



## **Department of Education and Science**

### **Summary of All Initiatives Funded By the Department to help Alleviate Educational Disadvantage.**

Education can play a key role in the promotion of a more inclusive society. Educational qualifications, or the lack of them, determine to a large extent the life chances of people. More than ever, underachievement at school results in social difficulties that can lead to a life of uncertainty, marginalisation, and dependence on the structures of social assistance. Lack of qualifications can combine with unemployment, dependence on social welfare, accommodation difficulties and health problems, and create a situation where the various aspects of disadvantage become mutually reinforcing. A wide range of measures has been introduced aimed at addressing disadvantage and a summary of these measures are set out in this document.

#### Footnote:

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this document. Please contact Tracey Shanks, Social Inclusion Unit with any queries - [mailto:tracey\\_shanks@education.gov.ie](mailto:tracey_shanks@education.gov.ie)

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# 1. Early Childhood Education

## 2. Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care

In September 2001 the Minister launched a new initiative to promote early childhood education. St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra and the Dublin Institute of Technology were appointed to jointly undertake and manage a project to develop and support the provision of quality early childhood education and to advise the Department of Education and Science on policy issues in this area in pursuance of the objectives in the White Paper on Early Childhood Education "Ready to Learn" in 1999. The project will run for up to three years and a Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education has been established for this purpose. Funding for the project is being met from the €93.96m allocation provided by the Government under the National Development Plan for the implementation of the White Paper.

One of the main functions of the Centre is to develop appropriate forms of early intervention and support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and children with disabilities, building on the experience of existing programmes. The Centre will also develop a quality framework in relation to the wide range of issues affecting early childhood education including equipment and material, staff qualifications and training, teaching and learning methodologies, curriculum, guidance for parents and related areas. It is envisaged that the quality framework would be capable of being adapted to the various settings in which early learning takes place.

The work of the Centre will be undertaken in close consultation with the Department and the various agencies, advisory bodies and providers in the sector.

The Centre has a staffing complement of a full-time Director, Assistant Director, administrative staff and three Development Officers.

## 3. Early Start

Early Start is a pilot pre-school intervention project for pupils aged 3 to 4 years who are most at risk in areas of social disadvantage. It aims to expose young children to an educational programme, which would enhance their overall development and prevent school failure and offset the effects of social disadvantage. Approximately €4.83m was spent on this project in 2001 benefiting 1,587 pupils in 40 schools (16 full units and 24 half units) with 56 teachers and 56 childcare workers. Each Early Start Pilot Project pre-school class attracts special capitation funding of €95.23 per pupil, a qualified primary teacher and a qualified childcare worker, a start-up grant of €5,713.82 for materials/equipment and a grant of €1,904.61 to foster parental involvement.

List of beneficiaries: [Schools Involved in the Early Start Pre School Project](#)

Schools:	40
Pupils:	1,587 as on 28/09/01
Current Spending:	<b>€1,801,727.61</b> , exclusive of teachers salaries in 2001

#### 4. Rutland Street Project

The Department funds the Rutland St. Project which caters for 95 pupils age 3-5yrs and which includes a pre-school centre, a special staff teaching allocation, classroom assistants, secretarial services and cooks, together with the provision of school meals.

Pupils: 91 (2001/2002 school year)  
Current Spending: **€203,979.28 (£160,646.74)**, exclusive of teachers salaries, in 2001

#### 5. Traveller pre-school Education

The Department provides 98% of teaching and transport costs, plus grants for equipment and materials.

List of beneficiaries: [List of Traveller Preschools](#)

Pupils: 500  
Current Spending: Annual expenditure on this service is in excess of €1m.

#### 6. Special Needs – Early Childhood Services

There are 18 places at present on the Cork Applied Behaviour Analysis in Schools programme (CABAS) for early childhood services for those with special needs. The annual cost is approximately €685,658.56. In October 2000, a major new package of developments was launched with support funding of £5.5m/€6.98m. This funding will support the development of a nationwide pre-school education service for all children with autism, the extension of the school year through the month of July and the doubling of special needs assistant cover for each special class catering for children with autism.

Pupils: 18  
Current Spending: €685,658.56

## 7. Primary Level Initiatives

### 8. Giving Children an Even Break incorporating Breaking the Cycle

A new Programme, *Giving Children an Even Break*, costing €33m was announced in January 2001. It benefits 2,320 primary schools, involving the appointment of 204 extra teachers over a three-year period. Prior to the allocation of additional resources, a survey was carried out by the Educational Research Centre to identify the schools with the highest levels of disadvantage. Schools with the highest concentration of educationally disadvantaged pupils were invited to participate in the *programme* a key condition of participation being that additional resources must be used for the provision of holistic supports for these pupils.

Training will be provided for teachers in the understanding of educational disadvantage and the delivery of targeted supports.

The Programme has two elements - Urban and Rural.

**Urban:** Enables **224** schools to implement a maximum class size of 20:1 in junior classes and 29:1 in senior classes, resulting in the allocation of **150** posts to 89 urban schools. For the 2002/2003 schoolyear the Minister approved the reduction in the maximum class size in senior classes for these schools from 29:1 to 27:1. The maximum class size for junior classes will remain at 20:1. In addition, grants were provided to 763 urban schools in 2001 for initiatives focused on disadvantaged pupils.

**Rural:** Under the rural dimension of the Programme involving **345** schools, a local coordinator was allocated to clusters of five schools (total of **79** clusters). In 71 cases where it was not possible to include a school in such clusters, additional grant aid was allocated. Grants are also being provided to 1,381 targeted rural schools.

Total number of beneficiaries:

Schools: 2,320

Pupils: Of the 302,101 ordinary pupils in the 2,320 schools in Giving Children an Even Break, 80,234 'at risk' pupils or 26% are targeted for support.

Current Spending: **€5.080m, exclusive of teachers salaries, in 2001**

Further information is available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) -

[Information by Topic > Social Inclusion > Giving Children an Even Break by Tackling Disadvantage](#)

### 9. Breaking the Cycle

The five-year pilot phase of this scheme involving 32 urban and 121 rural primary schools ended on 30 June 2001. The scheme provided for extra staffing, funding, in-career development and a pupil teacher ratio of 15:1. The purpose of these additional resources was to support each participating school to develop improvement strategies, which are designed to break the deterministic social mould, which surrounds educational disadvantage.

[list of schools, which participated in the Breaking the Cycle scheme.](#) The extra benefits allocated to these schools, now included in the Giving Children an Even Break Programme, have been maintained by the Department.

Further information is available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) - [Information by Topic > Social Inclusion> Breaking the Cycle Pilot Project Update](#)

## 10. School Staffing

From September 2001, all primary schools with an enrolment of 180 pupils were entitled to have an administrative principal.

## 11. School Development Planning

The initial phases of the School Development Planning Support (SDPS) initiative at Primary level involved 1,775 school (442 designated disadvantaged, 1,309 with one, two or three teachers and 24 with twenty-four teachers or more) up to June 2001. The next phase, from September 2001, involved a further extension of the initiative towards all schools within the education system, and provided a service for 840 4/5/6-teacher schools. Schools catering for disadvantaged communities continued to receive special assistance.

During the 2001-02 phase, 19 facilitators worked with these schools; grant aid was provided to allow schools to acquire materials and to assist them in putting collaborative planning structures in place. During the school year 2002-03, all remaining (640) primary schools will receive support under the initiative. It is also intended to provide differential support to schools serving areas designated as disadvantaged, while the smaller schools (1309) will continue to receive full support during 2002-03. It is proposed to increase the team of facilitators by ten members to meet the specific needs of small schools.

Current Spending: **€1,284,974** in 2002

## 12. Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

This Scheme benefits 314 schools by providing – over quota teaching posts, additional funding to launch book rental schemes, additional capitation grants of €38 per pupil, a maximum class size of 29:1 and a home/school liaison grant to develop links with parents.

List of beneficiaries: [List of Schools in the Disadvantaged Area Scheme](#)

Schools:	314 schools
Pupils:	70,002 as on 30/09/01
Current Spending:	€2.6m, exclusive of teachers salaries, in 2001

### 13. Curricular Reform

A critical aim of curricular reform is to enhance the relevance of the curriculum to emerging economic and social needs, to provide a range of choices which cater for diverse needs, interests and abilities of the school population, and to encourage more young people to remain within the system to completion of senior cycle second level education. At primary level the new curriculum launched during the 1998/1999 school year will continue to be implemented on a phased basis. This process will take up to 5 years and will, inter alia, emphasise the need for greater attention to pupils with special needs and the importance of achieving functional literacy and numeracy.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a new subject, which has been included for the very first time in the revised primary school curriculum. It is designed to be delivered in three ways: through the attitudes, values and practices conveyed in a positive school climate and atmosphere, through integration with other subject areas in a cross-curricular approach and through dedicated curricular time

### 14. Support Teacher Project

This scheme supports 48 designated schools with 42 teachers. It aims to support the holistic development of pupils, who are support the holistic development of pupils who are experiencing difficulties in their lives and in their learning which is expressed in disruptive, disturbed and withdrawn behaviours. The thrust of the work is preventative and supportive and is concerned with advising on and participating in a whole-school strategy to devise, identify, implement and review good practice in behavioural management. It aims to prevent the occurrence of disruptive behaviour as well as supporting relevant personal where disruption occurs.

List of beneficiaries: [List of Schools in the Support Teacher Project](#)  
Schools: 48  
Pupils: Approximately 11,500 pupils.  
Current Spending: €21,679, exclusive of teachers salaries, in 2001

### 15. Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL)

All primary schools with *designated disadvantaged* status were invited to join this scheme in 1999. Currently, 277 primary schools are participating.

The Scheme is delivered through a co-ordinator (teacher), who is assigned to a school or group of schools. The aims of the scheme are

- 1) To maximise active participation of the children in the schools of the scheme in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure
- 2) To promote active cooperation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children
- 3) To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills

- 4) To enhance the children's uptake from education, their retention in the education system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level and their attitudes to life-long learning and
- 5) To disseminate the positive outcomes of the scheme throughout the school system generally

The scheme is concerned with establishing partnership and collaboration between parents and teachers in the interests of the child's learning. The role of the individual coordinator is to work with school staff, parents and relevant community agencies in advancing these aims. There are currently 176 whole time equivalent posts at primary level and a National Co-ordinator and two assistant co-ordinators oversee the day-to-day operation of the Scheme.

**List of beneficiaries:**

Schools: 277

**Number of Whole Time equivalent posts 176**

Pupils: approx 70,000

Current Spending: €0.589m, exclusive of teachers salaries, in 2001.

€7.04m (indicative figure for salaries)

Further information is available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) -

[Information by Topic > Social Inclusion > Home School Community Liaison Scheme](#)

## 16. Learning Support/ Resource Teachers

The Learning Support Scheme provides assistance for children experiencing learning difficulties, particularly in the core areas of literacy. All schools have access to this service based on their level of need. The number of teacher posts at primary level is currently 1480.

The revised Guidelines on Learning Support/Remedial Education, issued to all primary schools, make specific recommendations to address the progress and learning difficulties of pupils in designated areas of educational disadvantage. Courses in remedial education are provided in 6 centres.

465 resource teachers operating in 375 schools support the education of Traveller children, based on a PTR of 14:1. The total number of special resource teachers in the primary system is 1,237.

Current Spending: 1480 learning support teaching posts - €59.2m (indicative cost only)  
772 special/resource teachers (excluding support teachers for travellers) €49.5m (indicative cost only)

## 17. Education of Non-nationals

Schools with an enrolment of fourteen or more non-nationals with English language deficits are entitled to an additional teacher, appointed on a year-by-year basis, to

provide language support for such pupils. An individual child is entitled to a maximum of two years language support. These appointments are temporary, due to the transient nature of the non-national student population. In the case of a school having twenty-eight or more non-English speaking non-nationals, the school is entitled to a second additional teacher. Where a full-time teacher is sanctioned to provide English language support, a start-up grant of €635 is paid. €317 is paid where the appointment is continued for a further year. In primary schools where the number of eligible pupils is less than fourteen, grants are paid to enable the school authorities to arrange for part-time teaching for these pupils. The grants are at two levels and are available to any school, which has three or more such pupils enrolled, to enable them to acquire the services of a suitable person to teach these pupils English

### **Total number of beneficiaries**

**Pupils:** This information is not readily available. Information available is in the form of number of temporary posts sanctioned and amount paid in grant aid. In 2001/02 schoolyear approx. 144 posts were sanctioned.

**Current Spending:**     **Teaching Posts - €5.76m (indicative cost)**  
                                  **Grant assistance - €1.3m**

## **18. Book Grant Scheme**

This grant is paid to schools based on the number of 'needy' pupils enrolled. Needy is defined as those families on low incomes, those dependant on social welfare or those experiencing financial hardship due to specific circumstances. School principals administer the scheme locally. The Department provides seed capital for the Book Rental/Loan Schemes. In addition, funding is provided by way of Library grants by the Department to enable Local Authority Librarians select, purchase and deliver books to primary schools as part of their service.

Current Spending 2002 - **€3.73m – Book Rental/Loan Schemes**  
                                  **- €1.5m – Library Grants.**

## **19. Traveller Education**

The policy of the Department is that all school-going Traveller children should be fully integrated into mainstream education services.

Support is provided for an estimated 5,000 Traveller children at primary level. Approx. 4,600 of these children attends ordinary primary schools. The remainder attend one of the 4 special schools dedicated to Traveller children. As mentioned in 2.8. above children attending 375 ordinary primary schools are supported by 465 resource teachers for Travellers. These schools and the special schools for Travellers operate at a pupil teacher ratio of 14:1. Traveller children attending special schools or supported by the resource teacher for Travellers service attract special increased rates of capitation funding.

A special capitation rate of €249.50 is paid in respect of children under 12 years. The rate for older children is €472.34. 42 visiting teachers deliver a nationwide service to both primary and second level pupils.

The Department has recently appointed a High Level Officer to co-ordinate its response to the educational needs of Travellers.

Number of Pupils: 5,000  
Current Spending: 465 resource teachers - €18.6m (indicative figure only)

## **20. Substance Misuse Prevention**

The “Walk Tall” is subsumed into the new “Social, Personal and Health Education” (SPHE) programme. The 2002 Budget includes provision of £670,000/€850,724 for the phased implementation of the drug misuse prevention programme (including provision of in-service training for teachers) to all primary schools by the end of 2003.

The support team, consisting of a National Co-ordinator and 10 Regional Development Officers, are responsible for organising and delivering staff seminars on SPHE.

A once off “Walk Tall” grant is being allocated in the 2002/3 schoolyear to all primary schools in the Local Drugs Task Force areas. Schools may use this grant in order to purchase and provide resources associated with the implementation of the Walk Tall Programme in the context of the SPHE Curriculum. The level of the grant to each school will be €500.

The grant may be used by schools towards the purchase of materials, human resources, which in the view of the school may assist in the implementation of the Walk Tall Programme in the context of the SPHE curriculum. Schools may like to use the grant to provide workshops for both teachers and pupils or for purchasing the services of theatre groups and similar outside agencies who may assist in the teaching methodologies associated with the Walk tall Programme.

Further information is available on the Department’s website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) - [Information by Topic > Social Inclusion > Local Drugs Task Force](#)

## **21. Physical Education Grant**

A Physical Education Grant for all Primary schools was introduced in 2000. Under the terms of this grant all schools designated as disadvantaged plus schools in the rural phase of the ‘Breaking the Cycle’ scheme receive an annual grant of £1,000/€1,270 per school while all other schools receive £500/€635 per school.

**Spending: €2.360m 2001**

## 22. Special Needs

The Policy is to secure the maximum possible level of integration of special needs children into the mainstream school system, while ensuring that dedicated specialist facilities continue to be made available for students whose needs are such as to warrant placement in a special dedicated class attached to an ordinary school or in a special dedicated school.

Arising from a Government decision of October 1998, all children with disabilities within the primary system now have an automatic entitlement to a response to their needs, irrespective of their level of need or location. As a result of this decision:

- the number of resource teachers supporting children with disabilities in integrated settings in the primary system has grown from 104 in October, 1998 to approx. 2,000 at present, and
- the number of special needs assistants supporting children with disabilities in the primary system has grown from less than 300 to approx. 3,400 over the same period.

Children, who, because of the severity of their disability, are unable to attending on an integrated basis, are accommodated in special classes attached to ordinary primary schools or in special schools. All such facilities operate at significantly reduced pupil teacher ratios. For example, the maximum pupil teacher ratios for special classes and special schools catering for moderately handicapped children are 8:1. The ratio for children with autism is 6:1. All children attending special classes and special schools attract special increased rates of capitation funding and all are entitled to avail of the Special School Transport Service where an escort accompanies them on each bus. A total of 620 escorts are currently provided on individual routes at an annual cost of approx. €3m.

Current Spending

**€70m (annual salary) for Resource Teacher Service (indicative costs only)**  
**€55m (annual salary) for Special Needs Assistant Service (indicative costs only)**

### Special School System

- There are 108 special schools dedicated to children with disabilities.
- Approx. 6,600 children attend the special schools.
- A total of 1,089 teachers are employed in the special schools.
- There are approx. 940 full-time equivalent special needs assistants employed in the special school system.

### Special Classes attached to ordinary Primary Schools

- There are 465 special classes. Each is dedicated to a particular disability group.
- Approx. 3,700 children attend the special classes.
- A total of 465 teachers are employed in the special schools.
- There are approx. 2,030 full-time equivalent special needs assistants employed in the ordinary primary school system.

## **Integrated Special Needs Children**

- There are approx. 13,000 special needs children attending ordinary primary schools on a fully integrated basis.
- There are approx. 2,000 full-time equivalent resource teachers supporting these children.

## **Children with Autism**

In October 1998 the Department formally recognised the distinct educational needs of certain children with autism. Arising from this development provision for such children is now made available by way of dedicated special classes. Each such class caters for a maximum of 6 children and each has the support of a teacher and two special needs assistants.

Since October 1998 the Department has sanctioned the establishment of approx. 90 such classes and the number of classes is increasing on an ongoing basis in response to assessed needs.

Also, since 2001, the Department is funding the extension of education programmes through the month of July for pupils attending dedicated units for children with autism.

In addition, the Department is currently funding a number of pilot projects which are delivering a dedicated Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) model of response to children with autism. The projects in question are:

- the CABAS Project in Cork.
- the CABAS Project in Dublin, and
- the Saplings Project in Kill, Co. Kildare.

The operation of these models will be evaluated to determine the appropriateness/suitability of the ABA approach as a model of response to the educational needs of children with autism. The annual operating cost of these models is in excess of €1m.

## **Task Force on Autism**

A special Task Force on Autism was established in November 2000 to review current approaches and make recommendations for the future development of education services for children on the autistic spectrum. The Task Force has now presented its report to the Minister and the Department is currently considering this.

## 23. Second Level Education

### 24. Improvements in Staffing

In the 2000/1 schoolyear 1,000 additional second level teaching posts were created. The extra 1,000 teaching posts enabled a reduction in the pupil teacher ratio from 19:1 to 18:1 for appointment purposes and further improvements in teaching posts allocations targeted at programmes such as the Leaving Certificate Applied, the Junior Certificate School Programme and the Guidance Enhancement Initiative.

### 25. School Development Planning Initiative (SDP)

*School Development and Planning (SDP) at first and second level:* A key aspect of the SDP initiative is to assist disadvantaged schools in developing strategies for combating educational disadvantage, enhancing school retention, promoting social inclusion and strengthening the interface between the local school and the wider community. At post-primary level, 276 Phase One schools were grant aided in 1999 and in 2000; 85 Phase Two schools were grant aided in 2000 and in 2001. The remaining schools (394) were grant aided in 2001 and received the second instalment in 2002.

By the end of October 2001, all post-primary schools received grant aid to assist them in advancing the process of development planning. Extensive SDP guideline materials for schools have been published on the School Development Planning Initiative website. Current work of the SDPI team at post-primary level includes in-service training for individual schools and school clusters, ongoing engagement with various education bodies in promoting and supporting school development, and collaboration with a range of agencies including the Commission on School Accommodation Needs, Area Partnership Boards, NEPS, and NCCA in helping schools to address key issues, such as amalgamation, disadvantage, special needs, and curriculum review and development, through School Development Planning.

### 26. Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

This Scheme benefits 211 schools serving approx 96,000 pupils by providing over quota teaching posts, additional funding to launch book rental schemes, additional capitation grants of €38 per pupil and a home/school liaison grant to develop links with parents.

In the case of VEC schools and colleges, additional capitation funding corresponding to that for other schools, is built into the regular funding arrangements for VECs.

#### **Current Spending €3.7m**

Total expenditure under this heading in respect of voluntary secondary and Comprehensive & Community schools amounts to some €2.3m, while the corresponding funding in respect of the VEC sector amounts to €1.4m.

**Total number of beneficiaries** Approx 96,000 pupils

**List of Schools: 211** - [List of Schools in Disadvantaged Area Scheme](#)

## 27. Support Teachers/Special Needs Assistants

Support for students at post-primary level with special needs continues to be catered for on an integrated basis. Such students are supported by special support teachers and/ or special needs assistants. In 2000/01 370 approx. whole time equivalent teaching posts and 135 whole time equivalent special needs assistants were allocated.

## 28. Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL)

All 211 post primary schools with *designated disadvantaged* status were invited to join this scheme in 1999. 197 of the 211 designated disadvantaged schools are currently participating.

The Scheme is delivered through a co-ordinator (teacher), who is assigned to a school or group of schools. The aims of the scheme are

- 1) To maximise active participation of the children in the schools of the scheme in the learning process, in particular those who might be at risk of failure
- 2) To promote active cooperation between home, school and relevant community agencies in promoting the educational interests of the children
- 3) To raise awareness in parents of their own capacities to enhance their children's educational progress and to assist them in developing relevant skills
- 4) To enhance the children's uptake from education, their retention in the education system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and to third level and their attitudes to life-long learning and
- 5) To disseminate the positive outcomes of the scheme throughout the school system generally

The scheme is concerned with establishing partnership and collaboration between parents and teachers in the interests of the child's learning. The role of the individual coordinator is to work with school staff, parents and relevant community agencies in advancing these aims. A National Co-ordinator and two assistant co-ordinators oversee the day-to-day operation of the Scheme.

Number of Schools : 197

Number of Posts: 161 (112 posts for C&C and VEC schools  
49 WTE for voluntary and secondary schools)

Current Spending: €7.25m (indicative figure only)

Further information is available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) -

[Information by Topic > Social Inclusion > Home School Community Liaison Scheme](#)

## 29. Learning Support/ Resource Teachers

All schools have access to this service based on the level of need. The number of teaching posts in 2001 was 571 and 584.4 in 2002. All post-primary schools with enrolments of over 600 have been allocated a Learning Support post; those with

under 600 being allocated 0.5 of a post. Revised Guidelines on Learning Support/ Remedial Education have been drawn up and issued to all post primary schools. They make specific recommendations to address the progress and learning difficulties of some pupils in schools of designated areas of educational disadvantage. Courses in remedial education will continue to be provided at 6 centres.

Support for the Resource Teacher Scheme at second level continued in 2000/01 with approximately 382 Whole Time Equivalent posts allocated.

Current Spending

- 571 learning support teaching posts - €25.7m (2001)
- 584.5 learning support teachers - €26.3m (2002)
- 382 whole time Equivalent resource Teacher Posts – €17.2m

### **30. Education of Non-nationals**

Post-primary schools with an enrolment of fourteen or more non-national students with English language deficits are entitled to an additional teacher to address the needs of these students. An individual student is entitled to a maximum of two years language support. These teacher appointments are temporary, due to the transient nature of the non-national student population. In the case of a school having twenty-eight or more non-English speaking non-nationals, the school is entitled to a second additional teacher. Where a full-time teacher is sanctioned to provide English language support, a start-up grant of €635 is paid with a top-up grant of €317 where the appointment is continued for a second year. In the case of post-primary schools with fewer than fourteen non-national students with English language deficits, additional hours are sanctioned ranging from three hours for one student to nineteen and a half hours for thirteen students.

Current Spending - In the school year 2001/2002, approximately 95 WTE posts were sanctioned, along with €13,322.24 in start-up and top up grants

Schools: 136

Pupils: approximately 1330

### **31. Curricular Reform**

A critical aim of the reforms is to enhance the relevance of the curriculum to emerging economic and social needs, to provide a range of choices which cater for diverse needs, interest and abilities of the school population, and to encourage more young people to remain within the system to completion of senior cycle second level education.

*Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP):* 2000/01 saw the continued expansion of this programme. It is now available in 125 schools. Each of these schools receives an additional grant of €63 per pupil and an additional 0.25 teacher post.

*Transition Year Programme:* Now available in over 500 schools with 23,269 students participating in 2000/01.

*Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA):* Designed to meet the needs for which the traditional Leaving Certificate had been unsuitable. In 2000/01 7,197 pupils participated.

*Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP):* Aims to strengthen the vocational, technical, language and entrepreneurial dimension of the senior cycle. Results from LCVP count for points for entry into university. There are currently 500 schools participating in the scheme each of which received once off start up grants of: €16,506 for computer and communications equipment, €5079 for equipment related to the teaching of the Vocational Subject Groupings and €1,270 for start up consumables. Schools receive an additional 5.25 hours for each group of twenty students participating in the programme.

The support services for JCSP, LCA and LCVP have now been formed into a cohesive group called the Second Level Support Service.

## **32. Remote Area Boarding Grant Scheme**

This scheme provides financial assistance to island children who attend school on the mainland. The maximum grant payable is €3,809.

Under this scheme, provision exists for the payment of grants in respect of pupils, including pupils resident on off shore islands, whose normal place of residence is outside the range of public transport services to a school providing suitable free second-level education. The grant is payable quarterly in arrears to the parents/guardian, whichever is appropriate, subject to verification by the school that the pupil has been in full time attendance for the period concerned and a statement of the annual maintenance charge. This scheme of grants was introduced in conjunction with the Free Post-Primary Education scheme in the 1967/68 schoolyear.

The purpose of the Scheme is to give pupils who are educationally disadvantaged because of their remoteness from schools an opportunity to attend school on the same basis as other pupils not so disadvantaged.

The assistance given relates to the cost of maintenance only and is given irrespective of parental means. A means test that used to apply was abolished on the recommendation of the Inter-Departmental Committee in 1997. The Committee, in its consideration, took into account that because of location, parents on islands and / or remote areas incur costs in maintaining their pupils at schools not borne by parents elsewhere.

The maximum grant payable was increased from €2,540 to €3,809 per annum with effect from the current school year.

Current Spending : €450,000 in the 2001/2 academic year

Total number of beneficiaries: 135 Pupils.

### **33. Guidance Services and Career Guidance**

*Guidance Services:* All schools have an ex-quota allocation in respect of guidance, varying from 0.36 posts to 2 posts depending on school size. The equivalent of 580 whole-time posts were allocated in 2000. €5m was provided in 2001/2 to augment existing provision by creating a Guidance Fund to enable increased guidance provision. Under the School Guidance Enhancement Initiative, 50 additional permanent posts were allocated for 2001/2002 benefiting 103 schools.

Current Spending on posts: €25.2m (indicative figure only)

Over €1.9m was provided to supply equipment and software to assist Career Guidance in schools.

### **34. Book Grant Scheme**

A grant scheme for schoolbooks for necessitous pupils in second level schools has operated since the introduction of free post primary education in the 1967/68 school year.

Principals administer this scheme in schools. Subject to the annual financial allocation to individual schools and the terms of the scheme, Principals have discretion in the selection of pupils to be assisted and the level of assistance in each case. The means by which assistance is provided to pupils (financial assistance, vouchers or provision of books on loan) is a matter for the individual school authorities.

A necessitous pupil, for the purpose of this scheme, is defined as a pupil from a family in which genuine hardship exists because of – unemployment, prolonged illness of parent, large family with inadequate means, single parent family or other circumstances which would indicate a similar degree of financial hardship.

In addition to the grants paid to necessitous pupils, a special seed capital grant for the establishment of book rental/loan schemes was introduced in 1994. This seed capital is available to schools that are

- Officially designated as disadvantaged (i.e. have at least 1 disadvantaged post and/or are in the home school community liaison scheme)
- Do not already have a loan/rental scheme in place and
- Give a commitment to arrange for such a scheme.

This scheme provided financial support for the introduction or expansion of book loan/rental schemes in individual schools on an annual basis, for a maximum of 6 years (five in the case of five year cycle schools). It is envisaged that schools in receipt of seed capital will be in a position to establish sustainable book loan/rental which, after the initial assistance, will operate on a self-financing basis where ongoing costs will be met by fee income (which can be subsidised in the case of

needy pupils from the general book grant scheme). The seed capital allocations in 2000 was €209,850 and in 2001 was €139,344

Total number of beneficiaries

Schools: over 700  
Pupils: 141,760 (2000/2001 school year)  
Current Spending - €6,175,000 (2002)

### 35. Exam Fees Exemptions

With effect from June, 1998, exam fees for Junior and Leaving Certificate were waived for candidates where the students, or their parent/guardian, were medical card holders. The figures at June 2002 are as follows:

<u>Examination Exemption</u>	<u>Total number</u>	<u>Total number with medical card</u>
Junior Certificate	60,782	17,108
Leaving Certificate	56,926	13,510
Leaving Certificate Applied	3,129*	1,454*

(\*these figures are for Year 2 entries only – no fees apply in year 1)

### 36. Traveller Education

The capitation grant €426 continues to be paid to schools to help them in the outreach necessary to help the children and families to successfully participate in the life of the school. There are approximately 1,178 currently attending second level school. An ex-quota hour of 1.5 per week is allowed per Traveller child enrolled and additional full time equivalent (teachers) appointed as a result.

*Junior Traveller Training Centres:* A number of children aged 12 to 15 years, attend Junior Traveller Training Centres. A grant of £200/€254 per pupil is provided to cover overhead costs. Teaching resources are provided by the Vocational Educational Committees.

42 visiting teachers deliver a nationwide service to both primary and second level pupils..

The National Education Officer for Travellers promotes and oversees the implementation of the education service (involves identifying the needs of Travellers, assisting in planning and establishment of education provision, consultation with Traveller families and ensuring optimal use of existing educational facilities).

### 37. Substance Misuse Prevention

The second level substance misuse prevention programme “On My Own Two Feet” has been introduced in 75%(570 approx.) of schools and has now been subsumed

into the “Social, Personal, and Health Education” (SPHE) programme. Every school is expected to have SPHE as an integral part of its programme at junior cycle level by end of 2002. All schools located within the Local Drug Task Force areas have been requested to implement this programme during the 2002/2003 school year.

### **38. Special Needs**

Children of second level age with milder forms of disability are generally catered for on an integrated basis in mainstream **post-primary** schools. Such students are supported by special support teachers and/or special needs assistants. The level of need is based on the assessed needs of the individual student. In 2001 approximately 370 whole time equivalent resource teaching posts and 135 whole time equivalent special needs assistants were allocated to support students with disabilities in post-primary schools.

Children with more serious disabilities are catered for in special schools or special classes attached to ordinary schools. All such facilities operate at specially reduced pupil teacher ratios which are in line with the levels recommended by the Special Education Review Committee.

Revised arrangements for students with special needs taking Certificate Examinations allow for an increased allocation of 20 minutes for papers in Irish, English, History and Geography in line with the Advisory Group on the Certificate Examinations.

Since October, 1998 the Department formally recognised the distinct educational needs of children with autism. As a result of this development, such children are now catered for in special dedicated classes operating at a maximum PTR of 6:1. Each class also has the support of two special needs assistants. In the last 2 years the number of dedicated classes for autism has been increased to over 80.

The reports of the Task Forces on Autism will provide a valuable input into the further development of special education services in this particular areas.

## 39. School Completion Programme (Primary and Post-Primary)

The focus of the School Completion Programme is on young people between the ages of 4 and 18 years who are educationally disadvantaged and at risk of leaving school early. The latest statistics, which reflect the extent of early school leaving in Ireland place the School Completion Programme in context:

- Between 700 and 1,000 young people do not transfer annually from primary to second level.
- Of those who entered second level in September 1993, 2,400 (3.2%) left school before completing the Junior Certificate three years later in 1996.
- Almost 10,600 of those who sat the Junior Certificate in 1996 did not sit the Leaving Certificate.
- In all, at the end of the 1990s, about 13,000 (18.4%) young people leave school annually without the Leaving Certificate.

The School Completion Programme incorporates the elements of best practice established by the 8-15 Year Old Early School Leaver Initiative (ESLI) and the Stay-in-School Retention Initiative at Second Level (SSRI), the pilot phases of which came to an end in August and July 2002 respectively. It is designed to deal with issues of both concentrated and regionally dispersed disadvantage and is a key component of the Department of Education and Science's strategy to discriminate positively in favour of children and young people who are at risk of early school leaving. The programme is funded on a multi-annual basis under the National Development Plan with assistance from the European Social Fund.

### Factors That Impinge On Early School Leaving

The School Completion Programme recognises that a wide variety of home, community and school-based factors can contribute to low school attainment and early school leaving. Consequently, strategies designed to address the needs of young people at risk of early school leaving must include a range of actions that impinge on these aspects of young people's lives; these strategies must therefore be holistic and child-centred by nature. The School Completion Programme aims to develop local strategies to ensure maximum participation levels in the education process. It entails targeting individual young people of school going age, both in and out of school, and arranging supports to address inequalities in education access, participation and outcomes.

#### **FOUR MAIN TENETS OF THE SCHOOL COMPLETION PROGRAMME**

- Establishment of Local Management Group to manage the Project at local level
- Appointment of co-ordinator to co-ordinate the Programme at local level
- Clearly defined process of targeting young people between the ages of 4 and 18
- Provision of in-school, after-school, out-of-school and holiday-time supports

## School Selection Process

Selected schools at second level have been invited by the Department of Education and Science to participate in the School Completion Programme based on rigorous statistical analysis; the main feeder Primary Schools for these second level schools have also been invited to participate. A Local Management Group is established to manage each of the 82 Projects at local level which include the already established 17 sites of the 8-15 Early School Leaver Initiative. It must have representatives of relevant schools, parents, together with local statutory, voluntary and community agencies. This Local Management Group will consult with the local Home School Community Liaison Committee, where one exists, on a two-way advisory basis.

Evidence generated from the pilot phases of the School Completion Programme shows that the most effective way of addressing educational disadvantage is through an integrated services approach. The Management Group will therefore be required to assess the needs of marginalised educationally disadvantaged young people at local level and to devise an integrated costed focused targeted Retention Plan that will support these young people in their school, home and community life. Representatives of schools and agencies on the Local Management Group must engage school staff and parents in a consultative and planning process in order that the Retention Plan supports the needs of all young people at-risk. The Retention Plan will offer in-school, after-school, out-of-school, holiday-time supports to young people at risk.

## Local Co-ordination

Local co-ordination of the School Completion Programme will be undertaken by a co-ordinator appointed at local level. The co-ordinator will lead the development and implementation of the programme in consultation with the national co-ordination service, under the direction of the School Completion Management Group and in consultation with school principals.

Biannual written reports on actions and outcomes at local level, in addition to completed quarterly financial returns will be required.

A National Co-ordinating Team that comprises a National Co-ordinator and four Assistant National Co-ordinators supports the School Completion Programme. It is the task of the National Co-ordinating Team to advise on and monitor the integrated area-based Retention Plans that support the young person at-risk at local level.

Schools participating in SCP: 112 Post Primary  
: 288 Primary

Further information is available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) -

[Information by Topic > Social Inclusion > School Completion Programme](#)

## **40. National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) (Primary and Post-Primary)**

Following a commitment in the Programme for Government 1997, a Planning Group, representative of the Partners in Education, produced a Report in 1998, *A National Educational Psychological Service*. The Government accepted the recommendations in the Report and, on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1999, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Agency was established. It has been set up initially on an administrative basis as an executive Agency of the Department of Education and Science. NEPS has delegated authority to develop and provide an educational psychological service to all students in primary and post-primary schools and in certain other centres supported by the Department, paying particular attention to those with special educational needs.

The terms of the Government decision allowed for the number of psychologists in the educational system to increase to 200 and for administrative and support staff to increase to 36 over a period of 5 years. The complement of the Agency doubled from 43 psychologists on the date of establishment to 86 in May 2002. (In addition to NEPS staff, there are also a number of other psychologists working in the educational system, bringing the overall total to approximately 100). The number of administrative and support staff now stands at 13.

A Government announcement in July 2001 indicated that NEPS would be permitted to accelerate its recruitment programme in order to meet the demands caused by expanded provision for special education. The Civil Service and Local Appointments Commissioners concluded the selection process in a second competition for NEPS. Over 60 psychologists were successful in the competition and their names have been placed on a panel. It is intended that they will be joining NEPS within the next few months.

The NEPS service is now available to approximately 1,950 primary schools (serving over 200,000 pupils, approximately, and more than double the number of primary schools that were served on establishment date) and to all post-primary schools with the exception of schools in the City and County of Dublin Vocational Schemes. (These have their own psychological services, which come under the aegis of NEPS). The service is provided on an integrated basis to primary and post-primary schools, to allow for the tracking of children throughout their school career.

Pending the expansion of NEPS to all schools, the Minister for Education and Science has allocated funding to NEPS to allow for the commissioning of psychological assessments from private practitioners.

NEPS psychologists are located throughout the country in 10 regions corresponding to the Health Board regions in order to facilitate co-operation with the psychological services provided by the Health Boards and Voluntary Bodies. It is intended that there will be offices in approximately 20 locations around the country so that each team of psychologists will be located near the schools it serves.

Total number of beneficiaries: 200,000 Primary pupils

Schools: 1950 primary  
741 post primary schools

Current Spending - There is a dedicated NEPS subhead (B 21) within the Vote of the Office of the Minister for Education (OME). The 2002 provision is €11.260m, comprising €8.876m for pay and €2.384m for non-pay costs.

## 41. Youth

### 42. Youth Services

Youth Affairs Section promotes the personal and social development of young people, outside of, but complementary to, the formal system, having particular regard to the youth work needs of young people between 10-21 with payments given to those who experience social or economic disadvantage. This is achieved by the promotion and development of funding schemes for the provision of youth work and services. The Youth Work Act, 2001, which was enacted in December 2001 gives a statutory framework for youth work at national and local levels.

**The four major funding schemes are:**

- The **Youth Service Grant Scheme** where funding is made available to ensure the emergence, promotion, growth and development of youth organizations with distinctive philosophies and programmes aimed at the social education of young people. **33** organisations/programmes are currently in receipt of grant-in-aid under the terms of the Youth Service Grant Scheme. Total funds of approximately **€9.46m** will be available for this scheme in 2002.
- **Special Projects for Youth** is a funding scheme, administered through the Vocational Education Committees, which makes grants available in respect of out-of-school projects for disadvantaged young people. Priority is given to projects in the spheres of special youth work initiatives for a range of target groups including, young homeless people, young substance abusers and young travellers. There are approximately **165** community based youth projects catering for the special needs of marginalised young people in disadvantaged areas supported by the Department under the above scheme. Total funds of approximately **€11.86m** will be available for the Special Projects for Youth Scheme in 2002.
- Resources are provided for **Youth Information Centres**, which provide young people with easy access to information on welfare, health issues, rights, opportunities and other matters. There are **30** Youth Information Centres located throughout the country. Total funds of approximately **€1,549,139** be available for Youth Information in 2002.
- The **Local Youth Club Grant Scheme** administered through the Vocational Education Committees, assists local Youth Clubs and Groups in areas such as start up cost, insurance, etc. Total funds of approximately **€1.27m** will be available under this scheme in 2002

Current Spending - €1,549,139 for 2002

### 43. Youth Information Centres

Department support continues for the 30 Youth Information Centres, which provides advice and support to young people.

Current Spending - €24,139.134

Contact details for Youth Information Centres are available at <http://www.youthinformation.ie/ireland/index.htm>

#### 44. Senior Traveller Training Centres

These Centres provide a programme of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience and guidance/counselling/psychological services for some 769 Travellers annually in the 15+ age group. A National Co-ordinator promotes and monitors the development of the network. As with Youthreach, programmes are provided in an out-of school setting, and feature integrated personal development, literacy, numeracy, ICT and communications and a range of vocational options and work experience. Trainees are paid a training allowance. There is no upper age limit on the programme in order to attract Traveller parents, in view of the impact participation has on their children's schooling. Guidance and counselling and childcare services are available for participants.

Certification is provided through the FETAC (Foundation and Level 1) through the Leaving Cert Applied, and through subjects in the Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Centres have a Board of Management structure with Traveller/Traveller organisation representation, in line with the recommendations of the Task Force on the Travelling People

Current Spending 2002 €12.849m

List of Centres: Details are available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) - [Education Provider Search](#)

Students : 911

Further information is available in the form of a detailed progress report at <http://www.education.ie> -

[Parents & Community > Further Education > Senior Traveller Training Centres](#)

#### 45. Children at Risk

*Youth Encounter Projects:* 5 such projects are being supported at an estimated cost of €0.635m excluding teachers salaries. 125 non-teaching staff are employed. The projects cater for 125 young people.

*Line Projects:* Support continues for the 3 projects: Phoenix, City Motor Sports and Carline. These projects bring together the community, State agencies and relevant Government Departments, to provide a direct and immediate response for young people aged from 8-18 years who have dropped out of the system due to disruptive behaviour or habitual non-attendance.

Beneficiaries: 125

Current Spending: €0.635m excluding teachers salaries – 5 projects

## 46. Youthreach

This initiative aims to provide education, training and work experience to young people aged 15-20 with no formal education or training qualifications i.e who have left school with less than 5 Ds at junior cycle.

Programmes are provided in an out-of school setting, and feature integrated personal development, literacy, numeracy, ICT and communications and a range of vocational options and work experience. Trainees are paid a training allowance. Guidance and counselling and childcare services are available for participants. Certification is provided through the FETAC (Foundation and Level 1) through the Leaving Cert Applied, and through subjects in the Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Youthreach, the Senior Traveller Training Centres and the FAS funded Community Training Workshops form part of a joint early school leavers programme catering for some 7,162 participants in over 130 centres (30 Traveller centres, some 77 Youthreach centres, both provided by the VECs, and a network of 35-40 Community Training Workshops provided by FAS.). There are approx 3000 VEC Youthreach places.

Counselling, guidance and psychological services are provided at an annual cost of some €1.005m. Provisions are made for supporting in-service training in front-line counselling skills for staff, co-ordination of services, dissemination of good practice and evaluation.

All Youthreach centres provide a substance misuse prevention programme and, in co-operation with other State agencies, a crime awareness programme "Copping On".

Current Spending	€34.153m
Total number of beneficiaries:	3,000
Centres:	77

Further information is available in the form of a detailed progress report at <http://www.education.ie/> -

[Parents & Community > Further Education > Youthreach](#)

Contact Details for Youthreach Centres are available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) - [Education Provider Search](#)

## **47. Further Education/Second Chance**

### **48. Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)**

VTOS provides second chance education and training for adults aged 21 who have been receiving an unemployment payment or signing for credits for at least six months. Lone Parents, dependant spouses and persons with disabilities who satisfy these criteria are also eligible. The programme is of 1-2 year's duration, and participants may choose from arrange of options including Foundation, Level 1, Level 2 or 3 within FETAC, or subjects in the Junior or Leaving Certificate or a portfolio approach to certification. Trainees receive an allowance in lieu of welfare entitlements. Childcare support is also available to encourage parents onto the programme.

Programmes are provided by VECs either in an inschool or out of school setting. The programme may be delivered either as a VTOS stand alone core group, or participants may also be dispersed on other programmes (e.g PLCs).

Local referral networks are in place linking VTOS with welfare, FAS and employment services.

Current Spending            €46.814m in 2002

Total number of Pupils: 5708

Schools:                      C100 centres

Further information is available in the form of a detailed progress report at <http://www.education.ie/> --

[Parents & Community > Further Education > VTOS](#)

### **49. Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLCs)**

Post Leaving Certificate courses are provided in schools and colleges for young people and adults who have completed upper second level education but who need vocational training to enhance their employment prospects. The programme continues to grow, and offers over 1,000 courses in some 229 centres. A wide range of disciplines are covered including Business, Electronics, Engineering, Computing, Catering, Sport and Leisure, Theatre and Stage, Performance Art, Art Craft and Design, Equestrian Studies, Multi-media studies, journalism, Tourism, Marketing, Childcare and Community Care, Hairdressing and Beauty Care, Horticulture, Applied Science etc. All programmes feature general education, ICT and a work experience programme in addition to the vocational options. Overall, an increasing number of mature students are entering the programme, and over 40% of the enrolment in the sector is now over 21. Certification is provided through FETAC Level 2 and Level 3, and colleges also supplement this with certification from private/professional bodies in certain disciplines.

A progression scheme operates which enables holders of FETAC/NCVA Level 2 awards to progress to designated certificate and diploma courses in all Institutes of Technology throughout the country. A list of the college courses and FETAC (NCVA)

awards in the scheme is provided annually by FETAC to school principals and guidance counsellors and is also on the web. The Central Applications Office is notified electronically of candidates' results by the FETAC and this process leads to the automatic award of IOT/DIT places as appropriate.

While the programme is offered to all schools each year, 92% of take-up is in the VEC sector. Students are eligible for means-tested maintenance grants, and those with disabilities may access the disability fund for additional supports on the same basis as applies within third level.

Further information is available in the form of a detailed progress report at <http://www.education.ie> -

[Parents & Community > Further Education > PLC Courses](#)

A list of PLC Courses is available on the Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) - [List of PLC Courses 2002 - 2003](#)

Current Spending (estimate €78m, but this is not funded separately from overall school/college provision)

Total number of beneficiaries

Schools: 229

Pupils: 26711

## 50. Access to Third Level

There are a range of schemes and measures available to assist students from disadvantaged background to avail of third level and further education:

- The Special Rates of Maintenance Grants for Disadvantaged Students
- The Millennium Partnership Fund for Disadvantage
- The Student Assistance/Access Fund
- The Special Fund for Students with Disabilities

Under the social inclusion measures in the NDP, there is provision for a Third Level Access Fund totalling €120m over the period 2000 to 2006, aimed at tackling under-representation by three target groups: -

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

In September 2000, the former Minister, Dr Michael Woods TD, announced the creation of an Action Group on Access to Third Level Education to advise him on the development of a co-ordinated framework to promote access by students from the three target groups. One of the major tasks of the Action Group was to advise on how the €120m should be allocated.

The report of the Action Group on Access to Third Level Education, was published in July 2001.

To date measures, such as the **Special Rates of Maintenance Grant** and the **Millennium Partnership Fund for Disadvantage [see Par 7.4 below]**, have been taken in response to some of the main recommendations in the report: -

**ESF-aided Special Rates of Maintenance Grant** usually referred to as ‘top-up’ grants, payable to disadvantaged grant holders, were introduced with effect from the 2000/01 academic year. Where a student is already in receipt of a grant under one of the existing maintenance grant schemes, s/he may apply to the relevant local authority or VEC for the special rate of grant.

Following a review of the operation of the special rates of grant, the Minister, in July 2002, increased the annual income threshold for the special rates by **32%**, a significant increase.

For 2002/03, the special rate of grant has also been increased to: -

- **€4,000** for students residing more than 15 miles from college and
- **€1,600** for students resident within 15 miles of college.

This is equivalent to a “top-up” of **€1,490** and **€596** respectively, for eligible students, on the ordinary maintenance grant.

In addition, a number of additional social welfare payments have been added as eligible payments.

As a result of these improvements it is expected that the number of students qualifying for the “top-up” grant in 2002/03 will double to **7,000** students.

## **Access: Existing Provision**

### **Special Fund for Students with disabilities**

Funding is provided towards the cost of services and the purchase of equipment for students with disabilities attending courses in third level institutions or Post Leaving Certificate courses through the Department of Education and Science Special Fund for Students with Disabilities.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities currently operates with assistance from the European Social Fund.

The individual students through their third level institution/Post Leaving Certificate centre make applications for assistance. The allocations are paid to the relevant institutions in respect of the particular students.

The Fund applies to students who have serious sensory, physical and/or communicative disabilities. Grants are awarded towards the cost of specific equipment, specific materials, technological aids, targeted transport service, sign language interpreters, personal assistants and other educational support workers such as note-takers. Provision for this fund has increased significantly from

€276,000 in 1997 to €2,619,283 in 2001. The fund provided assistance to **809 students** in 2001/02.

## **Student Assistance/Access Fund**

The Student Assistance/Access Fund is devolved to the third level institutions. The allocation to the University sector is made through the Higher Education Authority, while the allocations to the Institutes of Technology, the teacher training colleges and the colleges of education are made directly by the Department. These allocations are based on total enrolments in the previous academic year.

The Student Assistance/Access Fund (originally known as the Hardship Fund) was established in 1994. All registered students who are attending the relevant third level institutions are eligible to apply for assistance from the Fund.

The Student Assistance/Access Fund currently operates with assistance from the European Social Fund.

**The Fund is administered on a discretionary and confidential basis by each third level institution** and provides direct financial support to disadvantaged students to assist them to remain on in college.

Assistance with such items as books, additional tuition, transport, rent has been made available in the past and can be considered within the Fund. It is not envisaged that support from the Fund would be limited to students on a once-off basis as there may be those who require continuing financial assistance over a period of time as a result of circumstances such as family breakdown, bereavement, accidents, health problems or domestic arrangements. There may also be students who do not come within the scope of the third level student support schemes, such as those aged under 23 who are not financially supported by their parents, and who face particular financial difficulties. There may also be students with family responsibilities, particularly in relation to childcare costs.

Provision for this fund increased significantly from €2.49m in respect of the 2000/01 academic year to €7.49m in respect of the 2001/02 academic year

## **HEA Targeted Initiatives**

The expenditure under the Third Level Access Fund is complemented by funding, allocated by the HEA, for targeted initiatives within the universities.

The Higher Education Authority has for a number of years provided dedicated funding to the Universities and other HEA designated institutions to support new developments in areas of strategic importance in higher education. One particular priority area is that of broadening access to the Universities and HEA institutions for students from traditionally under-represented groups. These include students from disadvantaged backgrounds, mature students, and travellers. In 2001, the HEA provided over €5 million to support institutions in initiatives aimed to provide for such broadened access.

The HEA also, as a part of the targeted initiative process, undertakes periodic external evaluation of the targeted initiatives. An evaluation of the initiative for

access for disadvantaged students was carried out in 2000 (Osborne and Leith 2000). The report noted that the Universities have responded positively to the challenges of creating a series of activities designed to enhance opportunities, and that there was now a wider opportunity to consider a national strategy to enhance the initiatives at local level. The report of the evaluation was a key source document for the subsequent Action Group on Access to Third Level, which proposed inter alia, building upon the work of the targeted initiatives as part of the creation of a national strategy for access.

## 51. Millennium Partnership Fund for Disadvantage

A new **Millennium Partnership Fund for Disadvantage**, which is ESF-aided, was introduced with effect from 2001. The Fund provides assistance to Partnership Companies and Community Groups to develop their support schemes for students from disadvantaged families.

The Fund is intended to build on the experience of the Support Scheme for Students from disadvantaged families, operated by the Northside Partnership, which assists students to participate in higher education.

The report of the Action Group on Access sets out detailed recommendations on the criteria that should apply in the disbursement of the Fund.

Area Development Management (ADM) Ltd, under whose aegis the Partnerships operate, accepted the Department's request that it would administer the Fund for the 2001/02 academic year. The total allocation for the 2001/2002 academic year was €1.2 million, with 37 partnerships and community groups receiving allocations from the Fund. **1,747** people benefited from the fund during the 2001/02 academic year.

ADM will continue to administer the Fund for the 2002/2003 academic year. The allocation for the 2002 Fund has increased to **€2 million**. 50 applications have been received from Area partnerships and Community Groups in respect of the 2002/03 academic year. Allocations have now been decided upon for all 50 applications

Expenditure in 2001	€1.27m
Provision in 2002	€2m

The Department also funds a number of projects from the fund for special initiatives for Disadvantage at 2<sup>nd</sup> level as follows:

BITE in Ballymun - €50,000 per annum  
ACE in Tallaght - €50,000 per annum  
CHEAP in Clondalkin - €65,000 per annum  
Riversdale in Blanchardstown - €10,000 per annum  
There is a similar project for access to Limerick University - €25,000 per annum  
Trinity Access Project -€76,000 per annum

## 52. Non-Completion in Undergraduate University Courses

The HEA produced a study on this in February 2001. The report shows that of all first-time entrants to universities in the academic year 1992/93 67.9% of students graduated on time and a further 15.3% graduated late. This gives an overall completion rate of 83%.

At the Minister's request, the HEA hosted a national seminar on course completion in higher education on 28 May 2001. This seminar provided an opportunity to consider the issues and trends arising from the recent studies produced by the Educational Research Centre. The need for qualitative research to be undertaken into factors influencing non-completion was highlighted at the seminar. The Educational Research Centre is to undertake this research with a view to developing appropriate strategies to deal with the issue.

## 53. Certification

On 26 February 2001, the first Parts of the *Qualifications (Education and Training) Act, 1999* were commenced when the Minister signed an Order establishing the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) on a statutory basis. The new Authority has three main tasks:

1. To establish and maintain a framework of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners regardless of where, when or how such learning takes place, whether in institutes or colleges of education and training, or in the workplace or the community;
2. To facilitate continuous lifelong learning through the promotion of access, transfer and progression for all learners including those who have special needs; and
3. To establish and promote the maintenance and improvement of the standards of awards of the further and higher education and training sector, other than in the existing seven universities and to liaise with bodies outside the State for the mutual recognition of awards at transnational level.

On 11 June 2001, the remaining parts of the Act were commenced and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) were established. The two new awarding Councils will make national certification available for all education and training in the State, other than that provided in the primary and post-primary sectors, the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Universities.

The two new awarding Councils have three principal functions:

1. the establishment of policies and criteria for the making of awards and the validation of programmes;
2. the determination of standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners, before an award may be made by a Council or recognised by a Council; and
3. the making and recognition of awards where persons have achieved the required standards as set out.

The new Councils will also be responsible for ensuring the quality of awards.

## 54. Adult Guidance

The White Paper on Adult Education and the National Development Plan provide for the development of an educational adult guidance service to meet the needs of clients in adult literacy, VTOS and adult and community education. An inter-agency group led by the National Centre for Guidance in Education oversees the development of the initiative. Applications for proposals under Phase 1, 2 and 3 of the initiative (in 2000, 2001 and 2002) led to the selection of projects, which have now been approved in 26 areas. Of the providers to date, 2 are community groups, 1 is based in a third level college and the remainder are VECs. Services are focused on an area basis, and are usually staffed by a Guidance Officer and an Information Officer.

The National Centre for Guidance in Education provides technical support for projects and co-ordinates the monitoring and reporting for the measure. The centres are networked to share good practice. In general the activities engaged in by projects include

- establishment of drop in centres
- organisation of outreach visits to other locations on a visiting service basis
- training in front line guidance and counselling for tutors and providers, and advice in handling cases -- in some projects facilities for regular case conferencing with a specialised counsellor are provided
- group sessions for learners in study skills, vocational and career information etc
- 1:1 guidance and counselling
- referral to welfare and health services
- development of resource/information centres
- use of computer aided diagnostic tools and career information
- development of data bases of learning options, some ICT based and others manual.

Projects are networked with the employment, welfare, FAS and health services in their areas. Evaluation and support services have been commissioned from Glasgow Caledonian University.

The services will continue to expand on a phased basis with the aim of having a comprehensive service in place by 2006.

In addition, a feasibility study has been completed on the development of a publicly accessible database of adult learning options integrated with a national telephone helpline system. This aims to address the current fragmentation of information, and provide integrated data on learning options in FE, third level, FAS, CERT, TEAGASC and the community sector.

Further information is available in the form of a detailed progress report at <http://www.education.ie/> -

[Parents & Community > Further Education > Adult Guidance](#)

Current Spending €3.466m

Total number of beneficiaries: 3012\*

\*Phase 1 and 2 only, at the end of 2001. Phase 3 centres are becoming operational

Locations: 26

## 55. Adult Literacy

The OECD International Adult Literacy Survey found that some 25% of adults scored at the bottom literacy level, and do not have the necessary skills needed for participation in knowledge based economy.

Adult literacy services are provided through the VECs, which employ Adult Literacy Organisers and staff, funded through the Department's Adult Literacy and Community Education budget. At the time of the publication of the OECD survey, the budget was €1m for the entire country, some 5000 learners were benefiting from the service, and 85% of all tuition was given by unpaid volunteers.

Participation on adult literacy programmes has increased from 5,000 in 1997 to 22,733 at the end of December 2001. TV adult literacy and awareness programmes have been commissioned and broadcast on RTE, with the 2001 series of READ WRITE NOW attracting an average weekly audience of 235,000. A free-phone help line manned by trained tutors and free learner support materials supplement this TV programme. Videos of the series have been distributed to literacy schemes, Youthreach/Traveller and VTOS centres, public libraries and video outlets.

In addition, a quality framework, nationally certified staff development programmes, research on assessment, and international co-operation have all been undertaken. Family learning programmes, literacy and language for non-nationals, programmes for special needs and for Travellers have also been expanded.

A joint FAS/VEC Return to Learning Programme which combined work experience within the Community Employment Scheme with intensive literacy tuition is also being expanded nationally.

A workplace literacy programme has been piloted successfully and is being extended to all local authority areas, in co-operation with LANPAG (the Local Authority National Partnership Board). A workplace literacy group with the key social partners and education and training agencies has recommended the establishment of a Workplace Literacy Fund.

Further information is available in the form of a detailed progress report at <http://www.education.ie/> -

[Parents & Community > Further Education > Adult Literacy](#)

Current Spending €16.4m in 2002

Total number of beneficiaries

Venues: 731

Learners 22733

## 56. Education Equality Initiative

A Women's Education Initiative was established in 1998 with assistance under the 1994 – 1999 Community Support Framework (CSF) to assist projects to address the current gaps in provision for educationally disadvantaged women. The Women's Education Initiative was completed in early 2000 and culminated in a national conference in Dublin Castle to disseminate the learning from the initiative. A short brochure disseminating the key learning was provided.

In the 2000 – 2006 Operational Programme this measure has been broadened into an Education Equality Initiative focussing on both disadvantaged women and men, in view of the under-representation of men in adult education generally, and the particular difficulties experienced in attracting disadvantaged older men.

The inter-agency steering group overseeing the initiative was re-constituted to embrace a wider membership and to include specific expertise on men's education. This group monitors the overall Education Equality Initiative.

The aim of the projects selected under this initiative is to address gaps in provision of education and training for specific marginalised groups, to mainstream learning, to facilitate progression of marginalised groups and individuals and to disseminate learning and share good practice.

The EEI was advertised in national press early in 2000. Over 120 applications were received. 18 projects were selected for funding over the first three years of the measure – 6 women only groups, 5 men only groups, and 7 mixed groups. The target groups include early school leavers, lone parents, Travellers, men and women experiencing rural isolation or urban deprivation, adults with special needs literacy difficulties or drug abuse problems, and women experiencing domestic violence.

The projects will support the development of models of good practice, which address gaps in the provision for educationally disadvantaged adults, which will be capable of wider application and which will impact on future policy.

The National Women's Council of Ireland has been contracted to provide technical support for the initiative. A project directory has been compiled, all projects are networked, information has been circulated through the NWCi website and through the magazine Womenzone.

**Funding : €700,000**

**Projects 18**

**Participants 355.**

Further information is available in the form of a detailed progress report at <http://www.education.ie/> -

[Parents & Community > Further Education > Introduction](#)

## **57. Community Education**

Grants are paid to VECs to wards the cost of community education programmes and special initiatives for disadvantaged adults, to enable them to access learning at moderate or no cost. The funds are generally used to offset the fee costs of attending courses and to provide tuition hours to a range of community education programmes, both provided directly or through community groups. Provision in 2002 was **€6.285m**.

In addition to the above, a network of 35 Community Education Facilitators is being put in place in 2002 to network providers, help them access funds and support quality.

10% of all expansion under the Community Education Initiative is being earmarked exclusively for community education providers. This will begin with 600 part time places in Further Education in 2002.

## **58. Back to Education Initiative**

This provides for an expansion of flexible part time options across Further Education so that adults can combine a return to learning with work and family responsibilities.

The priority is, those (1m adults) with less than upper second level education. An adult ICT skills initiative is part of the programme. Tuition is free for means tested welfare recipients, Family Income Supplement and medical cardholders and their dependants. There is a fee reduction to 30% of tuition costs for unwaged adults with less than upper second level education. All others pay fees.

Provision will include FETAC Foundation Level, Level 1 and Level 2/3, and subjects in the Junior and Leaving certificates. However, only 30% of provision may be targeted at those who have already achieved at least 5 Ds in the Leaving Certificate, and such provision must be targeted towards addressing skill needs e.g computing, language and childcare. The key aim of the initiative is to promote flexible responses to needs, which have been unmet to date.

Under BTEI, 6000 places are being made available this year, of which 10% is exclusively for the community sector. This will increase on a phased basis with a view to having 20,000 extra places each year by 2006.

Applications have been invited from schools and VECs for the main strand of the initiative, and a selection committee will determine the applications to be funded. Discussions are beginning on the community strand of the initiative.

Expenditure in 2002 is estimated at €8m

Further information and the application pack for the Back to Education Initiative is available at <http://www.education.ie/>

[Parents & Community > Further Education > Back to Education Initiative - School/VEC](#)

Homeless, Asylum, Disability, Drug Court and Equality Initiatives

In addition to the above a range of pilot actions are under way

- Providing basic education services for some 200 **homeless people** in the Dublin area, visiting homeless hostels, providing literacy, evening family learning groups, summer programmes etc and an education co-ordinator in the Homeless Agency in line with Government Report on Homelessness
- Testing approaches to literacy and language for **asylum seekers** and running programmes for unaccompanied minors
- Providing supports in a number of Dublin based PLC colleges for integration of people with **disabilities** into FE programmes in collaboration with the National Training and Development Institute
- Operating an integrated programme of treatment, rehabilitation, education and training for drug addicts at risk of a custodial sentence who opt for the **Drug Court** Initiative, in collaboration with the health and probation service

## 59. Other Initiatives

### 60. National Educational Welfare Board

The Education (Welfare) Bill was enacted by Dáil Éireann in July 2000. It deals with issues of non-school attendance to address issues relating to educational welfare of children experiencing difficulties in school attendance and early intervention to address the problem. The Bill raises the minimum school leaving age to 16 or the completion of 3 years of the Junior Cycle, whichever is the later.

The National Educational Welfare Board was established on 29 May, 2001. The Board, chaired by Dr. Ann Louise Gilligan, includes representatives from the education partners and State Agencies with the emphasis on assistance to schools, families and children rather than penalties. The Board has responsibility for implementing the Act and ensuring that its objectives are met.

The Board's activities, both locally and nationally, will be coordinated with those of other child and family support agencies. A network of Educational Welfare Officers will be allocated to areas on the basis of local need.

This development involves the first ever-national response to supporting school attendance. A total of €5.4 million is being allocated over the next 3 years to facilitate the establishment of the Board and the enactment of the provisions of the Act.

### 61. Educational Disadvantage Committee/Forum to address Educational Disadvantage

The Educational Disadvantage Committee – provided for in Section 32 of the Education Act – will advise the Minister on policies and strategies to be adopted to identify and correct educational disadvantage. The Committee includes in its membership a number of people from voluntary and other bodies who have objectives or experience in the area of tackling disadvantage. The Committee has held seven meetings to date. In addition, the first education Disadvantage forum was held in November 2002.

Further information on the Educational Disadvantage Committee is available on the Department's website at <http://www.education.ie/>

[Information by Topic > Social Inclusion > Educational Disadvantage Committee](#)

### 62. Primary Pupil database

The development of a Primary Pupil Database to provide accessible and meaningful information for the development and implementation of policies particularly relating to tackling disadvantage will be reviewed in the context of the structural reform of the Department. A Working Group has been formed within the Department.

### **63. Advisory Committee on the Education of the Hearing Impaired**

This committee was established in early 2002 to review current education support services for the hearing impaired and make recommendations for the future development of services in this area. The committee, which is comprised of representatives of the various interests involved in this area, is continuing its work.

### **64. Dyslexia**

A special Task Force on Dyslexia was established in November 2000 to review current approaches and make recommendations for the future development of services in this area. The Task Force has now presented its report and the Department is currently considering this.

In a €2.5m project, 31 schools have been provided with funding for a number of eligible students to assist with the purchase of laptops and appropriate software. A grant of €3,400 is paid for each eligible student and each school will be paid €3,810 to purchase back-up equipment for the project teachers who are trained by the National Centre for Technology in Education.

The Learning Support Teacher Service also supports children with dyslexia.

### **65. National Centre for the Visually Impaired**

A Planning Group established by the Minister in 1999 put forward a comprehensive range of proposals for the development of a National Centre of Excellence for the Visually Impaired at the site of the schools for the visually impaired at Drumcondra, Dublin. A project team was appointed early in 2002 to assess the feasibility of the proposed development. This report will provide a basis for advancing the proposal.

### **66. Cyber Campus Pilot Programme**

In December 2000 funding of £250,000/€317,434.52 was provided for a new, highly innovative, *Cyber Campus* pilot programme run by the Cystic Fibrosis Society of Ireland. The new programme will provide on-line education and training for students with Cystic Fibrosis using information and communications technology to fill the educational gap caused by recurring illness and prolonged hospitalisation. Students will be provided with an up to –date computer set up at home, complete with connection to the Internet and suitable learning software. Significantly, the educational programme provided will deliver a modular course in ICT skills leading to a recognised Information Technology qualification.

### **67. Refugee Language Support**

**Integrate Ireland Language and Training Ltd (*formerly The Refugee Language Support Unit*)**

With the Department's support of £1.2m/1.52m over a two year pilot programme The Refugee language Support Unit was established in Trinity College in 1999 which has

completed benchmarks for English Language proficiency for school-going and asylum seeking children. All adult refugees presenting for English Language Tuition are assessed and assigned to appropriate classes. A register of English language tuition providers is maintained.

The pilot phase of the Refugee Language Support Unit has been successfully completed and has been replaced on a more permanent basis by an organisation called Integrate Ireland language and Training Ltd. This Unit operates on behalf of the Department of Education and Science under the aegis of Trinity College. It will continue the work of the pilot unit. It is also providing training on an on-going basis for teachers involved with non-national pupils as well as delivering English language teaching to adult refugees, developing further teaching materials and carrying out research.

A co-ordinator has been appointed to engage in action research on a pilot basis in the Dublin area to assess level of language needs in the area, and to examine models of good practice, which will inform future good practice. A circular has been issued to all VECs explaining the extent to which non-EU nationals may access Further Education services, and that asylum seekers etc., may access adult literacy services to the extent that they can be met from existing budgets.

## **68. National Council for Special Education**

In July, 2001 the Minister for Education and Science secured Government approval for the establishment of a National Council for Special Education. The Council will have a research and policy advice role and an operational role. It will establish Expert Groups to advise on policy issues. It will also establish a Consultative Forum to facilitate inputs from the partners in education and other interested parties.

The Council will have locally based offices where Special Needs Organisers will be employed to ensure the delivery of an effective service to children special needs in the area. Arrangements for the establishment of the National Council for Special Education are well advanced in the Department.

## 69. ICT

IT 2000 was a major investment programme launched in 1999. It involved grants of £9.7m/€12.32m which included £4/€5.08 per pupil for software, £3/€3.81d per pupil for ICT hardware and £2/€2.54 per pupil for computerised school administration subject to a maximum level of £500/€634.87 per school.

An investment programme costing £81m/€102.85m, £60m/€76.81m of which is capital funding, is being provided between 2001 and 2003 augmenting existing technology introduced under the Schools IT 2000 to develop an advanced curriculum support programme.

The Teaching Skills Initiative (TSI) provides training for teachers. Approximately 50,000 training places have been provided. The overall aim of TSI is to allow teachers to develop a skills/training continuum, which will allow them to progress in a structured way from novice to expert user of ICTs.

The *ScoilNet* site launched in September 1999 contains a wealth of curriculum material, lesson plans and other information of interest to teachers, students and parents will continue to be further developed in a major partnership with Intel Ireland. The development of multimedia software products tailored to the Irish curriculum will be promoted in co-operation with various interests, including publishing and software companies.

Seventy projects, involving 400 schools and 58 project partners from the public and private sectors were initiated in March 1999 under the *The Schools Integration Project (SIP)* which promotes whole school development and the integration of computers into learning and teaching in schools by piloting various models of ICT integration in individual schools or clusters. Emergent information on best practices and curriculum products will be disseminated throughout the school system.