the last month (or last 4 weeks)	10% or less	11-40%	41-70%	71-90%	91-100%
The number of prioritised pupils/students in the attendance band					

iii. Universal attendance action:

Has the school engaged in universal attendance action(s)/initiative(s), such as a whole-school attendance drive, to improve attendance for all pupils/students in the school during the last year? Yes / No _____

If yes, please select one universal action that was implemented in your school and provide the information below. The evidence provided will support discussions on the action planning for improvement process during the meeting with an attendance focus.

Name the action implemented: _____

If a target was set for this action, please describe the target: _____

Please provide a breakdown of the attendance for all pupils/students for the term/period prior to the start of the attendance action in the table below:

% Attendance prior to action	Less than 10%	10-39%	40-69%	70-89%	90-100%
The number of pupils/students in the attendance band					

The numbers here should add up to the total number of pupils/students in the school

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Rationale

- Gather evidence that a universal and a targeted action has led to improvements
- Support discussion with the leadership team and teachers
- Promote reflection by schools on the impact of improvement actions



Universal and targeted actions

Universal actions

These are actions that a school implements to support improvement for all children and young people in a particular area of improvement focus

Examples:

- Implementing small-group instruction with levelled readers to improve the average school reading standard score
- Introducing “Fun Fridays” to improve overall attendance rates on that day

Targeted actions

These are actions that a school implements to support improvement for a prioritised group of children and young people in a particular area

Examples:

- Using an evidence-based reading improvement programme for a cohort of children or young people with literacy needs
- Introducing short courses based on caring for animals or equine classes for a cohort of children or young people with chronic attendance issues

Both universal and targeted actions are important



Features

Two aspects
of provision

Learning
experiences
and
outcomes

Professional
dialogue
Focus
groups
children and
young
people and
parents

Five-day
notification

Three and a
half days in-
school
One
inspector

Brief
published
report
Regularly
published
composite
report of
evaluations



Ceisteanna agus plé



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