

EVERY CHILD: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S CORPORATE PLAN 2023-28

Our Vision:

“Every child and young person is happy, learning and ready to succeed”

Our Values:

All in the Department of Education seek to uphold the NICS values of:

- Honesty;
- Integrity;
- Objectivity; and
- Impartiality

Our Strategic Priorities:




In implementing this Corporate Plan the Department will deliver actions and commitments within:

- **■** Children and Young People's Strategy Delivery Plan;
- **■** 'A Fair Start';
- **■** New Decade, New Approach; and
- **■** Covid-19 Recovery Strategy

CHAMPIONING all our children and young people and the positive impact of education on all aspects of life


We want our Department and all our education partners to put children and young people at the core of everything that we do. By 2028 we aspire to:

(a) Put the interests of children and young people first and provide them with a greater voice in shaping their own future

To achieve this, we will: 

- Develop a participation network to improve engagement with children and young people to ensure their views are sought when developing and co-designing policy or when making decisions which impact on their educational experience; and
- Work across government to ensure the interests of children and young people and the education sector are at the fore. This will include education representation on NICS-wide groups and working with other departments to align current and future government strategies; and

(b) Develop a properly resourced education system that actively seeks to promote the benefits that education brings to our society


To achieve this, we will: 

- Facilitate the completion of the Independent Review of Education and commence implementation of agreed recommendations;
- Build the case for appropriate investment in Education to support the delivery of our education services and improve outcomes for our children and young people;
- Promote intra and cross-departmental working (including opportunities for secondment of school staff) and identify, share and encourage research and best practice to inform policy development and implementation.

HELPING all our children and young people where they need support for their learning and well-being


We want to unite families, communities and educators around a shared vision to nurture healthy, confident children and young people, supported to learn and ready to lead fulfilling lives. By 2028 we aspire to:

a) Ensure every child and young person with additional or Special Educational Needs (SEN) has their needs identified and assessed as early as possible and receives provision which is timely and appropriate.

To achieve this, we will: 


- Implement the new SEN policy and legislative Framework in collaboration with our partners and shape future SEN and inclusion policy development through engagement and research;
- Invest in supporting additional educational needs; train more educational psychologists and provide better training on restorative practice in schools; and
- Work with DoH to enhance assessment and support of early years children with SEN and those who are pre-term; and provide joint oversight of services for children with SEN who require therapies and other health support to be delivered in schools;

b) All our children and young people enjoy active lives and healthy minds.

To achieve this, we will: 

- Continue to implement the joint DE/DoH "Children and Young People's Emotional Health & Wellbeing in Education Framework";
- Promote active lifestyles and healthy eating, including a review of school nutrition; and
- Address the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's wellbeing through the Engage Programme and other high quality education interventions.

c) All children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are able to participate fully in education, leading to improved learning outcomes.

To achieve this, we will: 

- Deliver DE actions in "A Life Deserved - A Strategy for Children Looked After";


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- Support families who need help with the costs of education and childcare through development of an Executive Childcare Strategy and delivery of accepted recommendations from the reviews of Free School Meals Entitlement (FSME) and school uniform policy; and
- Through the Extended Schools Programme, support work with clusters of local schools and other service providers to provide opportunities outside the normal school day for children and young people to develop and progress.

INSPIRING all our children and young people to make a positive contribution to society


We want an outward-looking and engaged Department, working in partnership with others, to raise aspirations and develop children and young people to make valuable contributions to society. By 2028 we aspire to:

(a) Encourage more children and young people from different backgrounds to engage together, building societal cohesion and learning to understand, respect and celebrate difference

To achieve this, we will: 

- Encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education through: expansion into Early Years and Youth Sectors, continued support of SE programmes, and progression of the Shared Education Campus (SEC) programme, including the flagship Strule SEC;
- Encourage and facilitate the development of Integrated and Irish-Medium Education;
- Progress programmes in partnership with the voluntary, community and youth sector in support of the Fresh Start Agreement / Tackling Paramilitarism Programme; and
- Support newcomer pupils in overcoming barriers to learning through a revised newcomer policy.

(b) Provide all children and young people with the opportunity, knowledge, skills, experience and support to empower them to make a positive contribution to the economy and society


To achieve this, we will: 

- Enhance our readiness for employment support with a particular focus on 14-19 year olds, in conjunction with the Department for Economy, the business community and other partners;
- Support capacity to engage in lifelong learning and promote alternative pathways to learning, including vocational qualifications;
- Contribute to tackling climate change through the development of the school estate and transport; and
- Co-design regional and local youth development plans and work with statutory and voluntary youth work organisations to meet assessed needs of young people and develop personal and social skills.

Meeting the **LEARNING** needs of our children and young people and developing their knowledge and skills, enabling them to fulfil their potential


We want every child to enjoy a high-quality education and learning experience from Early Years to post primary. By 2028 we aspire to:

(a) Provide a fit-for-purpose curriculum that gives equal emphasis to skills and knowledge and empowers all children and young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.

To achieve this, we will: 

- Work closely with all education delivery partners to raise standards through more effective implementation of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and seek to reflect wider societal and environmental issues;
- Design, develop and implement new arrangements for Key Stage assessment in Northern Ireland;
- Review our policy and develop a new strategy and programme to support effective school improvement across our education system;
- Ensure that children and young people with SEN in all educational settings have the support they need to access the curriculum and achieve their learning goals; and
- Use our inspection resources efficiently to promote improvement in the quality of learning; enhancing teaching and achievement across the education system.

(b) Develop an Early Years partnership approach – educators, health providers, parents, families and communities, working together to ensure all children are supported in their early development so they are ready to learn when they reach school age.

To achieve this, we will: 

- Work with delivery bodies to establish effective advice and support services for DE funded pre-school settings, and focus attention on target age pre-school education;
- Continue to support disadvantaged pre-school children (0-4 years) and their families through a collaborative approach involving parental engagement; and cooperation with DoH and the charitable, voluntary and community sectors;

- Review our Early Years programmes which target support to children and families facing disadvantage, and collaborate with Health practitioners to support our children's learning and development; and
- Promote learning through play throughout the early years of childhood, including a further resource and capital programme to support outdoor learning.

(c) Reduce the short and longer term impacts of COVID-19 on children and young people's learning, and embed improvements in education delivery arising as a result of the pandemic.

To achieve this, we will:




- Implement the “Reducing Educational Disadvantage” (RED) programme;
- Undertake a system level assessment of learners to ascertain the impact of COVID-19 on educational attainment and identify areas for improvement; and
- Improve access to learning and reduce digital poverty by expanding and accelerating the delivery of digital devices to learners; and support the use of assistive technology.

DELIVERING an effective, child-focused, collaborative, high-quality education system


We want a sustainable education system which is appropriately resourced, works in partnership, invests in its workforce and is committed to excellence and equity. By 2028 we aspire to:

(a) Deliver more modern, sustainable schools and education settings, which are committed to excellence and equity for every learner

To achieve this, we will: 


- Introduce a more agile and responsive Area Planning process which will bring forward area-based solutions that create more sustainable education provision (with a focus on more sustainable provision in rural communities);
- Invest in our education estate to provide a high quality learning environment for children and young people through a combination of major works, the School Enhancement Programme and minor works schemes; and
- Develop a new equality scheme and work with partners such as the Equality Commission to embed equality in our policies and governance.

(b) Deliver a highly skilled, motivated and high-functioning education workforce, which is provided with adequate support and training to enable it to meet the needs of every learner and stakeholder it serves

To achieve this, we will: 

- Support the learning and development needs of our education workforce and improve its capacity and resilience through implementation of the Learning Leaders strategy and providing more access to health and wellbeing initiatives; and
- Develop and implement a DE People Plan to enhance staff development, internal communications and support hybrid working.

(c) Deliver an efficient education system which works in partnership to meet the needs of children and young people

To achieve this, we will: 

- Review DE's organisational structure to ensure our staffing and resources are allocated to the right priorities;
- Enhance our visibility; make information more accessible, provide better signposting of support services, and agree a communications strategy to reduce administrative burden for our schools and ALBs; and

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- Replace the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland; commission regular reviews of each of our ALBs; and work in partnership whilst continuing to maintain good governance and fulfil our statutory obligations.

To help us deliver our Plan we will shape how we work based on the following enablers:

- **Collaborating** - Partnering with all our stakeholders to support co-production and achievement of shared outcomes.
- **Optimising** – Prioritising, modernising and making most efficient use of our resources to achieve the greatest impact, including stopping or changing activities that don't make the difference we want.
- **Responding** – Addressing the long term impacts of the pandemic and other emerging challenges and needs faced by our children and young people and the education workforce.
- **Engaging** – Communicating and consulting with our stakeholders to help shape our future services.

How will we know if we're making a difference?

We will use a range of indicators to gauge impact on our desired outcomes. These will be underpinned by tracking departmental performance measures to what we did, how well we did it and whether anyone is better off; these will be detailed within annual business plans and performance reports.