

# INTO Submission

## OIDE Strategic Plan 2024-2027

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**Submission on behalf of the INTO**

**To Oide**

**On their Strategic Plan 2024-2027**



## Introduction

The INTO welcomes the opportunity to contribute to Oide's Strategic Plan 2024-2027. However, the timing of this consultation may draw criticism as there is an overlap with the current NCCA consultation which is seeking stakeholder feedback on five draft Primary Curriculum specifications. Ideally, Oide should have selected a more opportune moment to engage with education stakeholders to avoid consultation overload.

As the strategic plan spans from 2024 to 2027, and considering it is already mid-2024, there is a palpable rush to implement this plan concurrent with the new curriculum rollout. The INTO hopes that this does not foreshadow a rushed approach to the upcoming implementation of the redeveloped curriculum. It is crucial that Oide align its efforts more effectively with wider education bodies in future stakeholder engagements.

Priority actions set for 2024-2027 must focus predominantly on the imminent introduction of the redeveloped Primary Curriculum, ensuring primary schools are not overwhelmed or unduly pressured during the process. The actions taken must allow sufficient time for the curriculum to be explored, implemented and reviewed under this strategic plan and the next. With that in mind, Oide must ensure that the primary education sector voice is adequately represented in all managerial, facilitation, and advisory roles across the organisation.

The INTO requests that Oide provide a well-considered and comprehensive rollout plan and support programme ahead of the curriculum's introduction in September 2025. It is vital that schools are informed of any activities that may interrupt regular school operations in a following academic year before the summer break of the current academic year. This timely communication will enable principals to adequately prepare for the new academic year, incorporating any potential closures or teaching interruptions.

The INTO would also like Oide to consider the creation of an Inclusive Learning Team. This team would examine how the integrated subject structure of the redeveloped curriculum can best support all learners, particularly those with additional social, emotional, or behavioural needs. Practical and easily accessible CPD and resources, aligning the curriculum with the *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*, the imminent guidelines on *Understanding Behaviours of Concern and Responding to Crisis Situations* and any other relevant future guidelines should be available to every teacher, supporting their work with the diverse range of pupils in their classrooms.

The strategic plan should also mandate an 18-month review with all relevant educational stakeholders to ensure that the set priority actions are being met and to address any arising challenges. The plan should also outline its progression from 2027 to 2030, anticipating the ongoing needs of primary education during the curriculum rollout.

The INTO also requests that Oide actively engages with parent organisations to facilitate information sessions about the new curriculum. These sessions should aim to educate parents on the benefits of the curriculum changes, alert them to expected disruptions during the rollout, and clarify avenues for addressing any concerns they might have. By directing parental queries and concerns to the Department of Education or local representatives rather than school leaders, we can alleviate this burden on schools and ensure that schools remain focused on curriculum implementation. Proactive communication will build understanding and support among parents and foster a cooperative spirit towards the successful implementation of the curriculum changes.

The strategic plan should also incorporate a means for collecting, analysing and publishing feedback directly from teachers and school leaders. This feedback will provide real-time insights into the practical challenges and successes during the curriculum rollout and any other concerns that arise in the coming years. This ongoing dialogue will enable Oide to continuously refine and adapt strategies, ensuring that the organisation delivers on the priority actions of this strategic plan.



Additionally, the strategic plan must prioritise educational efficacy over cost-effectiveness to ensure the successful implementation of the redeveloped curriculum. Finally, the plan must at all times consider the infrastructural needs of our schools, the onerous administrative responsibilities of school leaders, the financial pressures on parents and schools around school funding, and the needs of all learners within our classrooms. The INTO believes that a well-crafted strategic plan from Oide, complete with realistic outcomes, clear timelines and adequate resourcing, will support and enhance the delivery of education change between now and 2027.

## Priority Actions 2024-2027

### General

The INTO has cautiously welcomed the consolidation of the education support services (Centre for School Leadership (CSL), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT), the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)) under a single managerial entity. This reorganisation is recognised for its potential to enhance the efficiency, communication, and culture among the support services by facilitating quicker and more flexible responses to changes across the organisation. It is also hoped that this consolidation will foster innovative thinking, leveraging strengths from each support service to enhance the others.

However, the success of this amalgamation remains to be seen, and there are concerns about potential drawbacks. The INTO believes there is a risk that specialised focus and expertise might be diluted due to an emphasis on financial efficiency, leading to less effective system supports from Oide.

The INTO understands that co-ordinating such a large-scale reorganisation may be disruptive given the required adjustments. We hope that all avenues of support are being exhausted to ensure that the amalgamation of the education support services does not unduly impact INTO members. With this in mind, the INTO hopes to see priority actions from the previous support services continued in the 2024 to 2027 strategic plan and commends the previous support services for all of their work to date. With this in mind, Oide's priority actions should, at a whole school level:

- Develop and maintain a professional development infrastructure to include leadership training, classroom management and up-to-date education practices for NQTs and experienced teachers. This should involve both online and face-to-face workshops, continuous training programs, communities of practice and specialist trainers to address the evolving needs of current and future classrooms.
- Expand support for integrating technology in education, ensuring that teachers are equipped not only with the digital tools but also the skills to use them effectively. Specific training should continue around digital literacy, cyber safety, and the pedagogical use of technology to enhance learning.
  - It may be prudent to include training that explores the impact of AI software across the various subject areas. This should include helping teachers and principals to understand AI's capabilities, ethical use, and its impact on education. AI can be leveraged to support the work of schools and it is essential for students to receive a well-rounded education on AI to prepare them for a future where it will be increasingly prevalent.
- Have clear and open communication channels between Oide, schools, and other educational stakeholders. Regular updates, feedback mechanisms, and collaborative platforms should be used to ensure all voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes.
- Promote and support sustainable practices within schools.
- Promote and support inclusive education which respects diversity.
- Conduct research to assess the effectiveness of educational initiatives and support services and continuously improve and adapt services based on evidence and feedback from teachers on the ground.



- Replicate the model of training/CPD currently being provided for staff in the small schools' pilot to small schools nationwide. Ensure that in-person school-based training and facilitated planning for curriculum implementation are provided.
- Provide meaningful training around child protection each school year, facilitated by experienced advisors ensuring that all staff are well-equipped to handle child protection issues and are aware of the latest guidelines and best practices.
- Provide comprehensive training for teachers in primary and special schools to engage effectively with all strategies listed in the education appendix to the new public service agreement. These include the Department of Education's Statements of Strategy on:
  - Curricular and assessment reform including the Primary Curriculum
  - *Literacy and Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy (2024-2033)*
  - *Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027*
  - *Gaeltacht Education Strategy*
  - *Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education Policy Statement 2017-2026*
  - *Modern Foreign Language Strategy "Languages Connect" 2017-2026*
  - *Cineáltas Implementation Plan 2023-2027*
  - *Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development to 2030*

This also encompasses training to support schools' engagement with:

- the outcome of the NCSE *Policy Advice on Inclusive Education*
- the review of the EPSEN Act
- the SNA *Workforce Development Plan* including the review of the SNA contract

### *Inclusive Learning Team*

The INTO urges Oide to create an Inclusive Learning Team (ILT) which would be strategically aligned with their curriculum implementation plan to effectively support all learners, especially those with social, emotional, or behavioural needs. The following outlines the proposed functions of the ILT within Oide;

- The ILT should focus on how the integrated subject structure of the redeveloped curriculum can be leveraged to support the needs of all learners while upholding the principles of diversity and inclusion and respecting the varied needs of all students in a supportive learning environment.
- The ILT should develop comprehensive, practical, and accessible CPD programmes that equip teachers with the skills and knowledge to use the redeveloped curriculum to serve the needs of all children in their classrooms. This CPD should develop teachers' understanding of a wide range of learner needs and provide practical methodologies to ensure all pupils are receiving equitable access to the curriculum.



- The ILT should ensure that teachers have access to up-to-date and relevant resources that support all learners. This should include guidance on how to use both concrete and a suite of suitable digital resources to enhance the delivery of the curriculum to all learners, and detailed teaching guides that align with the *Cineáltas Action Plan on Bullying*, the imminent guidelines on behaviours of concern and all future relevant guidelines.
- The ILT should offer direct support to teachers, aiding them in the application of ILT methodologies and relevant guidelines. This support should be responsive, with the ILT serving as a resource for teachers as and when they need them.
- The ILT should work collaboratively with other curricular teams within Oide. This collaboration will ensure that ILT methodologies and guidance are not developed in isolation but are interwoven with broader educational objectives and content across all subjects.

### *Redeveloped Curriculum*

The implementation of the redeveloped Primary Curriculum must be a primary focus for Oide in the coming years. Oide's priority actions in this area of their strategic plan must be carefully managed and implemented to ensure the successful rollout of the redeveloped curriculum into primary classrooms. Each of the five specifications of STEM, Arts Education, Wellbeing Education, Social and Environmental Education, and the Primary Languages Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages, merits a meticulously planned support strategy.

It is essential that each subject receives the undivided effort of a dedicated Oide primary team. The Department of Education must also ensure that sufficient funding and resources are allocated to guarantee the success of the work of Oide. Oide must sustain in-house expertise over time to prevent any knowledge gaps and attrition of expertise during the rollout of the redeveloped curriculum.

This initial phase of exploration, implementation, and review of the redeveloped curriculum should be regarded as the beginning of Oide's long-term engagement with this curriculum. Given the introduction of new subject areas such as modern foreign languages, coding in mathematics, and consent in wellbeing education, Oide must plan for continuous and sustained support across all aspects of the redeveloped curriculum beyond its rollout. The INTO's suggested priority actions for the redeveloped curriculum lean on the NCCA's *Supporting Systemwide Primary Curriculum Change* document and also reflect the views of our members concerning the rollout and ongoing support of the redeveloped curriculum from 2024 to 2027 and beyond.

Aligned to the NCCA's *Supporting Systemwide Primary Curriculum Change*, Oide's priority actions should:

- Establish a unified and shared vision across all levels of education, ensuring that the redeveloped curriculum aligns seamlessly with broader educational policies. Actions will involve clear communication of the curriculum's goals and principles to ensure all stakeholders have a full understanding and are fully aligned in their efforts.
- Provide ongoing, evidence based professional development opportunities for teachers and school leaders, with substitution, including training that is directly connected to the new curriculum's content and pedagogical strategies, ensuring that schools are well-prepared to implement the relevant changes.
- Ensure that adequate resources are available to support the implementation of the new curriculum. This should include both financial, material and personnel resourcing.



- Promote distributed leadership within schools. Empowering middle leaders, curriculum leaders and other educators to take active roles in curriculum implementation and school improvement efforts will ground the curriculum in schools. It must be noted that this can only happen with the full restoration of assistant principal posts at primary level.
- Engage with a broad range of stakeholders in the curriculum change process, including parents and community members to help foster a collaborative approach to educational reform.
- Facilitate, through education centres, opportunities for teachers to collaboratively review and make sense of the new curriculum changes. This should be supported through the creation of communities of practice and leadership networks that encourage sharing of ideas and practical examples of curriculum implementation.
- Encourage Oide teams to continuously evaluate the impact of the curriculum changes and gather feedback from all stakeholders. This feedback should be used to make iterative improvements to the curriculum and Oide's own implementation strategies.
- Ensure that the curriculum is inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with additional educational needs. This involves adequately resourcing schools and training both practicing and student teachers to adapt their teaching methods to cater to our diverse student population.

Aligned to INTO member feedback around the redeveloped curriculum, Oide's priority actions should:

- Look to reduce curriculum overload by distilling specification content down to its essential knowledge and skills and ensuring teachers have a thorough understanding of same. This will also address concerns about the broad nature of the new curriculum.
- Provide substantial in-school training tailored to the new curriculum changes, especially in areas such as STEM, MFL, RSE, Wellbeing, Education for Sustainable Development and digital literacy. This training should be practical, face-to-face, provided by experienced advisors/facilitators and available to all members of staff.
- Prioritise the wellbeing of teachers and students by managing curriculum workload and incorporating sufficient time for embedding the redeveloped curriculum in schools and classrooms.
- Outline in the strategic plan how the language support team will provide ongoing assistance for teachers as they transition to teaching MFL in senior classes ensuring that support is available, on a needs basis, during and after the rollout of the redeveloped curriculum.
- Prioritise the wellbeing of teachers through respect and consideration for teachers' work life balance.
- Adapt assessment strategies to better reflect the new learning approaches and outcomes, especially in areas such as wellbeing and digital literacy, while also simplifying documentation and evidence collection to reduce the administrative burden on teachers.
- Improve stakeholder engagement by increasing communication with parents and communities in the rollout process. Oide advisors and facilitators should have a central role in this work, it must not be left solely in the hands of school principals.
- Develop and implement diversity and inclusion training that reflects the needs of all students, including those from minority backgrounds, those with disabilities, and those with differing





learning needs. Culturally responsive teaching, development of inclusive curriculum materials, and support for schools in creating inclusive environments are key concepts that must be incorporated.

- Ensure that Oide's priority actions allow for teacher agency and flexibility in curriculum implementation alongside setting realistic timelines for the rollout and providing clear guidance and resources at all stages of the rollout.
- Establish a means for ongoing feedback from teachers and principals to allow for continuous review and adaptation of the curriculum rollout based on real-world classroom experiences and reliable data.
- Use the lessons learned from the successful rollout of the 1999 curriculum to inform its planning for the imminent rollout of the redeveloped curriculum. Oide should look to replicate the well-structured and phased implementation strategy already utilised by the PCSP.

The priority actions elicited from both the NCCA *Supporting Systemwide Primary Curriculum Change* and the members of the INTO are unquestionably aligned, particularly in the areas of professional development, resource allocation, the need for clear communication and a robust implementation strategy. The responsibility now rests with the Department of Education and Oide to carefully consider the needs of teachers and the primary system as a whole and develop a clear plan for the rollout of the redeveloped curriculum that will ensure its success. Oide must introduce the plan for the rollout before the end of 2024. This plan must provide a full timeframe for the delivery of the redeveloped curriculum and ensure that ample supports are in place to facilitate a smooth and effective integration of the new curriculum into the country's primary classrooms.

### *Induction*

The INTO calls on Oide to continue its strong support of NQTs, ensuring that they are well-equipped to meet the challenges of today's classrooms and have the opportunity to contribute positively to the educational landscape up to 2027 and beyond. This will ensure that the educational system remains capable of adapting to future changes, and also ensure a high-quality learning environment for all students.

The INTO would urge Oide to prioritise the following actions for teacher induction from now until 2027:

Oide should:

- Continue to fully support and resource the *Droichead* process. The Oide *Droichead* team should be adequately staffed at all times to enable them to address the needs of both NQTs & PSTs. This should include expanding the team and backfilling any posts due to leaves of absence as and when required.
- Build on the mentoring element of schools PSTs to support NQTs. Face to face PST cluster meetings should be held each year to share successes and collectively find solutions to issues with the *Droichead* process that PSTs may be experiencing in their schools.
- Ensure that NQTs have access to relevant and bespoke CPD opportunities that are tailored to their stages of career development. This should include workshops, seminars, and cluster meetings that focus on areas such as classroom management, inclusive education, and digital literacy and facilitate collaborative discussion and peer learning.



- Provide in-person interactions as a key component of the teacher induction programme. New teachers need opportunities to connect with other early-career teachers to prevent isolation and burnout
- Provide specific training and resources to support NQTs in addressing the diverse needs of all students. This training should help teachers effectively implement inclusive practices within their classrooms.
- Enhance communication channels between Oide, schools, NQTs, and other educational stakeholders.
- Support NQTs with targeted supports to facilitate implementation of the new curriculum effectively. This support should be sustained well beyond the initial induction phase to accommodate the ongoing learning and adaptation required by the curriculum changes.
- Work closely with bodies such as the NCCA and NSCE to ensure that induction programs are aligned with national educational priorities creating a unified approach to teacher induction that reflects the collective expertise of these bodies.
- Maintain strong links with the INTO to ensure that the induction process meets the expressed needs of NQTs and their schools.

### *School Leadership*

Considering the evolving educational landscape up to 2027, Oide must prioritise comprehensive support for school leadership. This support should focus on equipping school leaders to effectively navigate upcoming curriculum redevelopment, address the ongoing shortage of therapeutic supports available to pupils, tackle the teacher supply crisis, and manage any other relevant challenges. The priority actions outlined below seek to empower school leaders with the skills, knowledge, and strategies needed to effectively manage the challenges and the opportunities in the coming years. With the right support, our primary school principals can be facilitated to become dynamic and responsive leaders who meet the diverse needs of all learners.

With this in mind, Oide should:

- Continue to support the Misneach and Tánaiste programmes. It is vital that Oide leadership teams are adequately resourced to ensure newly appointed school leaders are provided with a comprehensive induction and ongoing support. These programmes should be regularly updated to reflect the latest educational sector changes and leadership challenges.
- Continue to ensure experienced school leaders have access to ongoing professional development opportunities that are tailored to address current leadership challenges, including change management, pedagogical change and school planning.
- Continue to promote and facilitate comprehensive school self-evaluation supports and training to help school leaders set realistic educational targets that align both with individual schools' context specific needs and national goals.
- Advocate for improved participation and accessibility to the Comhar programme, supporting middle leaders and in-school management teams.
- Continue to ensure that school leaders in DEIS schools receive specific training to address the unique challenges in their school contexts.



- Adapt leadership training to prepare both existing and aspiring school leaders for implementing the new curriculum, vision, pedagogical changes, assessment models, revised timetabling and the impact of subject integration.

## Conclusion

As we look towards 2027, and further ahead to 2030, the importance of Oide's role in shaping the future of primary education in Ireland cannot be overstated. The successful rollout of the redeveloped curriculum will require a significant commitment from all involved in Irish education and the resources to ensure teachers are fully supported in its delivery. It is important that no expense is spared in this endeavour, ensuring that all necessary supports are in place to facilitate a seamless transition to the new curriculum. This is not merely an investment in our current educational system but a foundational step towards the future education of all our pupils.

Considering the ongoing teacher supply crisis and the critical shortage of therapeutic services in schools, it can be said that the challenges facing the rollout are significant. These shortages impact the social, emotional, and behavioural needs of our children, making the task ahead even more difficult. To meet the diverse needs of all learners, the INTO believes that it is essential that Oide broadens its scope of supports. Collaboration with key educational bodies such as the NCCA and the NCSE must continue to be a priority. The voice of the teacher must also be central to all consultation. A collaborative approach will enable services to share their expertise, ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of all students and adds to their holistic development. Through these collaborations, Oide can create an environment that supports teachers and, in turn, benefits the pupils they teach.

Alongside this, the current trend of newly qualified teachers choosing to teach abroad highlights the urgent need for Oide to implement sustained curriculum CPD that extends well beyond the initial rollout phase. This sustained CPD will be important in ensuring that our teachers are well-prepared to deliver the new curriculum effectively when they return.

The INTO also advocates for the strengthening of communication channels between Oide, schools, teachers, parents, and other educational stakeholders. Effective communication will ensure that all stakeholders are well-informed, engaged, and supported throughout this time of curriculum change. Open and clear lines of communication will enable all parties to swiftly address any issues that arise, making the process as smooth as possible for everyone involved.

The INTO is fully committed to supporting this curriculum redevelopment. We will provide our support to assist Oide in communicating with our members and offer our support, wherever necessary, during the rollout of the redeveloped curriculum. Our involvement ensures that the voices of teachers and school leaders are heard and addressed.

Meaningful collaboration between all educational stakeholders is of the utmost importance. It will lay the groundwork for a curriculum that not only meets current educational standards but also stands the test of time. It will help sustain and support our school leaders in a time of system and societal change, it will ensure a robust induction to the profession for our NQTs and aid in their retention.

By investing in this collaborative approach now, we are setting the stage for a future where our educational system is resilient, inclusive, and capable of adapting to future changes. With effort, substantial investment, and meaningful collaboration, the rollout of the redeveloped curriculum can guarantee that every child receives the best possible primary education, ensure that every teacher is empowered to deliver impactful teaching, and every leader is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to help them succeed.