

# 3

## SECOND LEVEL



Girls from Christ King Secondary School Cork, performing excerpts from 'Bewitched' at the Gala Dinner of the National Association of Principals & Deputy Principals (NAPD) in Galway on 19 October 2018.

**PUBLISHED BY**  
Phyllis Mitchell  
EDUCATION MATTERS

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
Brian Mooney

ISBN: 978-0-9956987-2-7

**SPONSORED BY**  
Dublin City University - Irish Research Council  
National University of Ireland - Trinity College Dublin  
Maynooth University - University College Dublin - NUI Galway  
University of Limerick - QQI - SOLAS

Copy-edited by Stan Carey  
[www.stancarey.com](http://www.stancarey.com)

Designed by Artvaark Design  
[www.artvaark-design.ie](http://www.artvaark-design.ie)

Printed in Ireland by  
Walsh Colour Print  
Castleisland, Co. Kerry

The views expressed in this Yearbook are many, varied and sometimes contradictory. They are exclusively the views of our highly valued writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editor or of Education Matters.





This Second Level Chapter is part of  
Ireland's Yearbook of Education 2018 2019

# SECOND LEVEL CONTENTS

## SECOND-LEVEL REVIEW 2018

7

Clive Byrne

*In his review of 2018, Clive Byrne moves swiftly and succinctly through a broad spectrum of issues including initiative overload, professional development models, middle management, mentoring, coaching, new postgraduate diploma in school leadership, parents' aspirations for their children, and more...*



## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

13

John Curtis

*A paradigm shift is taking place in how we understand leadership in our schools. Circular Letter 0003/2018 presents new possibilities to schools in equipping a generation of school leaders for the challenges they face.*



## FLOURISHING LEADER - FLOURISHING SCHOOL

Linking the principal's potential to that of their school

17

Dr Michael Redmond

*The lives of school principals are profoundly enmeshed with those of their schools, and either one's flourishing is intrinsic to the other's. This article addresses the notion that schools have a personality of their own and explores what voluntary secondary principals say are the key aspects of their inner selves that directly affect their school's potential.*



## SCHOOL PLACEMENT

A new era for partnership?

22

Tomás Ó Ruairc

*This article looks at school placement in the context of the changes in Initial Teacher Education over the past six years. How far have school-HEI partnerships come? How could they be further supported? And what can we all do to enhance the experience for student teachers?*



## **JUNIOR CYCLE REFORM**

Five years in, where are we now?

26

Dr Pádraig Kirk

*This article provides an overview of progress in implementing junior cycle reform in schools. It highlights the many changes and innovations we can expect to see and describes how schools, school leaders, and teachers are being supported in the current reform.*



## **SENIOR CYCLE REFORM**

Barry Slattery, John Hammond

32

*Many developments at senior cycle have taken place in recent times, including new subjects, new grading system, syllabus revision, LCA, LCVP, and Transition Year. So it's a good time to review the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges of the new programmes and the senior cycle as a whole.*



## **TRANSITION YEAR - PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE**

Learning for the future

36

Dr Gerry Jeffers

*What insights for policy and practice can be gleaned from the Transition Year journey from a quirky, marginal anomaly thought up by a strong-willed Minister for Education to an embedded feature in over 90% of second-level schools?*



## **THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES STRATEGY**

Learning a foreign language has never been more important

43

Breda Naughton

*In this article, Breda Naughton addresses the place of foreign languages in primary, post-primary, further, and higher education. She summarises the context in which the Foreign Languages Strategy was developed, outlines existing provision, and highlights recent actions that have resulted from the Strategy.*



## VIRTUAL DESKTOP INFRASTRUCTURE

A virtual world where the benefits are real

48

Trevor Collins

*Assistant Principal Trevor Collins focuses on the use of Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) in schools. He describes one school's journey in changing from the traditional ICT model to cloud-based VDI. He discusses, also, an action-based pilot programme going on in the local area.*



## THE STORY OF AUNUA ACADEMY

How an Irish non-profit for mental health was born

59

Karina Murray, Philip Smith

*School days and childhood can be severely challenging, and things don't always get easier as one grows older. Irish non-profit Aunua Academy aims to provide free resources on mental health that can inform and support children, young people, and adults throughout the world. This is its story.*



## ACHIEVEMENT IN THE JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

Trends over time in DEIS and non-DEIS schools

62

Dr Susan Weir, Dr Lauren Kavanagh

*The achievement gap between students from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more affluent counterparts is well documented in Ireland and elsewhere. This paper uses Junior Cert exam results to examine trends in achievement in DEIS and non-DEIS schools over a 15-year period and concludes that the achievement gap has narrowed since the introduction of DEIS.*





**Clive Byrne,**  
Director, National  
Association of  
Principals and Deputy  
Principals (NAPD)

## SECOND-LEVEL REVIEW 2018

Initiative overload was a key phrase heard frequently in the second-level sector over the year. The Action Plan for Education to make Ireland's education system the best in Europe brought urgency to each initiative. Timelines and deadlines following close on their heels certainly raised the hackles and blood pressure of many school leaders. Each action in the plan is good and beneficial, but following so quickly one on top of the other made colleagues wonder what needed to be dropped in order to embrace the latest circular and when might the necessary resources flow to enable school leaders to keep up.

### PAY DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN TEACHERS

The pay differential between teachers still rankles, and it is increasingly difficult to hear that the €200 million it would cost to restore pay parity cannot be found, when all the economic signs point to an economy that is healthy and robust. The recent budget strategy towards restoration is welcome, but for many it isn't enough. The rate for the job should be similar even allowing for the 26-point salary scale, which limits the possibility of recognising and rewarding exceptional effort by teaching colleagues. Teachers are contributing to the rising economy, and this needs to be recognised by prioritising the financial needs of younger teachers in a meaningful way. The bulge in second level won't be really felt until 2025, but education must be seen as an investment in our future and not solely as a cost in the present.

### INCREASED INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

This year, as the public purse was loosened, we saw increased investment in education, with 1,600 additional teachers and 3,000 special needs assistants appointed to cope with the additional pupil numbers in the system. For every €5 spent by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), 20 per cent or €1 is spent on Special Educational Needs. The management bodies and school leader associations are being briefed by the Inspectorate on new models of inspection coming into force in 2019, to ensure that the investment in resources to promote inclusion as part of SEN is being used as effectively as possible.

### TEACHER SHORTAGE

Despite the additional staff appointed, many schools reopened this year without a full complement of teachers. Shortages this year included modern foreign languages, Irish, Maths, and the Science, Technology and Engineering subjects. Anecdotally, a Home Economics teacher is one of the most difficult to employ this year as a result of many graduates abandoning teaching and taking better-paid permanent positions in the food science sector.

## QUESTION MARK OVER ATTRACTIVENESS OF TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

The attractiveness of the teaching profession is now being questioned. Lower salaries, fewer permanent positions, and the lure of the Middle East and other countries where Irish teaching graduates seem to be more appreciated are listed as factors contributing to the shortage of teachers. Continuous professional development and in-service needed as a result of reforms to the junior cycle have made the situation worse. Hundreds of teachers at a time are called out of school for training by the Junior Cycle for Teachers team, but there are no substitute teachers available to cover classes, and this can lead to disruption in schools.

## CLUSTER MODELS OR BAKER DAYS?

It's an unintended consequence of curriculum reform, and will probably get worse before it gets better as we look to make the senior cycle more suitable for the needs of a significant cohort of students not suited to the type of academic curriculum on offer in the current Leaving Certificate. The recent introduction of Politics and Society, Computer Studies, and Physical Education for the exam is the start of a programme geared to meeting the needs of students, where the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is revising outdated syllabi, many of which haven't changed in almost forty years. The revision of subjects will benefit our students but will also require professional development programmes for the teachers, which will make the lack of available substitutes more obvious. Cluster models may be the way to go, but it would be great to have Baker Days as they have in England, during which all in-service and training could take place at the same time.

A policy decision was taken in the Department that school leadership needed to be supported.

## POLICY DECISION TO SUPPORT SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

A policy decision was taken in the Department that to cope with the range of initiatives being implemented, school leadership needed to be supported. After many years of lobbying, the decision to appoint 200 additional deputy principals and to partially restore a number of assistant principal posts at levels 1 and 2 will greatly benefit schools and should, in time, benefit the system as a whole. Seniority was the major criterion in the past, but following discussions between the Department, the teacher unions, and the management bodies, suitability to carry out the role is much more to the fore. The clarity in the circulars establishing the new positions is welcome, but school leaders find the appointment process difficult, with disappointment among unsuccessful applicants and an increase of tension and fractiousness among staffs. Hopefully this will soon dissipate.

## MENTORING PROGRAMME EXPANDED

The Centre for School Leadership (CSL), a collaboration between the DES, the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN), and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) to support leadership, continued to make great strides. The mentoring programme for newly appointed principals was expanded this year, and the positive feedback from mentors and mentees is a great reflection on the professionalism of all involved. The decision to expand the programme to accommodate clustered mentoring



for second-year principals is progressive, and the involvement of the expertise of the two professional associations in this aspect of mentoring provides further CPD opportunities for those participating.

### **COACHING SERVICE ESTABLISHED**

The outstanding success of the CSL this year was the establishment of a coaching service to cater for up to 400 school leaders from primary and post-primary sectors. The professional coaches involved are not educationalists, but the feedback from the coaching partnerships is phenomenal. There was a worry at the start that coaching would be seen as a deficit model. This hasn't happened – coaching is for excellence, and the benefits in participant schools will be noteworthy. Hundreds more leaders will benefit from the extension of the coaching supports into the current school year.

### **POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

Having implemented the coaching and mentoring strategies, the last leg of the stool for the CSL was the development of an eighteen-month Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL): a key milestone. The involvement of universities in Limerick, Galway, and Dublin, with additional support from Cork and Waterford Institutes of Technology, ensured that the CSL has created an opportunity for 240 aspiring school leaders to upskill and be accredited as the system seeks to create a pipeline of applicants for school leadership positions into the future. Cohort two is beginning this September as the first cohort completes the programme this term and will graduate in 2019. The CSL was established as a three-year pilot project, but having been subject to a review has been extended for a further two years.

**Cohort two [of the Diploma in School Leadership] is beginning in September 2018.**

### **NAPD SYMPOSIUM**

What should a well-educated eighteen-year-old look like was a question posed at a recent NAPD symposium as we continue a national debate about how well our education system caters for our students. According to the most recent census, 12% of our population come from a non-Irish background. Ireland educates pupils from 200 countries with multiple languages; 13% of pupils have a disability, and 20% experience deprivation. Our education system should provide happy, fulfilled, and challenged students who can think for themselves. There must be equality of opportunity and also equity in the system, and as educators we must develop students with a lifelong love of learning. As a society we need to recognise the harsh realities our young people will face when they leave school.

### **PARENTS' ASPIRATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN**

As part of the symposium, the National Parents' Council (Primary) undertook a questionnaire which was completed by over 3,000 parents. It addressed parents' aspirations for their children. Over 66% said they would like to see changes to the type of senior cycle on offer in our Irish schools. They wanted their children to get good results, but most of all they wanted their children to be happy, to develop good social skills, and to know about the world they live in. When asked what they believed were the qualities needed to be a well-educated eighteen-year-old, parents included independence,

confidence, creativity, ambition, leadership, curiosity, and courage. It was reassuring to note that parents believed their children should be imbued with values of compassion, honesty, justice, empathy, tolerance, and respect for themselves and others. The survey highlighted the skills needed to succeed in the modern world. Among them were strong computer and digital skills, a high level of literacy and numeracy, critical and creative thinking, practical skills, good knowledge about their personal well-being, and good social skills.

### **CHANGE NEEDED IN THE CLASSROOM**

Based on responses by our primary parents, it seems clear that change is needed to what goes on in the classroom. Are we in favour of a broad liberal education model as opposed to a vocational and training approach? For educational leaders, the challenge is to lead strategically, to lead the teaching and learning that transacts in schools, to lead the people in school, and to perform an important leadership role in the wider community. Building a positive school community is at the heart of what the goal should be in promoting a culture of lifelong learning in schools for both teachers and students.

### **HPV VACCINES**

Few were unmoved by the recent revelations in the media concerning the cervical check scandal. Reports from the High Court detailing the personal stories of women affected resonated with the public. These high-profile cases and the tragic outcomes reported went a long way to raising awareness of the need to deliver the HPV vaccine to girls in first year in school. Last year and earlier this year a campaign highlighting potential side effects of the vaccine resulted in a dramatic decline in the numbers inoculated. The HSE launched a national campaign emphasising that there was no evidence that any side effects reported could be linked to the HPV vaccine. They detailed the risks and consequences to girls of contracting cervical cancer if the percentage taking the vaccine in schools was not increased.

Many schools have had to rewrite their data-protection policies.

As a result of the campaign, it seems this is happening, and now there is talk of administering the vaccine to boys as happens in other jurisdictions. The HSE is clear that the most effective way to administer national vaccine campaigns is through the school system. Schools cooperate on the basis that such programmes are for the common good, even though administering the vaccines can be disruptive.

### **DATA PROTECTION POLICIES**

Schools hold a lot of sensitive information, so when news of the GDPR emerged in May it was a slow burner at first. As the date of implementation neared, the GDPR seemed to take on a profile similar to the millennium bug almost two decades ago, when there was a worry that systems would crash as the clocks struck midnight. As we know, they didn't crash, and the world didn't end, and so it is with the GDPR a few months down the line.

Management bodies and law firms held briefings and information sessions. A lot of potential risks were highlighted and Armageddon threatened, but thankfully, where schools have made honest attempts to comply with the regulations, things seem to be working out. What to file, how long to keep

records, issues to do with Section 29 appeals (whether on refusal to enrol or disciplinary matters), access to video recordings, and the need to pixelate faces are coming to the fore as implementation of the regulations beds down. Schools can get good information on the website [dataprotectionschools.ie](http://dataprotectionschools.ie), but many schools have had to rewrite their data-protection policies.

### DIGITAL STRATEGY

Schools received additional grant aid as part of the government's Digital Strategy, which was welcome. Funds are made available, but the hoped-for front-loading of resources has not materialised. The use of technology in our schools, whether as part of management information systems or for teaching and learning, must have adequate broadband and technical backup to help schools cope, and this often isn't the case. The strategy has GDPR implications, which may be a chore, but on the other hand the use of ICT to upload Classroom-Based Assessments as part of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement will be very welcome in recognising areas of learning and other areas of student interest that are proving difficult to record administratively. There is disagreement over who should be responsible for inputting what could be a significant amount of data. Schools await developments.

### ISSUES RESULTING FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

One area of significant concern is schools' ability to cope with issues resulting from social media. Bullying, racism, sexting, and videos undermining teachers and students that are posted outside school hours result in schools trying to cope with the consequences on a daily basis. Parents' expectations of what actions are possible for a school are often unrealistic. Schools find it frustrating when parents maintain that their child couldn't possibly be involved in such situations.

Resources on [webwise.ie](http://webwise.ie) are very useful but underused by parents and students.

Parents are often very conscious of their rights but not so conscious of responsibilities when issues that should be sorted out at home are brought into school. Inevitably, the school can't win. This is a worry, but what is more of a worry is pupil self-esteem, well-being, and resilience, which can be compromised by the abuse of social media. Resources on [webwise.ie](http://webwise.ie) are very useful but underused by parents and students. This has led to an increase in student self-harm and even more serious consequences.

What areas to cover in a review is a daunting task. Other issues prominent during the year but in no particular order involved:

State exams – how the system will cope in the light of the recent High Court ruling;

Possible revisions to the Leaving Cert;

The potential for conflict as a result of the Admissions bill in reducing the places available for children of past pupils;

The abolition of the Baptism barrier in one sector, but with other schools able to select on denominational grounds;

The moratorium on the appointment of ancillary staff, particularly in the ETB and Community and Comprehensive sector when people retire, which is causing severe disruption in affected schools;

Risk-assessment profiles in the new Child Protection Guidelines;

Expanding the range of subjects in the senior cycle as we seek to embed junior cycle reform;

The high trust model governing the use of professional time granted to teachers, and potential areas of conflict as schools implement CBAs and SLAR meetings;

The annoyance caused by the circular on school uniforms, when schools had so recently undertaken a review;

### ALL IN GOOD TIME...

The lack of clarity in the first circular on students who wish to opt out of Religion, and the ability of schools to offer alternative provision. Schools are dynamic institutions. The Action Plan for Education followed by Minister Bruton is being implemented to good effect, with improvements being registered across the board. Recent international studies bear witness to this. When Minister Bruton moved to his new portfolio in October, it is worth noting that his successor, Minister Joe McHugh, in his early pronouncements recognised the fast pace of reform and assured his audience that he was listening and would do his best to ensure that time to embed new initiatives would be provided, as well as the resources necessary to implement them. And so say all of us!

\*\*\*



Outgoing NAPD President, **Mary Keane**, passes the chain of office to **Kieran Golden** of Mayfield Community School, Cork, at the end of the annual conference in October 2018.



### **John Curtis**

General Secretary,  
Joint Managerial  
Body/Association  
of Management of  
Catholic Secondary  
Schools

# **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

## **A new paradigm**

In 2014 the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) and the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS) presented a document to the Department of Education and Skills (DES) entitled 'A Proposal for Management Structures for Post-Primary Schools'. It marked the culmination of a period of consultation and research by the two second-level school management bodies on how a recalibrated and enhanced model of middle management might be introduced in our schools.

The document's genesis was partly the moratorium on filling vacant middle-management posts that resulted from the economic downturn and obviously had an adverse impact in our schools. But it also reflected the realisation that a new model was needed for how middle management might be constructed and would evolve. It is interesting to look at the main principles of its proposals for new management structures:

- Allow for local-level decision-making on the recruitment and structure of middle-management roles
- Allow for local flexibility in managing the middle-management system
- Enable career development through the use of middle-management structures
- Ensure accountability of middle-management roles through better procedures for reporting, monitoring, and sanction
- Promote mobility in the middle-management structures as a preparation for advancement to senior management roles
- Create opportunities for senior management to prioritise teaching and learning in schools.

The proposals resonated with a realisation at DES level that reform in this area was warranted. In an address towards the end of 2015 to the Annual Conference of European Network for Improving Research and Development in Education Leadership and Management, Chief Inspector Dr Harold Hislop acknowledged: 'We have to face up to the need to create greater and more flexible middle-management capacity in Irish schools, and management bodies have been pressing this case with Department officials and ministers.' At that time, the chill winds of financial rectitude still blew, but dialogue began to occur, various suggestions and embryonic models were floated, and a sense emerged that as funding became available this was an area that could be addressed.

It was a time, too, when there was a thrust towards the curricular reform that culminated in the new junior cycle and, industrial issues

aside, prompted us towards a renewed focus on the teaching and learning and management dynamic in our schools. The work of the Inspectorate was coalescing towards the 'Looking at Our School' document. Published in 2016, it advocated a vision of engagement and management at school level predicated on concepts of fluid and distributed leadership, which focused primarily on optimising teaching and learning processes in the school.

That extra deputy principals were assigned to many schools in 2016/17 copper-fastened the sense that a new way of looking at collaborative leadership in schools had to evolve, and engaged us all in further reflection on what possibilities might emerge in the long-promised restoration of middle-management posts in our schools.

The nature of a collaboration that involves the Department, management bodies, and teacher unions towards producing any circular will inevitably present challenges for all involved. But it was apparent from early on that the final product had the potential to be forward-looking and transformative, and there was significant investment in time and energy from everyone involved.

The cooperation evident among the management bodies in producing the 2014 document was again manifest in discussion with Department officials as precepts took shape and officials crafted a document that would reflect the principles enunciated in 'Looking at Our School'. And so, after due consultation, Circular Letter 0003/2018 on Leadership and Management in Post-Primary Schools emerged.

There was of course frustration in many quarters that a circular due at the start of the 2017/18 academic year did not appear until January for schools in the post-primary sector. This put schools in an unenviable space, trying to concertina the process of reflection and engagement with all relevant school parties that the circular required, trying to make significant progress before the end of the academic year.

It stretched the school management bodies too, in trying to apprise their member schools of all that the circular entailed. In the case of the JMB, we reached approximately 600 people in information sessions scheduled throughout the country, and I would like to compliment my colleagues in the JMB who planned and delivered this training in such a short period of time. The other management bodies, too, engaged in similar preparatory work with their schools.

These frustrations were offset by the realisation that the circular did present new possibilities to schools. Whereas previous circulars in this area tended to use language that placed posts of responsibility solely in the management spectrum, this circular leads on the notion of Leadership and Management, and the change in focus appears in its opening line: 'High-quality leadership is crucial in establishing a shared purpose and vision for a school and to the achievement of high quality educational outcomes for students.'

**Circular 0003/2018  
on Leadership and  
Management in Post-  
Primary Schools  
presented new  
possibilities.**

The emphasis throughout is on leadership and empowering those taking on these middle leadership and management roles to engage in a coherent way in the running of our schools. The concept of distributed leadership and all this entails is referenced in the need for strategies in a school to evaluate need and direction, and in the key premise is that everything should funnel to improve the learning experience of the student in the school:

*Leadership in a school context creates a vision for development leading to improvements in outcomes for learners, and is based on shared values and robust evaluation of evidence of current practice and outcomes. In this way, leadership is distributed throughout the school as a key support for student learning.*

The circular also allows that in equipping a new generation of school leaders for the challenges they face in a complex and challenging school and social environment, there should be flexibility in assignment, the capacity to experience different perspectives of what leadership in a school can entail, and a review that can allow reflection and growth in the tenets of leadership.

'Looking at Our School' is the touchstone for a school reflecting on practice and establishing the needs and priorities that will allow it to construct a leadership and management frame to suit its specific needs. It identifies and explores four key leadership and management domains in a school, referenced in the circular, that should be comprehended in any leadership structure: *Leading teaching and learning*, *Managing the organisation*, *Leading school development*, and *Developing leadership capacity*. In determining what best fits the requirements of each school, cognisance can be taken of the school's characteristic spirit, its mission statement, and its particular aims and objectives.

**As the fundamental contact point with our pupils, teachers are unquestionably our key leaders.**

Any new circular and its implementation will have challenges, and it is unfortunate that in this instance it coincided with a tsunami of other curricular and legislative change that has stretched school leaders' capacity to cover all bases. Furthermore, the number of new posts allocated this year does not match the number lost in the last decade, and in an era of ever-increasing demands on schools this needs to be addressed.

Notwithstanding the challenges, school communities have embraced the opportunity and challenges that the circular entails, and its implications are seen as enhancing efficacy and student experience on the ground. Other challenges will emerge. Issues of distributed leadership and how it can be developed in this sphere perhaps still need exploration and more direction. Hopefully, what is opening up to us now are possibilities in this area and the beginning of a conversation that will improve mission, professionalism, efficacy, and outcome in each school.

Finally, if there is a paradigm shift taking place in how we understand leadership in our schools, the most important aspect is perhaps how we comprehend the role of teachers. As the fundamental contact point with our pupils, and in their engagement with the teaching and learning process, teachers are unquestionably our key leaders. Though its primary focus is

on the middle leadership and management structure, the circular notes: 'Every teacher has a leadership role within the school community and in relation to student learning', and it is important that this be given attention.

What occurs in the other spheres of leadership is to facilitate and augment the teacher's core function. Much of junior cycle reform is predicated on teachers becoming involved in more collaborative activities that should evolve from subject department engagement to such areas as modelling of best practice, team teaching, and peer evaluation, and this presents opportunities for leadership to be nurtured and encouraged. In the context of methodologies, teachers might be given opportunities to lead in illustration and exposition and to evaluate best practice in a manner commensurate with what 'Looking at Our School' promotes.

With further curricular reform envisaged, the concept of teachers as leaders and influencers in collaborative practice will become increasingly important. In his address in 2015, Dr Hislop said:

We must accept, as James Spillane puts it, that 'teaching is socially defined more as a complex social craft' as distinct from 'a well-defined, relatively invariable, technical endeavour'. This means that leadership in schools must support networks and collaboration in the school that promote professional control and collegiality among teachers.

In schools, we are all called to be leaders: perhaps with Circular Letter 0003/2018 it is a case now of progress made, but much more to do

\*\*\*



The **Irish Science Teachers' Association**, *Eol Oidí na hÉireann*, is the professional association for teachers of science in the Republic of Ireland. As such it is represented on the relevant subject development groups of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Since its foundation in 1961 it has been providing continuous professional development and support for its members at both national and branch levels.

The Association has close affiliations with the Association for Science Education in the UK and is a founding member of ICASE, the International Council of Associations for Science Education. It is also represented on SCIENTIX which promotes and supports a Europe-wide collaboration among STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) teachers, education researchers, policymakers and other STEM education professionals.

Members are also supported and informed of developments through the Association's website ([www.ista.ie](http://www.ista.ie)) and through its Journal, SCIENCE, which is posted to members three times per annum.

The major national ISTA events are the Senior Science Quiz - held during Science Week since 1990 and the Annual Conference which provides members with the opportunity to hear and meet national and international experts in areas relevant to science education. **The next conference will be held in St. Patrick's Campus, DCU, Institute of Education & All Hallows College on 12th - 14th April 2019 - Embracing the Elements of Change!**



For up-to-date information visit:

Website: [www.ista.ie](http://www.ista.ie)

Twitter: @IrishSciTeach

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/IrishScienceTeachersAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/IrishScienceTeachersAssociation)





**Dr Michael Redmond**

Director of Research & Development, JMB, and Vice Chairperson, NCCA

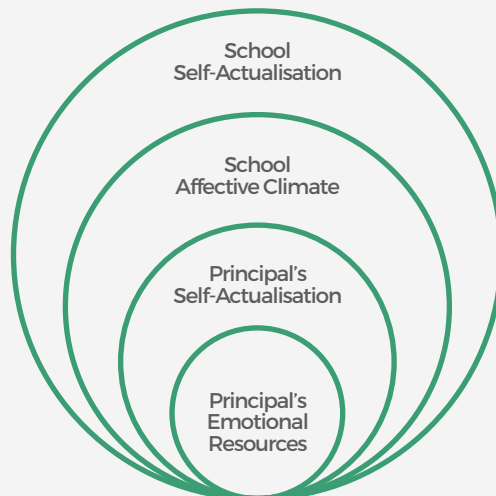
## **FLOURISHING LEADER – FLOURISHING SCHOOL**

### Linking the principal’s potential to that of their school

The 2018 national policy and framework for well-being in schools focuses, of course, on the flourishing of the individual, in particular that of the student and the teacher. The core premise is that ‘well-being is present when a person realises their potential’ (DES, 2018), which to me aligns with the concept of self-actualisation. But if an individual can self-actualise, might not a school be able to do this too – and how might this relate to the flourishing of the principal?

Though not well developed in the literature, the notion that ‘all schools develop a unique personality that is built up as people solve problems, cope with tragedies and celebrate successes’ (Schein, 1985) has potential to support a concept based on the idea of self-actualisation. If personal self-actualisation can be defined as ‘man’s tendency to actualise himself, to become his potentialities ... to express and activate all the capacities of the organism’ (Rogers, 1961), then the school, an ‘organism’ with its own unique personality, may similarly have a capacity for actualisation.

If ‘real transformation of schools ... involves a commitment to self-actualisation as a process of moment-by-moment change’ (Harris, 2007), there may exist a nested interdependence between the principal’s emotional resources supporting their self-actualisation and the creation of the emotional conditions essential for school renewal, leading to realisation of its own unique potentialities (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Modelling linkage between emotional resources, conditions, and actualisation**

One weakness of this model lies in the application of a human developmental term, *self-actualisation*, to an organisation, the school. I asked some principals in my recent research whether they believed a school can have a personality – not as a strategy to side-step such anthropomorphism but to explore their perspective on this possibility. The feedback was unanimous:

Denis: I think so, Michael ... personality and all that goes with it.

Christine: Yes. And different year-groups have a personality of their own, and different staffs have a personality of their own, and our staff personality is changing big-time.

Martin: I do actually, I do, because I think it's driven by their ethos or what they subscribe to. A school community has a character of its own and has a personality – almost like a temperament of its own.

It's possible that the principals' articulation of school 'personality' was as a result of my prompting, though it has been similarly affirmed by much larger groups of newly appointed principals in the training modules I have led. It is equally possible that the leaders are referring to school climate, which Owens (2004, p.178) relates to such terms as 'atmosphere, personality, tone, or ethos'.

So whether it is a social fiction or is more fundamentally related to climate or culture, it must nonetheless remain valid to speak of a school's 'tendency to actualise [itself], to become [its] potentialities ... to express and activate all the capacities of the [organisation]', to paraphrase Rogers, above.

I have long argued that a school's capacity to reach its potential is rooted in the affective capacities of the principal. My concept of 'affectively attuned change-management' (Redmond, 2016, p.109) draws from the shared stories of over 180 voluntary secondary principals to identify twelve key emotional competencies framed under four domains:

1. personal impetus (values and ethical foundations)
2. personal mobilisation (affective acumen and personal agency)
3. collective impetus (human connection and climate control)
4. collective mobilisation (staff synergy towards reaching potential).

Thus a resonance between the nested model of linked personal and organisational actualisation (Figure 1) with the affective attunement domains becomes evident (Figure 2):

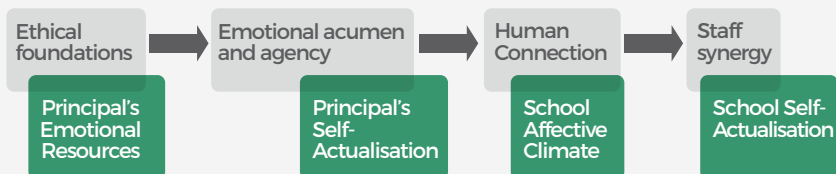


Figure 2: Resonance between affective attunement and self-actualisation models

So which ‘soft’ competencies, precisely, do principals point to in each of these four domains? From over 70,000 words of principals’ narratives, the following affectively rich capacities emerged as vital to the goal of authentic collaboration and school flourishing:

1. Recognising that values and emotionality are intertwined in the person of the principal (Beatty, 2000, p.339) and find expression in:

- an internal moral compass
- ethical decision-making
- purposeful and nuanced exchanging of information
- appropriate conveyance of meaning
- coherence between rhetoric and action
- engendering a shared belief in one’s integrity and actions.

2. Self-actualisation, ‘expressing and activating all one’s capacities’, presents as self-efficacy in which the principal:

- links life experience to the role of head teacher
- protects and renews self with ‘mental strength’
- bounces back from setbacks
- employs structured solution-seeking
- removes rocks from the river – i.e., solves problems effectively
- actively sources practical help or psychological support
- engages in social learning for sustainability
- possesses self-belief.

3. The principal must mobilise their skills in human connection, which directly impact on the school’s affective climate, by demonstrating:

- orientation towards care
- mutualisation of respect
- awareness and meeting of needs
- resolution focus towards micro-political dynamics
- emotional self-protection
- concern for quality of life
- a holistic approach to the condition of self and others
- empowerment of others.

4. Ultimately, the principal leads the staff in bringing the school to ‘expressing and activating all its capacities’ by artful reculturation, employing:

- listening and watching – contextual consciousness
- situationally aware decision-making
- operational consistency
- communicating and modelling expectations
- inculturating professional account
- a distinctive mode of influencing people.

#### **GRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION**

In generating a graphical representation of this phenomenon, the principals’ narratives were re-examined for recurring images. Although symbolic language was occasionally coined, such as interviewee Denis’s reference to his office desk as his ‘emotional-labour table – this is where all that stuff

goes on, the most frequently cited scene of significance in the principals' habitus was 'the corridor'. Each of the interviewees and a number of the survey respondents referred to important aspects of their activity being transacted on school corridors:

MR: So a lot of this [emotional labour] work happens at this table.

Denis: ...or around the corridors, Michael, you pick your spot, you pick your moment, you know your people.

Christine: I'd somebody here recently who is a principal, and they said, 'You know the students,' and I said, 'Yeah, I'm on the corridors.'

Thus, key elements of each of the four processes foundational to the model can and do occur 'on the corridor', including:

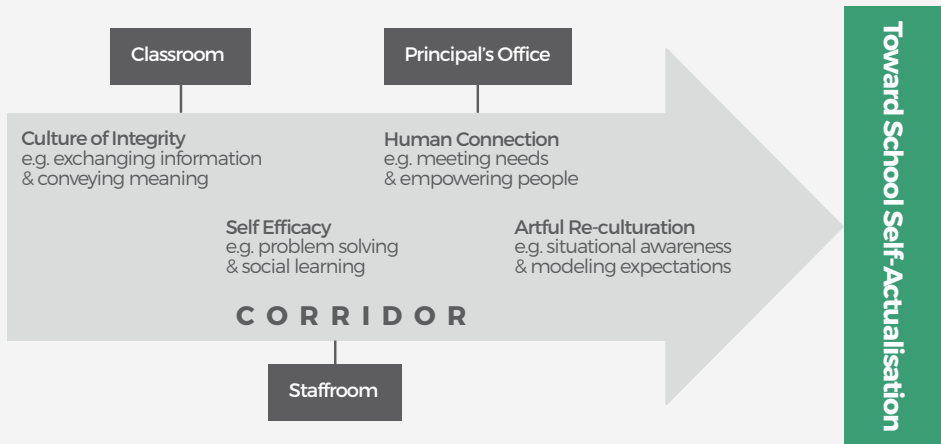
- purposeful and nuanced exchanging of information
- engaging in social learning for sustainability
- orientation towards care
- awareness and meeting of needs
- a holistic approach to the condition of self and others
- listening and watching – contextual consciousness
- situationally aware decision-making
- communicating and modelling expectations.

Two other features of 'the corridor' are also significant in terms of imagery – the purposeful flow of people through space and time, and the rooms off the corridor, where transformational activity can occur. This latter point was brought into sharp focus by Christine, who was taken from the corridor into a room and experienced a turning point herself:

Christine: I was sauntering along the corridor one day and they [two colleagues] said, 'Quick – into our room', and the two of them said, 'Cop on to yourself – you go and apply for that job'. 'I don't want it.' 'We don't care – you go and apply for it. Look at who's applying for it, and how would you feel if they were giving orders to you?' I said, 'It wouldn't bother me', and they set the seeds, and I remember asking my predecessor for an application form, and I ... I got the job.

A graphical representation of what I have called 'Affective Actualisation' is presented in Figure 3 on the next page as meaningful affective activity in the purposeful flow of people along a school corridor, ultimately taking the community towards greater fulfilment of their potential:

The Affective Actualisation concept sets out a chain of association linking integrity and efficacy to connection and, ultimately, reculturation. Its usefulness will hopefully lie in its affirmation of a link between the flourishing of the principal and that of their school, as well as its elucidation of the emotional competencies to which we all need to attend if we are to live and lead more fully.



**Figure 3: Graphical representation of Affective Actualisation**

## REFERENCES

- Beatty, B.R. (2000) 'The emotions of educational leadership: Breaking the silence', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 3, 331-357.
- Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2018) *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice*. Dublin: DES.
- Harrie, B. (2007) *Supporting the Emotional Work of School Leaders*. London: Paul Chapman.
- Owens, R.G. (2004) *Organizational Behaviour in Education: Adaptive Leadership and School Reform* (8th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Redmond, M. (2016) *Affective Attunement: Emotion and Collaboration – A Study of Ireland's Voluntary Secondary Principals*. Dublin: Joint Managerial Body.
- Rogers, C. (1961) *On Becoming a Person*. London: Constable and Robinson.
- Schein, E. (1985) *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

\*\*\*

## ASTI Convention 2018



**Kieran Christie**, General Secretary ASTI and **Dr Melanie Ní Dhuinn**, Assistant Professor in Teacher Education, TCD. Guest Speaker at ASTI Convention 2018, held in Clayton Hotel, Silver Springs Cork, 3- 5 April 2018.

# SCHOOL PLACEMENT

## A new era for partnership?



**Tomás Ó Ruairc**

Director and CEO,  
Teaching Council

One of the most visible and palpable aspects of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) for student teachers is school placement. From my own experience, it is certainly the part of the programme that leaves the most indelible of memories – both positive and negative! In a recent survey by the Teaching Council of student teachers, the questions on school placement drew some of the highest levels of engagement.

It is fair to acknowledge that we have made huge progress in ITE in the last six years. As the late Prof. John Coolahan would often point out, these programmes were transformed at a time when we were experiencing the most severe financial crisis in the history of the State. All seventy ITE programmes, covering primary, post-primary, and further education, have been reviewed and accredited by the Teaching Council. All are grounded in clear conceptual frameworks.

From the Council's perspective, two of the most significant structural changes in the programmes have been the increased time for reflective practice, and school placement. The programmes were extended to four years and two years, not to facilitate more of the same, but to give higher education institutions (HEIs) and student teachers space and time to fully integrate their learning into their professional practice. This was all with the ultimate aim of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning experienced by pupils and students.

This period of significant change and innovation in the content of ITE took place at the same time as the infrastructure around ITE provision was being transformed, on foot of the 2012 Sahlberg Report. The overall trend, at least conceptually, has been to bring more cohesion and collaboration to this provision, while ensuring that it is rooted in a university-based, research-informed context.

This policy position of the State is not a universal one in international terms. We must work hard as partners in education to ensure that it remains intact, and that it continues to demonstrate that it can support high-quality teaching, learning, and innovation in our schools. This is in all our interests.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) has conducted a formal review of the implementation of the Sahlberg Report, and we await its findings with interest. In the interim, it is reasonable to assume that a significant overhaul of the structure for HEI-based provision of ITE has occurred. If this is the case, how stands the structural support and provision for school placement?

## SCHOOL PLACEMENT – STRUCTURAL SUPPORT

Our recently published longitudinal research on school placement (Hall et al., 2018) indicates that we have made a lot of progress but that a number of areas need further work. It was conducted over four years, from 2014 to 2018. Eight recommendations arising from the research focus on the need for more schools to support school placement, more support for cooperating teachers, enhanced partnerships between HEIs and schools, including joint research, and the need to see how school placement links with Droichead and Cosán.

These recommendations hint at the complexity of relationships that underpin school placement. Many organisations and stakeholders are involved: school boards of management, principals, cooperating teachers, wider school staff, student teachers, pupils and students, HEIs, placement tutors, Teaching Council, Higher Education Authority (HEA), and the DES. Yet no one organisation or body has full control of all the levers that influence the management of school placement.

The DES has overall policy responsibility for education, including funding and resourcing. The HEA is responsible for the funding of third level. The Teaching Council, as the independent professional regulatory body, sets the standards and professional requirements for school placement in teacher education. The HEIs set the academic standards and are responsible for the operation of school placement as a central element of the programmes of ITE. Schools offer student teachers opportunities for school placement, and individual teachers opt for the role of cooperating teachers.

By supporting student teachers, school principals can help ensure an adequate supply of qualified teachers who will meet their needs.

The intention is that all of these elements should link together so that the experience of school placement is helpful, instructive, and enjoyable for everyone. The need to ensure a coherent, user-friendly system for organising school placement is obvious.

## PARTNERSHIP

Given this lattice of overlapping responsibilities, and the historical nature of the school system, the partnership approach which the Council has called for in its school placement guidelines is essential if its full potential as a professional crucible for student teachers is going to be realised. This has been clear to us for some time from the school placement seminars we have hosted for HEIs, school principals, and cooperating teachers.

The messages we have received from schools have been very clear: supporting student teachers on placement is an intergenerational professional responsibility which many principals and cooperating teachers take seriously. Given the high stakes of teaching and learning for pupils and their families, however, the experience of facilitating student teachers to teach in classrooms must be fully and wholly supported. They need to be given full opportunity to grow and develop their professional practice, to reflect on that experience, and to become better teachers as a result.

This should be a win-win-win for all concerned. By supporting student teachers, school principals can help ensure an adequate supply of qualified

teachers who will meet their needs, and especially their students' needs, well into the future. Student teachers will learn how to become better teachers. And HEIs will enhance the quality of graduates whom they help prepare for the teaching profession.

A full and holistic partnership approach to school placement, which fully acknowledges the critical importance of teacher education for all parties, is needed to realise this vision. How can we develop and enhance the current structural supports for school placement to this end?

### **WHAT CAN WE ALL DO TO ENHANCE SCHOOL PLACEMENT?**

The Teaching Council, for its part, is engaged in a comprehensive review of the standards for Initial Teacher Education, including the requirements for school placement. We are aware of the variety of views about the current standards, in particular the ten-week block that students must engage in towards the end of their programme. The rationale for this requirement continues to be valid – supporting student teachers as they approach the point of qualification in ensuring that the transition to full responsibility as qualified teachers is as smooth and effective as possible. As part of its review, the Council will consider the various ways this aim could be fulfilled.

Beyond that, it seems that the administrative and structural supports around school placement will need to be significantly enhanced. Based on feedback from HEIs, schools, and student teachers, all parties are looking for ways to make the organisation of school placement easier. The systems by which this could be achieved exist. It should be eminently possible for us all to work out how the systems could be implemented.

Implementing such systems would go a long way towards supporting the work of principals and cooperating teachers. Their work in supporting, guiding, and advising student teachers is vital. We all need to acknowledge the work they do throughout the year and look at practical ways we could enhance our support for them.

All parties are looking for ways to make the organisation of school placement easier.

Beyond logistics and administration, we are aware of enhanced efforts by some HEIs to strengthen their partnerships with schools in the area of school placement. One of the most innovative approaches is seeking to fully and authentically integrate research into relationships so as to inform and support professional practice in schools. In our most recent seminars on school placement, we facilitated HEIs and their partner schools in showcasing the various ways they are strengthening partnerships. The aim is to share professional learning both between HEIs and schools, and within each respective context.

### **MEETING THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF THE SYSTEM**

We have made significant progress in teacher education in the past six years. Much of the structural provision for ITE has been transformed, as have the programmes they offer. We are seeing clear evidence of the positive impact of these changes. If we are to sustain this progress, however, all stakeholders need to enhance the supports for school placement, so that together we can fulfil our responsibilities to student teachers and to the students they will teach.



More fundamentally, the demographic projections from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) indicate that the number of students attending post-primary will increase year on year until they peak in 2025. That is seven more years of growth, which will drive increased demand for teachers in post-primary.

We have a particular window of time now where we can enhance our structural supports for school placement, and ITE more broadly, to ensure that the model of teacher education that we have will provide enough teachers to meet the identified needs of the system. This means the need for more schools and teachers to facilitate school placement. And it means that schools will need more support and guidance to facilitate this engagement.

## CONCLUSION

In his book *Learning in Landscapes of Practice*, Prof. Etienne Wenger-Trayner neatly summarises the significant challenges that face students such as student teachers on school placement:

Students engaged in practice-based learning are engaged in courses which seek to integrate learning in academic and workplace contexts. They face the challenge of negotiating multiple boundaries in the course of their studies. They straddle a boundary between the academic and workplace context, but also typically are engaged in transitions across boundaries in the workplace, both between their current and future work roles and between different areas of practice.

Given the pressures that student teachers can face on placement, the seminar hosted by Mary Immaculate College in Thurles last November, led by Dr Finn Ó Murchú, was instructive. Teachers at the seminar were clear in calling for more coherence between the various elements of the system. They identified the need for reciprocal relationships between schools and HEIs. The seminar concluded with a call to further explore the opportunities for HEIs and schools to work together more broadly and deeply.

This will be the litmus test for us all on school placement over the next five years – the depth and breadth of school-HEI partnerships so that everyone involved, especially the student teacher, grows in their professional learning.

---

## REFERENCES

Hall, K., Murphy, R., Rutherford, V., and Ní Áingléis, B. (2018) *School Placement in Initial Teacher Education: Final Report*. Teaching Council and University College Cork.

---

\*\*\*

# JUNIOR CYCLE REFORM

## Five years in, where are we now?



**Pádraig Kirk**  
Director, Junior Cycle  
for Teachers (JCT)

Implementation of the new Framework for Junior Cycle (DES, 2015) began in schools in September 2014, with the 2012 iteration of the Framework forming the basis of teacher professional development at that time. The 2014/15 school year also saw the introduction of a new subject specification in English for all first-year post-primary students.

Since then those students have gone on to complete the full three years of their junior cycle, which heralded many firsts: they were the first to experience new classroom-based assessments (CBAs), the first to sit the final state examination in its new format (two hours instead of five for higher-level students), and the first to be awarded the new Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA), a rich picture of student learning which replaced the old Junior Certificate. These students are currently in their senior cycle years; for the students following in their footsteps, junior cycle reform is a reality in more and more subjects.

The reform of junior cycle is now well under way in schools. Subject specifications are replacing old syllabuses. These specifications set out expectations for students and through a series of learning outcomes 'describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and values students should be able to demonstrate after a period of learning' (DES, 2015, p.10). This shift to a learning-outcomes-based specification is perhaps one of the most significant changes at classroom level.

Junior cycle learning outcomes are student-centred and so are written in terms of learners and their development rather than what is to be taught (Biesta and Priestley, 2013). Each subject specification is developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and undergoes rigorous development, involving extensive consultation. Aligning with the key tenets of junior cycle, each specification is written to include opportunities to develop key skills, including literacy and numeracy, which aim to support students' learning, progress, and achievement.

New subject specifications were introduced for Business Studies and Science in September 2016, which means that by the end of the 2018/19 school year, three subjects will have concluded their first full cycle in schools. September 2017 saw the introduction of subject specifications in Gaeilge, Visual Art, and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), while September 2018 saw five being introduced: Mathematics, History, Geography, Music, and Home Economics. September 2019 will see the last group of subjects to be introduced, starting again

with first-year students: the four technological subjects, Classics, Religious Education, and Jewish Studies. By 2019 all subjects in their new format will have been phased in, and by 2022 all subjects will have undergone full cycles in the school system.

As well as individual subjects being revised, the curricular programme into which they fit is also changing. Students will now study a maximum of ten subjects for examination purposes, effectively ending situations where it was possible to study fourteen or even more subjects. More and more schools are introducing new short courses, of 100 hours duration across the junior cycle, and this is presenting opportunities for schools to better tailor their junior cycle to meet the needs of their own student cohort.

Innovative and creative courses such as Coding, Digital Media Literacy, Artistic Performance, Chinese Language and Culture, and Philosophy are popping up on junior cycle curricula nationwide, while external bodies such as the Post-Primary Languages Initiative are creating a repository of short courses that schools can introduce if they so wish. Short courses are designed in accordance with nationally established and published criteria by the NCCA, or schools may develop their own.

A new area of learning called well-being is assuming centre stage. This move is aimed at better supporting our students to cope with the normal ‘ups and downs’ of modern living and has at its core six well-being indicators: Connected, Aware, Resilient, Respected, Active, and Responsible. As well as promoting a whole-school culture of well-being, schools are asked to devote 400 hours of tuition time to this area by 2021, equivalent to one-fifth of the entire junior cycle programme.

**A new area of learning called well-being is assuming centre stage.**

The timetabled provision of the well-being area of learning comprises PE, SPHE, CSPE (in the form of three short courses which schools can follow if desired), guidance-related learning, and other areas deemed appropriate by schools for their student body. The Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines for schools, published in January 2017 by the NCCA, support schools in developing their well-being programme.

A significant development at junior cycle has been the introduction of Level 1 and Level 2 Learning Programmes. These are designed for a small number of students with particular special educational needs. This is the first time that students at these levels have had access to a tailored junior cycle programme, and is a welcome development in creating a more inclusive education system.

Student assessment practices at this level are also changing. Heretofore, student achievement at junior cycle level was measured primarily by how they performed in a final state exam in June. The reformed junior cycle changes all of this. It promotes formative assessment practice in classrooms, providing vital feedback on where the student is in their learning, where they need to go, and most importantly how to get there.

Junior cycle sees the introduction of a dual approach to assessment that supports student learning over the three years of junior cycle, and also

measures achievement at the end of those three years. While final exams still exist, albeit in a changed format, they are now complemented by structured Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) and an Assessment Task.

CBAs were developed to help assess skills that cannot be easily assessed in a traditional pen-and-paper exam. Students are required to undertake two CBAs in each subject they study, generally one in second year and one in third year. For short courses, only one CBA is required. Student work on CBAs takes place over a number of weeks (usually three) and is designed to take place as much as possible during class time. While CBAs are facilitated in the classroom by the subject teacher, they are externally devised by the NCCA, in consultation with the State Examinations Commission, who also define the national timetable for CBAs. CBAs are assessed by teachers with clear criteria provided, along with exemplars of student work at different levels to support teacher judgement.

Having assessed student work, teachers have an opportunity to share and discuss samples of work at Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings. This plays an important role in developing an understanding of standards and expectations, by enabling teachers to reflect on the evidence of students' work and to share the learning and teaching strategies supporting that work. SLAR also fosters 'purposeful peer interaction' (Fullan, 2008, p.46) and enhances student feedback.

Schools are also changing how they report on student progress, both to parents/guardians and to students themselves. Gone are the days of As, Bs, and Cs, etc., which provided limited insight into student progress, and in come new sets of descriptors for final exams and CBAs. For CBAs there are four levels of achievement: *Exceptional*, *Above Expectations*, *In Line with Expectations*, and *Yet to Meet Expectations*. These are informed by rich features of quality which are criteria to help teachers arrive at a best-fit, on-balance judgement about the quality of student work.

Junior Cycle for Teachers is a dedicated support service for schools, including school leaders and teachers.

Indeed, for schools, junior cycle reform has introduced a whole new language of learning, not just in how we report on student progress but right across the curriculum. Five years in, we all continue to engage with and develop a shared understanding of this new language. Significantly, most of this engagement happens collectively in schools, which in turn is helping to further promote an enhanced culture of teacher collaboration.

The changes currently being embedded in schools, like those outlined above, are significant. It was recognised early in the reform that schools would require significant support in implementing these changes effectively. This support came in the form of Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), a dedicated support service for schools, including school leaders and teachers. JCT is staffed entirely by teachers, who are seconded from their teaching role to design, develop, and facilitate high-quality professional learning experiences for teachers.

JCT has been providing sustained CPD for teachers since 2013/14 across a myriad of areas. We work closely with all interested stakeholders to ensure a smooth roll-out of our services nationally, and in doing so we endeavour to minimise disruption to teaching and learning at school level. Generally, schools close for two days annually to allow teachers to participate in CPD opportunities, while a smaller cohort of teachers will do an additional CPD day. No one ever moves to close schools lightly, but it is recognised that the greater good in the end will be worth the efforts being made now.

Other supports include allocating professional time to all teachers, which resulted in the creation of some 650 new teaching posts in summer 2017. School managers are also given additional resources to help them coordinate and manage changes at school level.

In recent months the NCCA has embarked on a review of senior cycle, and we look forward to what might transpire from this. There is little doubt, however, that the changes currently afoot at junior cycle level will impact across the wider school system and may lay foundations for developments in senior cycle.

---

## REFERENCES

Biesta, G.J.J. and Priestley, M. (2013) 'Capacities and the Curriculum'. In: M. Priestley and G.J.J. Biesta (eds.) *Reinventing the Curriculum: New Trends in Curriculum Policy and Practice*. London: Bloomsbury.

Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2015) *Framework for Junior Cycle*. Dublin: DES.

Fullan, M. (2008) *The Six Secrets of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

---

\*\*\*

---



**Mike Hughes**, author of 'The Magenta Principles.ie', addresses the NAPD conference, October 2018.

# National Student Grant Awarding Authority



In 2012, under the Government's Transforming Public Services agenda, a centralised student grant administration function at national level for higher & further education students was created. This replaced the existing student grant process which was administered by 66 individual grant awarding bodies across VECs and local authorities.

The Student Support Act 2011 introduced reforms to the student grant process, including a single consolidated Scheme, and provided for the appointment of a single grants awarding body.

City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB) was designated by the Minister for Education and Skills as the single national awarding authority and within that the business unit known as **SUSI** (Student Universal Support Ireland) was created. The rules governing the operation of the grant Scheme are set out in:

- The annual Student Support Regulations which outline approved educational institutions and approved courses.
- The annual Student Grant Scheme which sets out details relating to the Scheme including classes of grant, classes of applicant, eligibility exclusions etc. In addition, the Scheme sets out core eligibility criteria including:
  - Nationality
  - Residency
  - Progression (through education)
  - Means (including 'reckonable income' as set out in the Scheme).

Contact us:

 [support@susi.ie](mailto:support@susi.ie)
 [/susisupport](https://www.facebook.com/susisupport)  
 0761 087 874
  [@susihelpdesk](https://twitter.com/susihelpdesk)



PLC Student



Undergraduate Student



Postgraduate Student



Student Studying Outside the State



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

## Student grants online

The main objective in centralising grant administration was therefore to bring greater simplicity and efficiency to the grants administration process while ensuring a student centred application.

To this end **SUSI** operates an online application system at [www.susi.ie](http://www.susi.ie). Applications for new and renewal grant applications for the 2018/2019 academic year opened on the 5th April 2018. The requirement for students to submit supporting documents has been significantly reduced through data sharing agreements with relevant public bodies which further streamlines the process.

A responsive Support Desk is also available to answer any queries that students may have.

[www.susi.ie](http://www.susi.ie).

### SUSI by Numbers

SUSI processed almost 100,000 applications with circa 80,000 students awarded a grant for the 2018/2019 academic year.

## Grant types

Eligible students attending further education, **Post Leaving Certificate courses**, receive a maintenance grant, the value of which is determined by the level of reckonable income in the household for the previous year and the distance that the student travels from home to college (more or less than 45km).

Eligible students attending **Higher Education**, as well as receiving the maintenance grant, also have their fees/student contribution covered, whichever applies to the student. The value of the student contribution for the 2018/19 academic year was €3,000.

Eligible students attending approved courses in approved institutions **outside of the Republic of Ireland**, at undergraduate level only, receive a maintenance grant from SUSI.

2017/2018 academic year saw the introduction of a maintenance grant for eligible students at **Postgraduate level** who qualify for the special rate of grant. SUSI also provides funding to eligible students at postgraduate level towards the cost of their fees.

### Key Dates

<b>March</b>	Renewal reminder emails sent to renewal applicants
<b>April</b>	SUSI online application system opens
<b>June</b>	Renewal applications priority closing
<b>July</b>	New applications priority closing
<b>August</b>	Leaving Cert results and CAO offers
<b>September</b>	First maintenance payment Higher Education
<b>October</b>	First maintenance payment PLC
<b>November</b>	Online application system closes

# SENIOR CYCLE REVIEW

**M**any developments at senior cycle have taken place in recent years, including the introduction of new subjects such as Politics and Society, Computer Science, and Physical Education. A range of second assessment components have been introduced across many subjects, and the Leaving Certificate grading system has also changed significantly.

But it's fair to say that the last structural changes at senior cycle took place over twenty years ago, when many subject syllabuses were revised and the curriculum was diversified to include the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). At that time, Transition Year also became a recognised part of an optional three-year senior cycle. Much has happened with these programmes in the interim, so it's a good time to review the strengths, weaknesses, and challenges of these programmes and the senior cycle as a whole.

## CHANGING CONTEXT

The world and society have always changed, but with technological advancements the pace of change has become more rapid than ever, and schools have been immersed in these changes. The impact of globalisation, secularisation, a changing economy and world of work, and ongoing technological change is profound, even on small countries like Ireland. We have a more diverse society, where concerns about human well-being rise with the quickening pace of change.

Concepts of learning are evolving: there is now a focus on key skills and competencies, problem-solving, learning to learn, and working with knowledge. In turn, the role of teachers and teaching changes too. Teachers are working together, building learning communities, and adopting powerful pedagogies that are collaborative, inquiry-based, and dialogical, adjusting the focus from teaching to the impact of teaching on learning. This is aligned to a changing role for students, who may participate more in their schools on many levels – including, for example, in the review of senior cycle.

These changes have led to many debates about education and have presented schools with many challenges and opportunities. The review of senior cycle education is an opportunity for the influence of all these changes to be considered across this whole stage of education and across all programmes.

There are important local, system-based considerations for this review too. It's starting at a time when many recent developments at junior cycle are still being introduced and embedded in classrooms



**Barry Slattery**

Director, Curriculum and Assessment, NCCA



**John Hammond**

Acting Chief Executive, NCCA



– another major change that schools have experienced in recent years, and one that has not been as smooth as everyone would have liked. But we are now regularly reminded by parents, students, and teachers of the need to consider the line of continuity between a reformed junior cycle and a future senior cycle.

### **SCHOOLS AT THE HUB OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

It is clear that schools are at the hub of change in our education system, so it makes sense for them to be instrumental in developing the policy advice that will affect schools. The approach to senior cycle review involves schools from the outset. This allows for the realities of school life, culture, and perspectives to inform review from the earliest stage. It enables us to think about the implementation of educational change in the context of schools and daily schooling.

This combined approach, of working directly with schools and with our representative structures in the NCCA, will help to ensure that the advice from the review has stakeholder support and is based in the reality of what schools are doing and can do. Before any advice on senior cycle development is offered, NCCA is working directly with forty-one schools to hear the views of teachers, management, parents, and students, through school-based review. This is central to the overall review.

### **THE REVIEW PROCESS**

The initial phase of the review process, as set out in the figure below, involves two consultation cycles: a school-based review, and a series of national seminars. The first cycle explores the theme ‘The purpose of Senior Cycle: thinking about the future’; the second looks at ‘Pathways and flexibility’. Each begins with a school-based review. This involves discussions with around 2,400 students, and with teachers, school management, and parents in forty-one schools.

Teachers engage in staff discussions facilitated by a link teacher in the school who has direct access to an NCCA mentor.

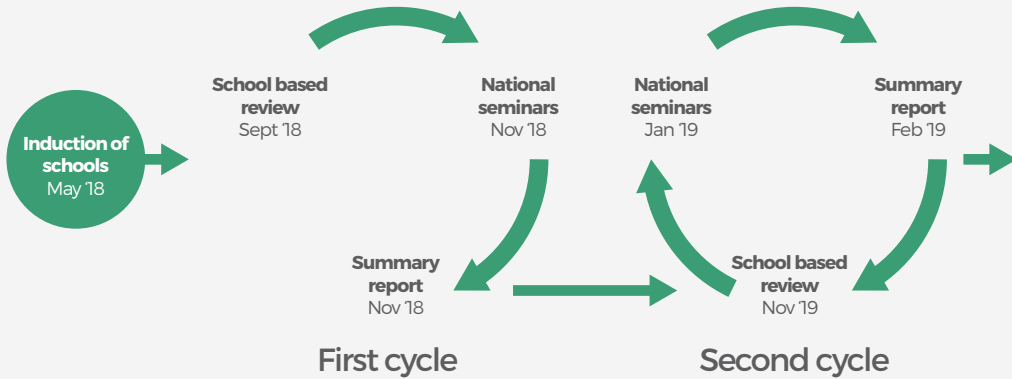
We are providing schools with a range of supports, including mentoring, short research reports on existing programmes, and research from other jurisdictions. The materials used by schools for the review discussions were developed with the ESRI and with feedback from parents, teachers, and students. In each school-based review, teachers engage in staff discussions facilitated by a link teacher in the school who has direct access to an NCCA mentor, and parents participate in focus group meetings hosted by parents in the school. The NPCpp are offering additional support to parents who wish to facilitate focus group sessions with students.

All materials, surveys, and online supports are available to all schools to facilitate optional, wider involvement in the review. Additional schools have availed of this to conduct their own school-based review and are submitting their feedback.

Each school completes a teacher and a parent response to the research questions. The student voice consultations are conducted by NCCA staff. At the end of each school-based review, the reports from parents and teachers, audio recordings, and reports of student focus group meetings are analysed

by the ESRI. The emerging themes are presented at the national seminars, held in Cork, Dublin, Galway, Waterford, Limerick, Athlone, and Sligo. These offer an opportunity for wider stakeholder involvement in the review of senior cycle, and a platform for all stakeholders to hear and discuss the views of fellow stakeholders representing a variety of interests.

The findings of both consultation cycles will be collated in a consultation report in March 2019. The final phase of the review will comprise extensive consultation on the report with all stakeholders, before a final advisory report is discussed by the NCCA Council in June 2019.



### Initial phase of review process

#### THEMES EXPLORED IN EACH CONSULTATION CYCLE

The first cycle focuses on ‘The Purpose of Senior Cycle: thinking about the future’. The Action Plan for Education aims to make the country’s education and training system the best in Europe by 2026. In this context, what is the purpose of senior cycle, and what is the place of well-being/citizenship education? Considering the tradition of a strong pastoral dimension in post-primary schools, it is not surprising there is consensus among stakeholders for a senior cycle better suited to all students. In this cycle we will begin to identify how senior cycle can become more inclusive – for students with special educational needs, groups at risk of exclusion, and students who have followed Level 2 Learning Programmes at junior cycle and are moving with their peers into senior cycle. A new senior cycle can set a benchmark for including learners who may not have benefitted sufficiently or at all from senior cycle in the past.

It is important to remember throughout these deliberations that our current senior infants will be moving into senior cycle in 2028. What will they need to participate and succeed? This will inform discussions during the second consultation cycle, on ‘Pathways and flexibility’. It will explore the structure of senior cycle, the educational programmes involved, the pathways available to all students, and how to organise the curriculum in these pathways. It will reflect on how the current structure of senior cycle reflects the purposes for a new senior cycle that have emerged from the first consultation cycle.

During the second cycle, we will also seek views on whether there are core subjects or learning experiences that are seen as central to senior cycle, and the degree of choice that is or should be given to students in each pathway.

If flexibility, autonomy, and customisation are to become features of a new senior cycle, it will be important to consider the implications this will have for learning, the sites of learning, assessment, reporting, certification, and qualifications.

There is a demand for upper-secondary alternatives to traditional academic pathways.

### INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Deliberations on senior cycle review will be informed by research on our current programmes and on the provision of, and developments in, upper secondary education in other jurisdictions. Across the systems examined in a recently commissioned NCCA study,<sup>1</sup> upper secondary education aims to enable all students, regardless of background or need, to achieve their full potential; prepare them for further, lifelong learning and employment; and produce adaptable, future-focused individuals and

responsible, active citizens. Other interesting findings from the study include:

- Upper-secondary education systems appear not to be a one-size-fits-all offer, but rather provide students with a range of options to suit their future destination.
- There is demand for upper-secondary alternatives to traditional academic pathways, and internal assessment arrangements play a heightened role in such vocational/professional and technical education pathways.
- Planning – both at individual student level and in terms of local planning of provision – is increasingly important as jurisdictions offer an increasing variety of pathways.
- Environments outside of school, e.g. alternative/training providers, work-based learning, and community learning make a key contribution to experiential learning in this phase of education.
- Official records of achievement, in addition to exam results and certificates, are a feature of the upper-secondary phase, serving the needs of students and of future employers or educational institutions.
- There is a focus in the upper-secondary ‘offer’ on ensuring students’ physical and mental well-being.

It will be interesting to see if similar findings emerge from the review of senior cycle. From an NCCA point of view, as a representative body, there is much we have learned from the work at junior cycle that can benefit the approach to senior cycle review and can contribute to establishing a shared platform and trust for shaping a curriculum that genuinely meets the needs of all learners at senior cycle for years to come.

---

1 ‘Overview Report: Upper Secondary Education in Nine Jurisdictions’ can be accessed at: [www.ncca.ie/media/3337/scoping-report-online-2.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/media/3337/scoping-report-online-2.pdf).

---

\*\*\*

---

# TRANSITION YEAR – PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Learning for the future



**Dr Gerry Jeffers**  
Researcher and  
lecturer

In mid-July 2018, as part of a review of career guidance provision in schools, the economic consultants charged by the Minister with the task invited a cross-section of people to a day-long consultative event in Farmleigh in the Phoenix Park, Dublin. This followed an earlier invitation for public submissions. A striking feature of the day was participants' focus on work experience placements at second and third level. Embedded in those conversations seemed to be a strong recognition by educators and other stakeholders that Transition Year (TY) is widely accepted as a vibrant, integral component of the Irish education system.

And yet doubts linger. For the first twenty years of Transition Year there was little evidence the programme would ever move beyond a quirky, marginal anomaly thought up by a strong-willed Minister for Education who didn't consult anyone about his innovation (Jeffers, 2015, p.97). One of Minister Richard Burke's concerns back in 1974 was the large number of early school-leavers. He also saw the secondary school system as conservative and described the Department of Education as 'demoralised'. He disliked the divisions and inequalities in schooling.

'Something subversive was needed,' he told me in a 2001 interview. And so Transition Year was born.

## OFF THE TREADMILL

Richard Burke described the kernel of his innovation as follows:

Because of the growing pressures on students for high grades and competitive success, educational systems are becoming, increasingly, academic treadmills. Increasingly, too, because of these pressures, the school is losing contact with life outside, and the student has little or no opportunity 'to stand and stare', to discover the kind of person he (sic) is, the kind of society he will be living in and, in due course, contributing to, its shortcomings and its good points. The suggestion was made that perhaps somewhere in the middle of the course we might stop the treadmill and release the students from the educational pressures for one year so that they could devote time to personal development and community service. (Burke, 1974)

Prescient words from 1974! The minister was also aware, from his experiences as a teacher, of the potential of Transition Year for teacher development. In 2001 he said:

I had a high regard for the teaching profession in the sense that I knew that if circumstances could be such, they would be delighted to be liberated to do that for which their basically idealistic calling had prepared them. So, it [Transition Year] was, in a sense, an emancipation of the teaching profession to educate as distinct from grind.

He was blunt in his view that teachers can also be victims of ‘the system’. He spoke of ‘the unfortunate teaching profession’ being ‘under such pressure to bring the pupils through the treadmill’, adding that ‘with the exception of a very, very few gifted teachers, there was no opportunity for the teaching profession to actually engage in education in the strictest sense of that term’.

### **PARTICIPATION**

Schools were slow to embrace the notion of an interdisciplinary year promoting intellectual, social, and emotional maturation and free from the pressure of public examinations. The Curriculum and Examinations Board in 1986 produced helpful *Guidelines for Schools* (CEB, 1986) but it was not until 1994, when the programme was ‘re-vivified and expanded’ (Coolahan, 2017, p.139), that participation rates increased dramatically.

“Transition Year was, in a sense, an emancipation of the teaching profession to educate as distinct from grind.”

By 2004, an official DES publication stated – some might say overstated – that ‘Transition Year, which has been one of the major innovations in Irish education, is an option which is now firmly embedded in the system’ (DES, 2004, p.13). Participation rates continue to rise. In the school year 2017/18, 92% of schools offered a TY programme, while 72% of students who enrolled in third year the previous year progressed to Transition Year.<sup>1</sup>

### **TENSIONS**

An early evaluation (Egan and O’Reilly, 1979) noted numerous tensions in the TY programme and varied views among practitioners. These included tensions between a focus on preparation for the workplace and for the Leaving Cert, between emphasis on practical living and on subjects like philosophy and logic, between what might be called ‘linear’ or ‘core’ subjects such as English, Irish, and Mathematics and ‘new’ subjects: ‘linear subjects were deemed an irritation in many schools and received the minimum possible emphasis,’ the researchers found, and along with Philosophy they were ‘generally seen to be of little importance compared with the other subjects’ (ibid., p.55).

The authors wrote that problems with the conceptualisation of TY were unlikely to derail the project, because:

many of the most enthusiastic and enlightened participants are the same people who have little time for problems of definition. From their point of view the Transition Year, as they are implementing it, is working satisfactorily; and if it does not conform with some blueprint in the Department – well, too bad for the blueprint. (ibid., p.55)

Importantly, Egan and O'Reilly conclude that Transition Year students were more self-aware, more confident in social settings, better informed about the wider world, and surer about career choices.

### NEW IMPETUS

Before the national mainstreaming of Transition Year in 1994, new guidelines for schools were published, in a document shorter than its 1986 predecessor. Transition Year was seen more as a whole-school responsibility, with the emphasis on teacher collaboration, teamwork, and staff development. Interdisciplinary or cross-curricular work was more strongly advocated, and any reference to a percentage of the programme being 'academic' was dropped.

At the same time, the new *Guidelines* sought to reassure doubters: 'This is not to say that TY programmes should lack intellectual content; it is essential that they offer a challenge to pupils in all areas of their development' (DE, 1993, p.5). The 1993 *Guidelines* also radically extended the ambition of the programme: 'The aims and philosophy of Transition Year should permeate the entire school' (ibid., p.2). An enormous challenge!

Following the dramatic expansion in the programme in the mid-1990s, the Inspectorate evaluated it in 146 schools. Its report concluded:

The consensus among principals, teachers and pupils is that the Transition Year Programme is a very worthwhile initiative, allowing the school to engage in genuine in-school curriculum development, offering teachers an opportunity to break free of overly compartmentalised subject teaching, and giving students the space and the time to grow in maturity and to develop in self-confidence. (DE, 1996, p.20)

**"The Transition Year Programme... gives students the space and time to grow in maturity and to develop in self-confidence."**

While praising schools for enthusiasm and innovation, that report also made recommendations. These point back to some issues raised by Egan and O'Reilly in 1979 and will have an uncomfortable familiarity with anyone reading recent DES inspection reports of Transition Year. Those recommendations from 1996 include:

- more attention to interdisciplinary, cross-curricular approaches
- Leaving Cert subject choices to be delayed until the end of TY (some schools were operating what looked very like a 'three-year Leaving Certificate')
- further develop links with the local community
- more compensatory teaching
- more networking between schools for 'improving and revitalising' programmes
- better assessment procedures
- improved evaluation in schools.

### VARIATION

A dominant theme in research into Transition Year in 116 schools by Smyth, Byrne, and Hannan (2004) was the variation in practices and perceptions both between and within schools. This diversity persists, one suspects, and

makes generalisations about TY especially problematic. Many people have anecdotal evidence of the programme in School A being 'brilliant' and in neighbouring School B being severely under-realised. Smyth et al. conclude by clarifying the importance of key features for a successful TY, including whole-school commitment, time for coordination and teacher cooperation, diverse content, structured exposure to the world of work, and more innovation particularly in teaching methods, forms of assessment, and ongoing evaluation and redesign.

Subsequent research noted how schools tend to 'domesticate' Transition Year (Jeffers, 2007, p.xxviii). This manifests in how schools adapt the TY guidelines and shape them to fit a school's tradition, values, practices, and context. A shadow side of domestication is that TY's flexibility can be invoked by schools to justify a narrow selectivity that ignores key features of TY: interdisciplinary work, new forms of assessment, and health education, for example, can thus be neglected.

### EXPENSE

Another persistent concern in much of the research already cited and in public commentary on TY relates to costs and the socio-economic status of non-participants. 'Transition Year costs can be significant, particularly if a family has more than one child in secondary school,' said Marcella Stakem, social policy officer with the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) to the *Irish Times* recently (Lally, 2018). Transition Year costs, which can vary from €300 to €900 per pupil, have become a significant source of stress for parents, according to the SVP. The organisation acknowledges that TY has 'lots of social and educational benefits' and called on the DES to put measures in place to enable children in low-income families to participate.

There is strong emphasis on collaborative planning of the Transition Year programme and of committing this to writing.

Other TY-related research, for example Moynihan (2013) on work experience and subject choice and Clerkin (2012, 2018) on psycho-social development, has illuminated important features of Transition Year. These works add to a growing evidence base showing how young people mature through the TY experience, how their self-awareness and confidence grow, how their aspirations become more focused, how relationships with classmates and teachers deepen, and how the experience enriches school life. It's also worth noting how insights into 'what works' in Transition Year echo key ideas in *Schooling for Change: Re-Inventing Education for Early Adolescents* (Hargreaves et al., 1996 p.80), especially their focus on relevance, imagination, and challenge.

### CURRENT CONCERNS

One window on current challenges for Transition Year is opened through the programme evaluations conducted by the DES Inspectorate and available online (DES, 2018). About ten programmes are evaluated each year,<sup>2</sup> and at the time of writing (mid-September 2018) eight TY programme evaluations have been posted. These reports are nuanced and, while broadly positive, warrant careful reading. Many of the challenges mentioned resonate with previously expressed concerns as well as issues identified by the support services in the mid and late 1990s (TYST, 1998).

Among the recommendations, there is strong emphasis on the importance of collaborative planning of the Transition Year programme and of committing this to writing. Allied to this is the recommendation, stated in one report, that ‘all teachers in TY need to incorporate teaching methodologies that promote active engagement and help students to take more responsibility for their own learning’. A strong focus on what’s actually happening in classrooms is striking in many recommendations, with calls for more cooperative learning, more differentiation, and more varied content, among other things.

Perhaps in response to the pejorative descriptor of Transition Year as ‘a non-exam year’ (or the more offensive ‘doss year’), the inspectors strongly encourage schools to implement appropriate assessment procedures. In one case there is an explicit proposal to introduce an end-of-year portfolio assessment.

Closely linked to the attention to classroom practice in the reports is a growing recognition of the importance of Transition Year as a place for ‘student voice’ to find expression. Indeed, this, and an awareness of Transition Year as a time when young people’s sense of agency can be deepened, are among the exciting developments in Transition Year thinking.

Tensions between Transition Year and the established Leaving Cert programme also persist in the inspectors’ reports. One illustration is a recommendation that ‘within the academic modules, teachers should diversify the content and ensure that there is greater distinction between the TY curriculum and the Leaving Certificate curriculum’. The school’s response, appended to that evaluation, is frank and robust:

**Inspectors strongly encourage schools to implement appropriate assessment procedures.**

The Board also acknowledges the recommendation relating to Leaving Certificate content. The line between giving a ‘taster’ course and looking in slightly more depth at the highly pressurised and stressful Leaving Certificate content is a fine one. The Board acknowledges the excellent work done by its teachers in preparing for achievement in the Leaving Certificate. As Module Descriptors are reviewed, the level of Leaving Certificate content will be closely examined.

While learning beyond the classroom has been one of Transition Year’s strengths, schools can, in the opinion of the Inspectorate, overdo it. For example, devoting 20% of the time in Transition Year to work experience placements is regarded as ‘excessive’. There are also occasional recommendations that make one wonder about the level of planning some schools put into Transition Year; for example, that a parent–teacher meeting be introduced! Or that admission to TY needs to be included in the school’s admission policy, that end-of-year evaluations should be conducted, that a community service component should be introduced, or that there should be planning meetings!



## REFRESHING

One of the biggest challenges schools face regarding Transition Year is to keep refreshing it, to avoid it becoming stale, predictable, or boring. The need to keep it vibrant was a strong finding among many interviewed for *Transition Year in Action* (Jeffers, 2015). A changed junior cycle, which resonates with many features of TY (Kelly, 2014) should prompt an imaginative rethink of how TY might best build on the learning experiences of the previous three years. Similarly, the current review of senior cycle is an opportunity to rethink Transition Year (Jeffers, 2018).

The evidence that Transition Year can greatly enhance the lives of students and teachers... is compelling.

The disappointment of Brexit directs us to revisit Transition Year's opportunities for learning about the rest of Europe – its history, geography, cultures, and social and political contexts. The 1993 *Guidelines*, while still clear and coherent, predate the technological explosions of the past two decades, and this is a further reason for a new impetus. New guidelines are needed.

Notwithstanding the claim referred to earlier that Transition Year is 'embedded' in the system, the programme continues to have to fight against being marginalised at many levels, including policy and support (financial, professional development, and moral). Transition Year is often marginalised in educational discourse: for example, it appears incidental in the ambitious *Action Plan for Education 2016–2019*.

The contention that Transition Year is a 'bubble' slightly detached from what is 'really important' has not gone away. Yet despite many challenges, the evidence that Transition Year can greatly enhance the lives of students and teachers, particularly through young people's holistic development, is compelling. The review of senior cycle education is an ideal opportunity to refresh this remarkable educational innovation.

---

## REFERENCES

- Burke, R. (1974) *Address to the Regional Meeting of the Dublin Education Council for Secondary Schools*. Synge Street CBS, 2 December.
- Clerkin, A. (2012) 'Personal development in secondary education: The Irish Transition Year', *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 20(38). Retrieved 20 September 2018 from: <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/1061>.
- Clerkin, A. (2018) 'Filling in the gaps: A theoretical grounding for an education programme for adolescent socioemotional and vocational development in Ireland', *Review of Education*, 6, 146–179.
- Coolahan, J. (2017) *Towards the Era of Lifelong Learning: A History of Irish Education 1800–2016*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.
- Curriculum and Examinations Board (CEB) (1986) *Transition Year Option: Guidelines for Schools*, Dublin: CEB.
- Department of Education (DE) (1993) *Transition Year Programmes: Guidelines for Schools*. Dublin: DE.
- Department of Education (DE) (1996) *Transition Year Programme 1994–95: An Evaluation by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education*. Dublin: DE.
- Department of Education and Science (DES) (2004) *A Brief Description of the Irish Education System*. Dublin: DES.

- Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2018) Inspection Reports and Publications. Available from: [www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications](http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications).
- Egan, O. and O'Reilly, J. (1979) 'The Transition Year Project', *Oideas*, 20, spring. Dublin: Department of Education.
- Hargreaves, A., Earl, L., and Ryan, J. (1996) *Schooling for Change: Re-Inventing Education for Early Adolescents*. London: Falmer Press.
- Jeffers, G. (2007) *Attitudes to Transition Year: A Report to the Department of Education and Science*. Maynooth: Education Department. Available at: [http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/1228/1/Attitudes\\_to\\_Transition\\_YearGJ.pdf](http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/1228/1/Attitudes_to_Transition_YearGJ.pdf).
- Jeffers, G. (2015) *Transition Year in Action*. Dublin: Liffey Press.
- Jeffers, G. (2018) 'Senior Cycle is about much more than the Leaving Certificate', *Irish Independent*, 22 March.
- Kelly, D. (2014) 'The New Junior Cycle: Learning from Innovations in Transition'. In: R. Dolan (ed.) *Pathways to Innovation and Development in Education: A Collection of Invited Essays*. Maynooth: Education Department, pp.69-73. Available at: <http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/5800/>.
- Lally, C. (2018) 'Sharp rise in parents seeking help for back-to-school costs', *Irish Times*, 28 August.
- Moynihan, J.A.G. (2013) 'Work experience in transition year: A mixed methods study of subject and career choices'. Ph.D. thesis. Cork: University College Cork.
- Smyth, E., Byrne, D., and Hannan, C. (2004) *The Transition Year Programme: An Assessment*. Dublin: Liffey Press in association with the ESRI.
- Transition Year Support Service (TYST) (1998) *End of Year Report*. Blackrock: Blackrock Education Centre.

---

## FOOTNOTES

1. 661 of 714 second-level schools offered a Transition Year in 2017-18, with 44,950 students enrolled in the programme. 62,533 students were in third-year junior cycle the previous year (Annual Statistical Report, DES).
2. These refer to specific evaluations of schools' TY programmes. Aspects of TY also feature in other inspections, notably Whole School Evaluations (WSE), and subject inspections.

---

\*\*\*

---

### Youth Volunteer of the Year



**Daniella Timperley** of St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena, one of two Pramerica "Spirit of Community" Youth Volunteers of the Year, 2018.



**Breda Naughton**  
Retired Principal  
Officer, Department  
of Education & Skills

## THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES STRATEGY

Learning a foreign language has never been more important

**L**earning a foreign language is no longer a luxury for some but a necessity for most. It is an international key which, upon turning, will open many doors and opportunities for those that embrace and enjoy the challenge. (Foreign Languages Strategy, p.40)

In December 2017, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) published 'Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017–2026'. It sets out a roadmap to place Ireland among the top ten countries in Europe for teaching and learning foreign languages. The Strategy is accompanied by a five-year Implementation Plan 2017–2022, which contains 100 actions to improve efficiency, diversity, and immersion. A Foreign Languages Advisory Group (FLAG) was established to oversee and advise on its implementation.

The Strategy is a priority in the Department's Action Plan for Education 2016–2019. While providing high-quality language-learning opportunities and promoting competence in both of our official languages, Irish and English, are very important objectives of Government, we must also target the learning of a range of foreign languages in Ireland.

This article addresses the place of foreign languages in primary, post-primary, further, and higher education. It summarises the context in which the Strategy was developed, outlines existing provision, and highlights recent actions that have resulted from the Strategy.

### CONTEXT

English may be a lingua franca of international communications, but knowing English is not enough. Competence in a number of languages is a key skill that our citizens should be encouraged to achieve. Our enhanced language diversity, predominantly due to the arrival of immigrants from almost 200 countries since 2000, is a social, cultural, and national resource to be welcomed and nurtured, especially by our education sector.

National, EU, and Council of Europe reports have promoted the need for Ireland to prioritise the learning of foreign languages. Such reports are referenced in the Strategy. With Brexit, the increasing globalisation of the world economy, and the rise of emerging non-English-speaking markets as a major source of growth for the Irish economy, the importance of foreign language skills cannot be overstated.

In August 2014, a consultation was launched to gather the views of stakeholders and inform the development of the Strategy. Almost 80 submissions were received. Two consultation events were organised: one concentrated on the teaching and learning of foreign languages in schools; the other sought input from stakeholders in the Further Education and Training and Higher Education sectors and industry. The Minister for Education and Skills hosted a roundtable event to discuss the findings of the consultation and the proposed strategy.

### EXISTING PROVISION

Traditionally, French, German, Spanish, and Italian were available on the Junior Certificate programme. Under the new Framework for Junior Cycle, a new specification for Modern Foreign Languages (French, German, Spanish, and Italian) was introduced in September 2017 with more emphasis on oral language and project work. New 100-hour junior cycle short courses in Chinese, Lithuanian, Japanese, Russian, and Polish are also available.

In addition to the four junior cycle foreign languages, Japanese, Russian, and Arabic are available as curricular subjects for Leaving Certificate. The suite of non-curricular heritage EU languages available for examination in the Leaving Cert is extensive. Students were examined in eighteen non-curricular languages in the 2018 Leaving Cert, with the greatest take-up in Polish, followed by Romanian and Lithuanian.

The opportunities to study foreign languages at junior cycle and Leaving Cert level are therefore significant. But there is scope for greater diversification. This has become apparent over the last decade, as candidates are presenting in a wider range of languages for the Leaving Cert, as the table below shows.

Year	French	German	Spanish	Italian	Japanese	Russian	Arabic	Non-Curricular Languages
2008	27,697	7,472	2,965	257	127	245	119	536
2012	25,977	6,788	4,330	384	240	308	159	1,348
2018	23,710	8,503	7,027	462	296	367	148	1,461

**Table: Candidate uptake of foreign languages for Leaving Cert examination**

### IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

The Foreign Languages Advisory Group was established to advise on and drive implementation of the Strategy. Regular reporting on the 100 actions in the Implementation Plan enables the Group to measure and report on progress.

### VISION AND GOALS FOR THE STRATEGY

The Strategy's vision is that Ireland's education system will promote a society where the ability to learn and use at least one foreign language is taken for granted, because of its inherent value for individuals, society, and the economy. Four overarching goals have been set out:

1. Improve language proficiency by creating a more engaging learning environment.
2. Diversify and increase the uptake of languages learned and cultivate the languages of the new Irish.

3. Increase awareness of the importance of language learning to encourage the wider use of foreign languages.
4. Enhance employer engagement in the development and use of trade languages.

### AUDIT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES PROVISION

One of the actions in the Strategy was an audit of foreign-language provision in post-primary schools carried out by the Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI). A total of 393 schools, about 55%, completed the survey. The following summarises key findings from the audit:

- Size, type, gender, and geographical location of schools affect the range of languages offered.
- A small percentage of students do not take a foreign language, because they have special educational needs (SEN) or because taking a language was optional.
- Transition Year gives schools an opportunity to offer a wider range of languages, with new languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Russian being made available.
- 76% of schools would like to offer additional languages, with Spanish and Chinese the two most frequently mentioned, followed by German and Japanese.
- Availability of qualified teachers, timetabling, teacher allocation, and insufficient numbers of interested students are key challenges identified by schools for the expansion of foreign language provision.
  - The reduced numbers of teaching graduates from higher education institutions (HEIs) is affecting schools' ability to introduce additional languages.
  - Dublin is the only county where all the non-curricular Leaving Cert languages along with Arabic and Russian have more than ten Leaving Cert sittings. Polish has more than ten sittings in nineteen counties.
  - Schools do not always understand that students and parents should be actively encouraged to maintain their heritage languages and be informed of the benefits of maintaining them.
- Despite the perceived low level of demand for support classes for heritage languages, most respondents are at least moderately interested in e-learning or blended learning options for such supports, which would help to address the challenge presented by small groups of interested students in individual schools.

**In August 2018, Minister Bruton announced an increase in the provision of Foreign Language Assistants.**

### RECENT ACTIONS

#### CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENTS

The new Primary Language Curriculum for senior classes acknowledges linguistic diversity to include English, Irish, and other languages, enabling teachers to draw on and support the linguistic abilities of the children in their classroom. Future development of the primary curriculum will take account of the intercultural/multicultural dimension.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is starting work on developing a Leaving Cert Mandarin Chinese specification and Leaving Cert heritage language specifications in Polish, Lithuanian, and Portuguese,

aimed at mother-tongue speakers. These are due for implementation in September 2020.

### **FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS**

The Strategy aims to double the number of Foreign Language Assistants in schools from 110 to 220. In August 2018, Minister Bruton announced an increase in the provision of Foreign Language Assistants from 110 to 140 for French, German, Spanish, and Italian during 2018/19. He also committed to expanding the range of languages to which the scheme will apply. These assistants will help students to:

- understand the spoken language
- speak the foreign language
- read authentic and fictional texts
- understand the way of life and customs of the foreign country.

### **TEACHER SUPPLY**

The Department has established a steering group to look at the issue of teacher supply, including teachers of foreign languages. In March 2018, Minister Bruton announced an expansion of the number of places on post-primary teacher education courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level in priority areas, including foreign languages.

### **TEACHER UPSKILLING**

Additional Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers of foreign languages is being provided by the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) support service and PPLI. Further CPD will be provided as new languages are introduced.

### **AWARENESS-RAISING CAMPAIGN**

A change in mindset is needed around foreign-language learning. Education providers and employers must work together to increase awareness of the importance of gaining proficiency in foreign languages. Parents must realise the importance of this and act as advocates to motivate their children to learn foreign languages.

An awareness-raising campaign, led by PPLI with the support of Government departments, HEA, HEIs, embassies, cultural services, and bodies such as IBEC and Enterprise Ireland, was launched in September 2018 and targets:

- school principals, teachers, and guidance counsellors
- parents and students
- third-level institutions.

A new 'Languages Connect' website brand has been developed to direct this campaign.

### **POST-PRIMARY LANGUAGES INITIATIVE**

In addition to the audit and awareness-raising campaign, PPLI is supporting implementation of the Strategy by:

The Department has established a steering group to look at the issue of teacher supply.

- Employing additional peripatetic teachers to teach Lithuanian, Polish (from September 2018), and Korean (September 2019). Korean is being introduced as a pilot in a small number of schools for Transition Year from September 2018.
- Facilitating *Communities of Practice* whereby teachers of foreign languages can meet their peers to share ideas and expertise.
- Piloting a variety of options for introducing lesser-taught languages into schools, including shared classes and blended learning.
- Providing a variety of opportunities for teachers who are qualified in a language but not currently teaching it, to upskill in that language and thus enable schools to expand their provision by activating existing but dormant capacity.
- Developing resources to support innovative teaching methodologies.

## CONCLUSIONS

The vision and four goals of the Foreign Languages Strategy will become a reality through delivery of the actions outlined in the implementation plan. This Strategy is being implemented alongside other strategies and policies (such as Irish, STEM, Creative Ireland) that seek to give our learners a broad and balanced education. Prioritising the knowledge and skills acquired through the study of foreign languages is a necessary component of our education system if it is to be the best in Europe by 2026, the key target under the Action Plan for Education 2016–19.

Working together, educators at all levels, employers, and parents in particular must heighten awareness of the importance of learning foreign languages. The opportunities that ensue for foreign-language learners, heritage-language speakers, and the economy are significant as we successfully navigate our global environment.

Languages Connect: <https://languagesconnect.ie/>

Information on the Strategy and progress reported by FLAG is available on the DES website: [www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/foreign-languages-advisory-group-flag-.html](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/foreign-languages-advisory-group-flag-.html).

\*\*\*

### FÉILTE: 'Weaving Well-Being - Learning to Flourish'



Mick Rock, Teacher, Pope John Paul the 2nd National School, Dublin; Máire Lineen, Teaching Council Member; and Fiona Forman, Teacher, Pope John Paul the 2nd National School, Dublin.

# VIRTUAL DESKTOP INFRASTRUCTURE

A virtual world where the benefits are real



**Trevor Collins**

Assistant Principal,  
Bandon Grammar  
School: Business,  
Economics and  
Computer teacher

**R**ecent ICT initiatives in Irish education have led to changes in teaching and learning, including what is taught, how it is taught, and the infrastructure for teaching and learning. This article focuses on the use of Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI). It describes a journey of a school changing from the traditional ICT model to one of the newest (and hopefully best) systems available in using cloud-based VDI. It also discusses an action-based pilot programme being undertaken in the local area.

The work undertaken has been solidly founded in the best practice of education literature. Those behind the change in infrastructure have won awards at local and national level and have been positively reviewed by business and academic management.

This journey has just started. Bringing about a change in the conservative world of education may prove difficult – but difficult roads often lead to the most wonderful destinations. Virtual Desktop Infrastructure is here to stay, and is becoming standard in business. This article explains how VDI can improve ICT infrastructure in education. The system is virtual, but as we will see, many of the benefits are real.

The concept arose from the benefits that staff in Bandon Grammar School (BGS) saw when using VDI after they upgraded their ICT system around 2012. In conjunction with VMware, a local software company, the school adopted a system that would normally be used in the banking, insurance, and finance sectors.

Since the system is quite new, there is a lack of academic research and literature on cloud-based VDI in both secondary and third-level education. This article may encourage further study in the area.

## THE PATHWAY TO CHANGE

Some schools do not have computer rooms and do not provide ICT training to students. Others may have a dedicated computer room with an average of twenty-five devices, each typically comprising a monitor, keyboard, mouse, and terminal. We can assume that devices would have applications for writing documents (e.g., Word), creating presentations (e.g., PowerPoint), and accessing the internet (e.g., Chrome).

Over the years, various State initiatives have attempted to develop ICT in schools. Schools IT 2000 was a key programme with over £40 million in investment. It financed equipment and improved connectivity and teacher training (Mulkeen, 2003). This investment in education continues.



Some schools may have a portable trolley with laptops or handheld devices to do something similar to normal PCs. Costs to maintain and upgrade these devices would be incurred by the school.

Each device is a standalone unit and must be updated individually. Maintaining these systems can be costly and time-consuming, and depends on a member of staff having a certain level of ICT skills. Often this is a teacher with a full timetable and huge and varied demands being made on them.

While various bodies such as the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) (see References) and Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU, 2017) provide guidelines for schools to develop their ICT infrastructure, many schools simply do not have the personnel or time to research, develop, and implement a suitable system. As difficult as it is for a secondary school in Ireland, primary schools face an even tougher task.

### **GENERATION 1: THE START OF A JOURNEY TO VDI**

Bandon Grammar School undertook a major extension in 2011/12, which created an opportunity to redevelop the ICT infrastructure. Before this, the school had one dedicated computer room with twenty-eight PCs. There was also a woodwork room with some PCs. Management's willingness to empower staff with decision-making rights was a key factor. As Ghamrawi (2011) wrote, in an article on improving ICT schools, it fostered 'collegial dialogue, collective problem-solving ... and a strong commitment to continual instructional development and design'.

**Our main investment was the purchase of servers that would process all accounts, personas, desktops, data, and applications,**

Staff researched ICT systems and joined up with VMware, a firm with specialist software used mainly in financial and technical sectors. Since the school essentially had a 'green-field' site on which to build and test a new ICT infrastructure, VMware used the school as a test case to see VDI operating in an education environment.

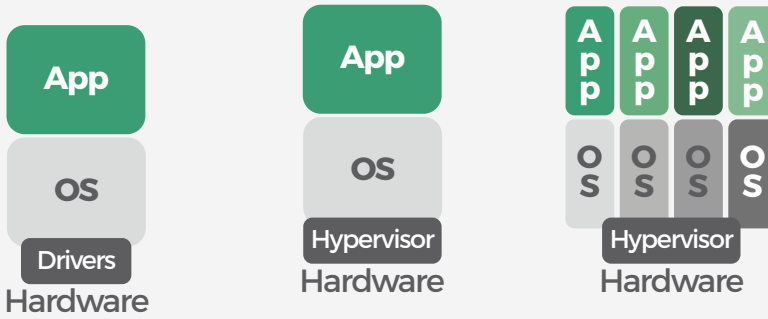
While the Irish Digital Learning Framework (DES, 2017) acknowledges that 'schools are at different stages of the school improvement journey with regards to embedding of the use of digital technologies into teaching and learning' (p.2), we felt from our experience that VDI has many benefits over the traditional ICT model in schools.

Following 'Universal Design for Learning' principles, our design and implementation of this system facilitated 'autonomy and control in order to develop a sense of ownership'. (Valstad, 2010). The team recognised that access to information did not imply access to learning. For students to have the opportunity to reach their potential, a student-friendly, efficient, and durable system was required.

### **VDI IN OPERATION**

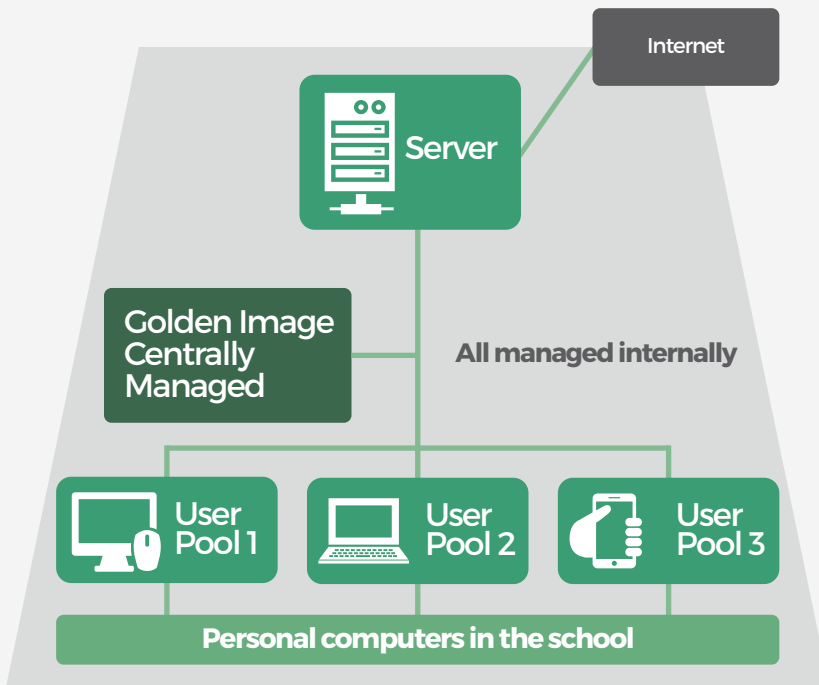
Our main investment was the purchase of servers that would process all accounts, personas, desktops, data, and applications. A special 'master computer' (golden image) is made using software, and it is then copied ('cloned') for each user.

Common with servers, but can be done with desktops too.



Virtualising - abstraction of computing from the underlying hardware/software

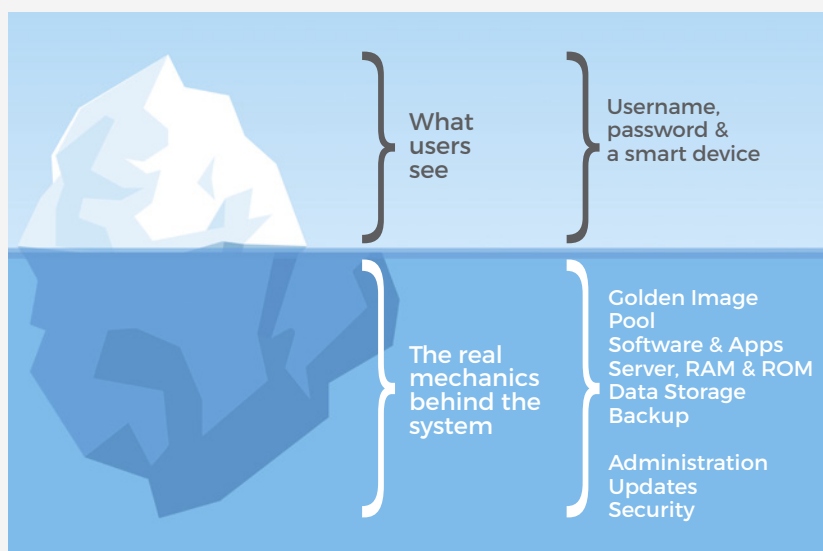
A key point is that instead of using the components of the computer you are sitting at (CPU, ROM, RAM, etc.), all of the processing is done by a more powerful, central server that manages the accounts, apps, software, virus protection, and everything else. The only function of the PC, laptop, tablet, or smartphone is to send the keyboard taps and mouse strokes to the central server. Cheap, second-hand devices can therefore be used instead of expensive, state-of-the-art devices.



Current System in (School VDI)

## BENEFITS OF VDI

1. Since the central server does all the processing, you no longer need to spend large sums on new ICT devices. In our case, we collected many second-hand PCs over the years. We now have five dedicated rooms with around 120 PCs, all sourced for free.
2. Different groups of users can be created for different needs (e.g., different software for different years). You can customise the desktops to suit specific needs.
3. You no longer need to spend heavily on updating current devices: maintenance costs are reduced.
4. Students see the exact same desktop on every device.
5. Once the master ('golden image') has been updated, all users get the update the next time they log on: massive savings on time and labour.
6. The devices work consistently and mostly very reliably.
7. Green factor: Devices that otherwise would have been dumped now get a second life (Dasilva et al., 2012).
8. If made available on a national level, every school regardless of location gets access to the same resources.
9. If managed centrally by a state agency such as the DES, the Department can make resources available on every user's desktop. (Equality of access for all, regardless of location, type of school, or background, once a student has access to a device.)



'Front of house' v 'Back of house' infrastructure

## FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN ADOPTING VDI

1. There are considerable costs in purchasing and setting up a server.
2. Licensing costs need to be factored into budgets.
3. Understanding how the system operates is vital.
4. Be willing to change one's perception of ICT in schools. Decision-makers and stakeholders must become less conservative. VDI changes the focus on expensive, fancy, 'front-of-house' devices to capital infrastructure spending on devices that operate in the background.
5. The school will need a skilled teacher or technician to maintain the servers and accounts if the schools use their own central server. (This has been a major stumbling block with the first generation of VDI in schools, and is now eliminated with cloud-based VDI.)
6. Since the whole system is internet-based, all functionality is lost if the internet is down.
7. Schools need an administrator to help set up accounts and to decide what applications different users have access to. (Less important than #5 above.)

## OUR EXPERIENCE

The system was designed and maintained by practising teachers in a school. Problems at ground level were flagged, and appropriate solutions were found: classroom-based solutions for classroom-based problems.

The accounts using the server worked more consistently. With the traditional PC system, a user could change settings (accidentally or deliberately), denying the next user access to applications. Individual accounts stop this from happening. Users can log on to their accounts more consistently, with the same desktop on their screen no matter which of the 120 PCs in the school they use. The applications on the devices worked.

For readers unfamiliar with computer rooms in a school, these may sound like obvious advantages, but in some schools a typical classroom could have up to half of the devices not functioning properly. More devices being able to work for more time is key.

Since updates can now be done centrally, device functionality improved.

With more devices available, teachers started to use more ICT applications with their students than before. More classes were brought to the computer rooms. More assignments were done with ICT. Teachers used the system to allow students to research topics and projects. There was a shift in the teaching pedagogies. Our change in ICT culture replicated many of the advantages described in Lai and Pratt's (2008) investigation on the effects of ICT use in New Zealand secondary schools – for both teaching (p.100) and learning (pp.105–106).

With more devices available, teachers started to use more ICT applications with their students than before.

The infrastructure has proven to be the foundation on which we built our ICT framework. But three applications, which depend on good infrastructure, helped to change the working ethos in the school. The applications are core to administration, teaching, and learning in the school:

1. School portal: The student school-day roll, exam reports, boarder roll, and detention system are now all managed electronically.
2. With Google Apps For Education (GAFE), every student (and family) now has a school email address. (Google Drive has been very beneficial.)
3. Google Classroom has opened up lines of communication between the teacher or coach and the student like never before. Teachers can post notes, resources, attachments, web links, and notices to their students. Sports coaches can put up teams and fixture arrangements. Students can access all of these through their email account or a laptop or PC. Importantly, they can download an app to their smartphone and get notifications via their device: the message comes to them rather than them having to chase the message!

#### OTHER FACTORS WORTH NOTING

1. Over the last two years, the average student has become much more ICT-savvy. Reluctance to use ICT is reducing (possibly a sign of the times as well as an effect of our infrastructure). This outcome is in line with the long-term objectives of the Digital Learning Framework for Post-Primary Schools.
  2. Students are more inclined to use facilities such as Google Drive for group projects.
  3. Students doing research for the Young Scientist competition now use online apps such as Google Forms and SurveyMonkey to collect data; this is a shift in learning culture from only four years ago. These apps make it easier and quicker to send and answer questionnaires and to review replies.
4. There has been a big increase in completion rate by Transition Year students who are doing the European Computer Driving License (ECDL), with a remarkable improvement in the average speed of finishing. In the last academic year, we had to create an extra programme for those who completed the ECDL much earlier than expected. To earn a special ICT award, students had to complete five Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), four of which were determined by the school: on social media, HTML programming, social media analytics, and digital leadership. Once the students had completed these four, they could choose a course that interested them.
5. There has been a shift in school culture: ICT is now part of everyday life in the school. Historically, students would be excited going into the computer room, but nowadays it is simply a room where they do things in a different way to a normal classroom.

There has been a big increase in completion rate by Transition Year students who are doing the European Computer Driving License (ECDL).

### **A BAD PROBLEM EMERGES ... BUT FOR GOOD REASONS**

The system is now nearly a victim of its own success. The demands made of it – numbers of devices required, quality of applications used, speed of processing required, and volume of data being transferred – have all increased considerably over the duration of our use of the VDI system.

### **A KEY ISSUE**

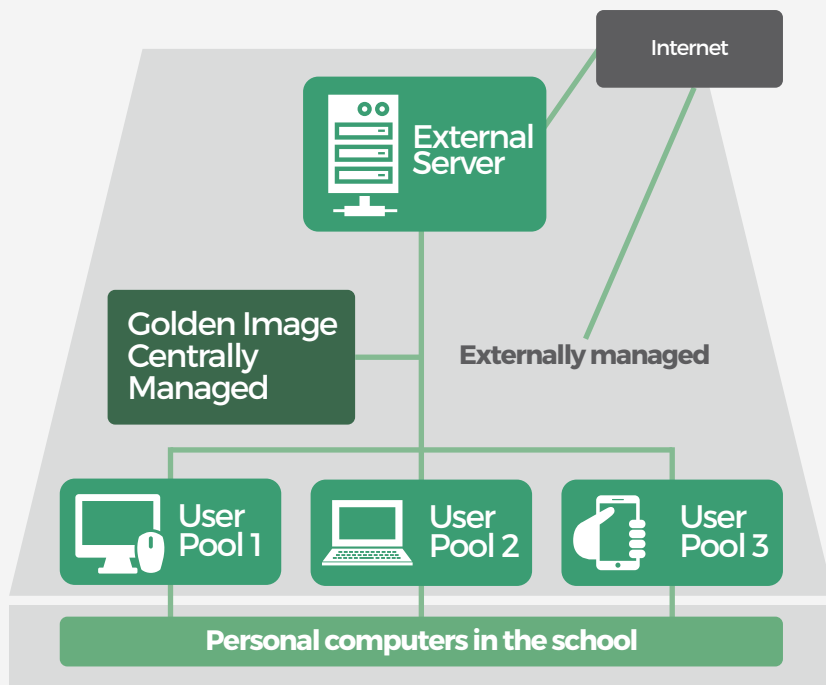
After we gave a presentation at the ICT advisory group of the Joint Managerial Body in summer 2017, an important piece of feedback resonated with us. Our system was over-dependent on key personnel. What would happen if they fell ill, moved away, or retired? Not every school can have personnel with such key skills. While schools may have a designated ICT coordinator, ‘coordinator may mean different things in different schools’, as Mulkeen (2003) wrote.

How can schools adopt a VDI system without the same level of skills or commitment? One solution came through a cloud-based VDI system that was being used in Spain.

### **GENERATION 2: CLOUD-BASED VDI IN ACTION**

With a cloud-based system, much of the software and mechanics remains the same, except that instead of using a server on-site or nearby, all the processing is done by an external server located and managed off-site. This server may be provided by the HEAnet or another service provider. Advantages of cloud-based VDI include:

1. There are huge economies of scale, as a school will only need to pay for the service as they use it. No capital, depreciation, or maintenance costs: just pay-per-use.
2. This second-generation system removes schools’ need to have a skilled teacher or technician available to fix issues with accounts or applications.
3. The school no longer needs to buy a server or pay to maintain and run it.
4. The school no longer has to pay for electricity to run the servers.
5. Labour costs are reduced hugely because fewer staff are needed to maintain the system, and less time is needed to update applications and devices.
6. The applications available can be the same as the first-generation, school-based server system or can be enlarged based on advice from the cloud-based VDI provider.



### Cloud-based Virtual Desktop System - Future Model

With this updated model, servers and user profiles and accounts are all managed off-site. While Stoll and Kools (2017) write that ‘the education sector does not have a track record of innovating itself’, the literature suggests that this system empowers schools as learning organisations (SLOs). It is innovative and far-reaching, with the potential to transform education infrastructure. The author feels it can be a catalyst to change the dynamics of education.

### THE FUTURE - PILOT PROGRAMME PROPOSAL

A long-term goal is to undertake a large-scale action research project to show cloud-based VDI in action in four local secondary schools. The goal of the pilot programme is to assess the viability of using cloud-based VDI in education in Ireland. This would require a system to manage the ICT education needs of around 1,500 students and 200 teachers. This is a first for Ireland and possibly Europe.

Key factors to consider for investigation include:

1. Cost-benefit analysis of
  - a. Capital infrastructure costs
  - b. Depreciation
  - c. Maintenance costs
  - d. Licensing
2. Impact on learning
3. Impact on teaching

4. Being future-ready
5. Operational functionality of the system.
6. Impact on school structure and life.

We expect the study to last two years and that third-level institutions would be part of the study of the system in action. The final report would be used by education stakeholders to determine future policy-making on using VDI in education in the future.

### **FUNDING REQUIREMENTS**

This proposal is based on all four secondary schools signing up to the project. All students and staff would have online accounts that enable them to access predetermined applications from any device with internet access. The system would also enable users to save their work online, so they could retrieve it from any device at any time.

### **FUTURE PLANNING**

We are working with interested stakeholders to create a business plan. This will be used to lobby for state funding for this two-year project. If successful, we believe the system will stand or fall on its merits. We have been on a journey to develop an efficient, cost-effective, user-friendly system. Perhaps our voyage has only now just begun!

**A long-term goal is to undertake a large-scale action research project to show cloud-based VDI in action in four secondary schools.**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I have been very lucky to be part of a team of dedicated people who have the interests of students at heart. I have been working with my colleague, but more importantly good friend, Darren Platts, who is best described as the brains behind the operation. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Darren, who simply makes things happen.

Thank you also to Dr Edward Gash, who was key to developing and implementing the VDI system in our school. He continues to go above and beyond the call of duty in helping to develop ICT in education.

Thank you to the management and staff of Bandon Grammar School, who trust us in our efforts and decision-making with ICT in the school.

Finally, a huge thank you to my wife, Caroline, and our two children. Without their support and patience, I would not be able to complete my small role in developing ICT in the school.

---

### **REFERENCES**

- Dasilva, D., Liu, L., and Bessis, N. (2012) 'Enabling Green IT through Building a Virtual Desktop Infrastructure'. Eighth International Conference on Semantics, Knowledge and Grids. doi: 10.1109/SKG.2012.29
- Department of Education and Skills (DES) (2017) 'Digital Learning Framework for Post-Primary Schools'. September. Dublin. [www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/)



Information/Information-Communications-Technology-ICT-in-Schools/digital-learning-framework-post-primary.pdf.

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (2015) 'Public Service ICT Strategy'. Dublin. <https://ictstrategy.per.gov.ie/>.

Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) (2017) Financial Guideline 2017/2018 for Community & Comprehensive and Voluntary Secondary Schools. IT Infrastructure Checklist. [www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2018/03/17-17-Financial-Guideline-IT-Infrastructure-Checklist.pdf](http://www.fssu.ie/app/uploads/2018/03/17-17-Financial-Guideline-IT-Infrastructure-Checklist.pdf).

Ghamrawi, N. (2011) 'Trust me: Your schools can do better – A message from teachers to principals', *Education Management Administration & Leadership*, 39(33). doi: 10.1177/1741143210393997

Lai, K. and Pratt, K. (2008) 'Positive to a degree: The effects of ICT use in New Zealand Secondary Schools', *Computers in the Schools*. 24(3–4), 95–109. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J025v24n03\\_07](http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J025v24n03_07)

Mulkeen, A. (2003) 'What can policy makers do to encourage integration of information and communications technology? Evidence from the Irish schools system', *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 12(2) 277–293.

PDST Technology in Education (2018a) 'Planning'. Dublin. [www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Planning/](http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Planning/).

PDST Technology in Education (2018b) 'The e-Learning Handbook'. Dublin. [www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Planning2/e-Learning-Handbook/](http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Planning2/e-Learning-Handbook/).

PDST Technology in Education (2018c) 'Networking/Wireless Networks'. Dublin. [www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Technology/Networking-Wireless-Networks/](http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Technology/Networking-Wireless-Networks/).

PDST Technology in Education (2018d) 'Cloud based Tools & Applications for Learning'. Dublin. [www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Technology/Advice-Sheets/Cloud-based-Tools-and-Applications.pdf](http://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/en/Technology/Advice-Sheets/Cloud-based-Tools-and-Applications.pdf).

Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) (2018) 'Post-Primary'. Dublin: PDST. [www.pdst.ie/postprimary](http://www.pdst.ie/postprimary).

Stoll, L. and Kools, M. (2017) 'The school as a learning organisation: A review revisiting and extending a timely concept', *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 2(1), 2–17. doi: <http://doi.org/10.1108/JPC-09-2016-0022>

Valstad, H. (2010) 'iPad as a pedagogical device'. Program and Information Systems, Specialization Project. Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

## GLOSSARY

**Cloud-based:** a term that refers to applications, services, or resources made available to users on demand via the internet from a cloud computing provider's servers. Companies typically use cloud-based computing as a way to increase capacity, enhance functionality, or add services on demand without having to commit to potentially expensive infrastructure costs or increase or train existing in-house support staff. (From: [www.webopedia.com/TERM/C/cloud\\_based.html](http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/C/cloud_based.html))

**Concurrency:** This relates to the level of usage of ICT resources. A school may have three computer labs with twenty-five devices in each. The school may have nine 40-minute classes a day and operate 150 days a year. We assume that classes are timetabled in each room for five periods a day: 3 hours and 20 minutes. You now need to examine the potential hours of use available versus the actual hours used. (As with a typical business, you pay only for what you use and when you use it!)

	Hours per day	Days of use per year	Total no. of hours
Potential	24	365	8,760
Actual	3 hours 20 minutes	150	500

Key value: 500 hours of use versus 8,760 hours of potential use gives a 5.71% level of usage. This example does not factor in half days, exam days, etc. The general average level of use based on major studies is a concurrency rate of just 3%.

**Flexilabs:** A firm that offers cloud-based VDI.

**ICT:** Information and Computer Technology

**Server:** A computer that provides data to other computers. It may serve data to systems on a local area network (LAN) or a wide area network (WAN) over the internet. (From: <https://techterms.com/definition/server>.)

**Virtual Desktop Infrastructure:** The practice of hosting a desktop operating system within a virtual machine (VM) running on a centralised server. VDI is a variation on the client/server computing model, sometimes referred to as server-based computing. (From: [www.gartner.com/it-glossary/virtual-desktop-infrastructure-vdi](http://www.gartner.com/it-glossary/virtual-desktop-infrastructure-vdi).) The term was coined by VMware for its VMware server and Virtual Desktop Manager (VDM).

**VMware:** An IT company that offers a unique program to facilitate virtualisation.

---

\*\*\*

---

### Irish-Language Books for Children of the Irish Diaspora



International students from Italy and St. Andrew's College, Dublin, helped to launch the first series of free Irish-language and culture activity books for children of the Irish diaspora in Iveagh House, as part of Conradh na Gaeilge's Cultúr Club project, on 3 October 2018.

*Chabhraigh mic léinn idirnáisiúnta ón Iodáil agus ó Choláiste Naomh Aindrias, Baile Átha Cliath, chun an chéad shraith de leabhráin ghníomhaíochta Ghaeilge agus chultúir do pháistí an diaspóra a sheoladh i dTeach Uíbh Eachach mar chuid den togra Cultúr Club de chuid Chonradh na Gaeilge ar 3 Deireadh Fómhair 2018.*



**Karina Murray**  
founder and CEO of  
Aunua Academy



**Philip Smith**  
Co-founder of Aunua  
Academy

## THE STORY OF AUNUA ACADEMY

How an Irish non-profit for mental health was born

**M**y name is Karina Murray: I am the founder and CEO of Aunua Academy, an Irish non-profit and global provider of free, expert education for mental health. But my most important role in life is being a mother, and just like every other parent I have many fears for my children's future. This is what compelled me to take a massive leap of faith. I dedicated the past year of my life and worked relentlessly to build Aunua Academy, as I knew that every child and adult needs to be heard, and I was determined to support them and give them their voice.

But my past is what got me where I am today. Let's start with my school days, which I found challenging. There were no allowances for daydreamers, for the child who got lost in what was happening outside the window, who was held back by an academic environment she felt trapped in. Schools just didn't work like that, and I didn't work the way the schools did.

Things became easier to accept as the years passed, and though I learned a lot more than I had realised, I still carried doubts and insecurities. Acceptance and fitting in were a problem for me, as for so many others – always being the square peg but not knowing how to embrace it. So many children face the longing for a best friend and the dismay and disheartened feeling of going it alone in what feels like isolation. When you are struggling to catch up, this all adds to the challenges faced during school days.

The sad truth is that nothing much has changed in the school environment, and children are expected not only to keep up with their academics but also to deal with the added pressures of today's world. Today, peer pressures come from social media, which can leave children wide open and vulnerable to danger. This is not an environment of comfort and support, and it can impact massively on each person's mental health.

Mental health should be at the core of education, as we can't expect children to know how to feel and react in situations: they need to be taught how to develop their emotional intelligence. The focus on academics needs to shift, or this generation of young people will be facing an even worse fate with a growing epidemic of mental health problems. All children learn differently, and it is crucial that we encourage them and accept them for who they are – not disempower them because they struggle to keep up.

## OPPORTUNITIES

For me, life after school became a happy release, growing as a person in new environments, ones that I felt I could control at my own pace and make my own choices. At last I was free: I felt that the chains of being institutionalised had been lifted. I could now use my imagination to create the life I wanted to live, without being told what, where, when, and how to do things. Nothing held me back – this was my time to explore the world and find my space. Having left school a little early, I managed to get into the college I wanted and studied fashion design and art for three years. I explored different jobs over the years, had fun, and travelled; life was good, exciting, and challenging.

Jumping years ahead, I am now in my mid-forties and a mother of two beautiful children. After nine years spent at home raising them, my world changed completely when my son started school and I faced the daunting task of returning to the working world. I wanted to find my place and stay being me. My imagination ran riot again, my gut instinct kicked in, and I gave birth to my new baby, Aunua, which is a play on words for ‘a new you’. It was certainly an opportunity for a new me! In a leap of faith I created this personal-development programme for adults, and in February 2017 we launched successfully with 140 attendees and the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Guss O’Connell.

At the same time, I became a radio presenter and hosted my own weekly Aunua show on Together FM. This was an amazing opportunity for me to interview incredible guests, meet new friends, and build a team for my next venture: Aunua Academy. In September 2017 I trained and qualified as an NLP practitioner. In October I was fortunate to win a scholarship to the Entrepreneurs Institute in Bali and became a founding member of the Genius School, which is one of Roger James Hamilton’s global movements to ‘ignite the genius in every child’.

## DIRECTIONS

My journey began as one of personal development, to find my space, and with Aunua I discovered that my path, passion, and purpose are ultimately to represent children and be their voice. The change of direction from Aunua being a personal-development course for adults to a global online platform for children was inspired by the son of a close friend. At the age of 11 he was bullied and was struggling so much, he wanted to take his own life. I could see the ripple effect of what was happening, and saw his pain and his family’s as they tried to help.

This boy compelled me to drive forward, and I made a promise to his wonderful mother – and to myself – that I would stop at nothing to make changes. Children today face many of the same challenges that I faced in school thirty-five years ago, but we are in a different world today. With each generation comes a sea of new information, new technology, new challenges and changes, and we need to build resources to teach our children how to arm themselves to face these challenges.

**Aunua Academy is dedicated to providing free resources on mental health that can inform and support children, young people, and adults throughout the world.**

To do this, I dedicated the past year to building the best team of professional experts I could find. I spoke to political representatives, health service professionals, and people from all walks of life, working relentlessly to bring Aunua to life. I wasn't sure how best to help children all over Ireland, let alone globally, but I knew we had to make a change. As a mother, I know that the fear we face for our children's future can be crippling, especially with outside influences that too often take hold and destroy young lives. I felt compelled to take action so that every child could have their voice and feel that what's impossible is possible for them.

### **POSSIBILITIES**

I feel blessed to have this opportunity to make a difference, and I know and understand my life's purpose now: to represent children and be their voice. I hadn't envisaged my role as being so public, and at times I have felt completely out of my comfort zone. But I know that if I want to give children their voice, I have to be willing to use mine and speak out.

I've been asked so often about my background, as so many think I have some fancy title, but the truth is that I'm a mother and can understand with compassion what this means and the responsibility it involves. I'm a communicator and networker who brings great people together. I'm just me, someone who leads from the heart, pushes through to make the necessary changes, to be that voice, and yet still I'm that daydreamer who believes that anything is possible when you believe.

### **AUNUA ACADEMY**

Aunua Academy is dedicated to providing free resources on mental health that can inform and support children, young people, and adults throughout the world. Mental-health resources are often expensive, confusing, or not available at all. The world has been crying out for free, accessible, accurate information on mental health: that is the role of the Aunua Academy. We are building a curriculum of content that will show people mental health disorder definitions, symptoms, and support tools. People need to be made aware to recognise their mental health, how to care for it, and how to support themselves and those around them to have a good quality of life regardless of their mental issue.

Aunua Academy is a voice for children and young people who need guidance and a place to call their home when it comes to their mental health needs. We feel this is a global movement that must happen now, and this is the start. Mental health is a battle we all share, regardless of age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender. It is a battle we must fight together and help the world have a better relationship with its mental health.

After piloting Aunua Academy as a secondary-school programme, it became evident that this was urgently needed everywhere. With the support and shared vision of my co-founder and COO, Philip Smith, we built a team of experts and volunteers around the world to bring the Aunua Academy into as many homes and schools as possible. We have worked tirelessly to build the Aunua Academy into what it is today and to make possible everything we aimed for. Now, with many new connections and global partnerships – with social education platform Belouga, the World Health Innovation Summit, – we are closer than ever to making the Aunua Academy the world's home for mental health education. You can visit us at [www.aunuaacademy.com](http://www.aunuaacademy.com).

# ACHIEVEMENT IN THE JUNIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

## Trends over time in DEIS and non-DEIS schools

**T**here is a wealth of literature, both Irish and international, that shows a very strong and persistent relationship between poverty and educational outcomes (Weir, 2001; Sofroniou et al., 2004; Reardon, 2011). The DEIS programme was introduced in primary and post-primary schools in Ireland in 2007, and is aimed at providing supports to students who are at risk of educational failure due to their poor socioeconomic backgrounds. The Educational Research Centre (ERC) has been conducting an independent evaluation of the DEIS programme on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

The evaluation is attempting to monitor the implementation of DEIS and assess its impact on students, families, schools, and communities at primary and post-primary levels. Many methodological approaches have been used to collect evaluation data (e.g., questionnaire studies, large-scale achievement testing programmes, school visits, interviews, and focus groups), and evaluation reports have been published concerning DEIS primary schools in rural areas (Weir et al., 2009; Weir and McAvinue, 2013), DEIS primary schools in urban areas (Weir and Archer, 2011; Weir and McAvinue, 2012; Weir and Denner, 2013; Weir and Moran, 2014; Kavanagh et al., 2017; Kavanagh and Weir, 2018), and DEIS post-primary schools (Weir et al., 2014; McAvinue and Weir, 2015).

As well as monitoring aspects of the programme's implementation and a variety of other issues, it is important that the evaluation includes the monitoring of student outcomes. At primary level, test data in reading and mathematics collected as part of the evaluation shows that students in urban DEIS primary schools have improved their achievements on each of four rounds of testing between 2007 and 2016, but that their achievements are still well below the national norm (Kavanagh et al., 2017). The monitoring of outcomes for the evaluation at post-primary level has been greatly facilitated by the availability of population-level Junior Certificate Examination (JCE) data provided by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) for all post-primary schools nationally. The aim of the current paper is to use this data to describe the gap in achievement between students in DEIS and non-DEIS schools, and to examine trends over time in their JCE performance.

For the present purpose, student achievement in the JCE is described using an Overall Performance Scale (OPS) score (Kellaghan and Dwan, 1995). The OPS scale involves allocating numerical values to the alphabetical grades awarded to candidates, which, when summed, produces an index of a candidate's general scholastic



**Dr Susan Weir**

Research Fellow,  
Educational Research  
Centre, Dublin



**Dr Lauren  
Kavanagh**

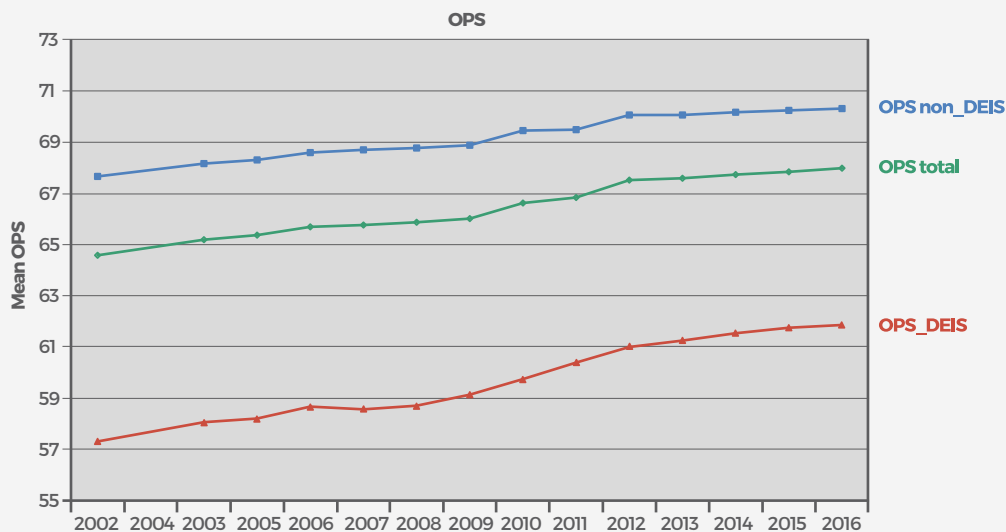
Research Associate,  
Educational Research  
Centre, Dublin

achievement. The OPS score is based on a student's performance in their best seven subjects, and the level of the paper is taken into account. The maximum possible OPS score is 84 (where a student is awarded seven A-grades on higher-level papers), while the lowest possible OPS score is 0 (where a student fails to achieve at least a grade F on any of their best seven papers). The OPS score is considered a useful broad measure of a candidate's achievements in the JCE.

The graph shows the mean OPS score in the JCE over a fifteen-year period from 2002 to 2016, in DEIS, non-DEIS, and all schools. In 2002, the mean OPS score of all schools was 67.7, rising to 70.3 in 2016. The effect of time on OPS was statistically significant, with an average annual rate of increase of 0.24 OPS points across all schools ( $p < 0.001$ ).<sup>1</sup>

There was also a significant gap between non-DEIS and DEIS schools from 2002 to 2016. In 2002, the mean OPS score in DEIS schools was 10.5 points lower than that in non-DEIS schools. By 2016, the most recent year for which data is available, the gap had reduced to 8.4 points. The average annual rate of increase in non-DEIS schools from 2002 to 2016 was 0.19 OPS points, but was significantly higher in DEIS schools, at an average increase of 0.33 points per year ( $p < 0.001$ ).

In 2002, the average OPS in DEIS schools was 57.3 points, approximately equivalent to seven B grades on ordinary-level papers or seven E grades on higher-level papers. In 2016, it was 61.9 points, approximately equivalent to seven A grades on ordinary-level papers or seven D grades on higher-level papers. (In reality, a student achieving an OPS of 57 or 62 will have earned that score from a mixture of grades and levels.) In non-DEIS schools, the average OPS score in both 2002 and 2016 was roughly equivalent to seven C grades on higher-level papers.



1 A multilevel modelling approach was taken to analyse the repeated measures data, with measurement points (Level 1) clustered within schools (Level 2). Data was analysed by fitting a random coefficients model, i.e., a model in which slopes as well as intercepts were allowed to vary across schools. Analyses were carried out using Mplus version 7. Data for 2004 was not available to the authors.

These findings confirm that the achievements of students in DEIS schools have continued to improve since previous analyses by McAvinue and Weir (2015) based on JCE data up to 2014. Their analyses also revealed that the introduction of resources associated with the DEIS programme in 2006/07 may have had an impact on trends for SSP schools: they identified a significant upward change in trend from 2008 onward, around the time the DEIS programme might have been expected to have its first impact.

The correlational nature of the data precludes our drawing conclusions about cause and effect (i.e., that the introduction of resources under the programme caused the improvement). But it is possible to conclude there has been an overall improvement in schools nationally, that the improvement is more marked in DEIS schools than in non-DEIS schools, and that the data suggests the increase is linked to the introduction of the programme.

It is important to continue to monitor educational outcomes in DEIS schools. However, the change to the grading system in Junior Cert English introduced in 2017, to be extended to other subjects in the future, will make it impossible to continue examining trends in achievement as it has been done in the current paper. The two marking schemes have many differences that make them incomparable. For example, there are fewer grades in the new system (6 vs 7), the boundaries for the grades have changed (the old top grade, A, was 85–100%; the new top grade, Distinction, is 90–100%), and the new scheme does not have the option of students taking the subject at foundation level.

A further issue may be even more problematic for comparing JCE data pre- and post-2017. It appears, from preliminary analysis of JCE English grades in 2016 and 2017, that the change to the new scheme has been accompanied by an increase in students achieving higher grades. This is based on the outcome of an exercise carried out at the ERC in which the individual marks allocated in 2016 were converted to the 2017 grading scheme. This revealed that while the distributions for both years were similar at higher level, at ordinary level more students achieved higher grades (i.e., Distinction, Higher merit) in 2017 than in 2016 (Millar, 2018).

Furthermore, if we assume that the 2017 cohort of students taking English at ordinary level contained those who would have opted for foundation level had it been available, that also suggests that the shift to the merit-based system has been accompanied by some grade inflation. Future studies of long-term trends in achievement in the state exams will require exploring ways of equating the old and new grading systems.

Other outcome data at post-primary level in the form of retention levels to Junior and Leaving Cert indicates that attainment rates are improving in all schools, but are increasing at a greater rate in DEIS than in non-DEIS schools (McAvinue and Weir, 2015). The analysis of trends in retention levels using data for the three most recent years is the subject of a forthcoming evaluation report (Weir and Kavanagh, in preparation).

“It is possible to conclude that there has been an overall improvement in schools nationally, and that the improvement is more marked in DEIS schools than in non-DEIS schools.”

“Future examinations of long-term trends in achievement in the state examinations will require exploring ways of equating the old and new grading systems.”



While it remains the case that on all of these outcome measures, students in non-DEIS schools perform better than those in DEIS schools, the data presented in this paper suggests that the gap may be starting to narrow. This is a positive finding for students attending DEIS schools, and for all associated with the programme.

---

## REFERENCES

- Kavanagh, L. and Weir, S. (2018) *The Evaluation of DEIS: The Lives and Learning of Urban Primary School Pupils, 2007–2016*. Report to the Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Kavanagh, L., Weir, S., and Moran, E. (2017) *The Evaluation of DEIS: Achievements and Attitudes of Students in Urban Primary Schools from 2007 to 2016*. Report to the Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Kellaghan, T. and Dwan, B. (1995) *The 1994 Junior Certificate Examination: A Review of Results*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
- McAvinue, L. and Weir, S. (2015) *The Evaluation of DEIS at Post-Primary Level: An Update on Trends over Time in Achievement and Retention*. Report to the Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Educational Research Centre
- Millar, D. (2018) *Note on JC English results 2016 and 2017*. Unpublished manuscript. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Reardon, S.F. (2011) 'The widening academic achievement gap between the rich and the poor: New evidence and possible explanations'. In: R. Murnane and G. Duncan (eds.) *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality and the Uncertain Life Chances of Low-Income Children*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press.
- Sofroniou, N., Archer, P., and Weir, S. (2004) 'An analysis of the association between socioeconomic context, gender and achievement', *Irish Journal of Education*, 35, 58–72.
- Weir, S. (2001) 'The reading achievements of primary school pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds', *Irish Journal of Education*, 32, 23–43.
- Weir, S. and Archer, P. (with O'Flaherty, A. and Gilleece, L.) (2011) *A Report on the First Phase of the Evaluation of DEIS*. Report to the Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Weir, S., Archer, P., and Millar, D. (2009) *Analysis of English reading and mathematics achievements in schools in the rural dimension of the School Support Programme*. Report to the Department of Education and Science. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Weir, S., and Denner, S. (2013) *The Evaluation of the School Support Programme under DEIS: Changes in Pupil Achievement between 2007 and 2013*. Report to the Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Weir, S. and McAvinue, L. (2012) *The Impact of DEIS on Class Size in Primary Schools*. Report to the Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Weir, S. and McAvinue, L. (2013) *The Achievements and Characteristics of Pupils Attending Rural Schools Participating in DEIS*. Report to the Department of Education and Skills. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Weir, S., McAvinue, L., Moran, E., and O'Flaherty, A. (2014) *A Report on the Evaluation of DEIS at Second Level. Report to the Department of Education and Skills*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.
- Weir, S. and Moran, E. (with O'Flaherty, A.) (2014) *The Organisation of Learning Support and Resource Teaching in a Sample of Urban Primary Schools Serving Disadvantaged Pupils*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

---

\*\*\*



Bring an international dimension to your work

[leargas.ie](http://leargas.ie)

