



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Select Committee: Public Service Performance Report (PSPR) 2022

## Opening Remarks

Department of Education

Finance Unit  
18 October 2023

**Opening Statement by Gavan O’Leary,**

**Assistant Secretary, Department of Education**

**Select Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research,  
Innovation and Science, 24 October 2023**

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**Vote 26 – Public Service Performance Report 2022**

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*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

A Chathaoirligh agus a Bhaill den Choiste (Chair, members of the Committee,)

My name is Gavan O’Leary. I am one of the Assistant Secretaries in the Department of Education.

I am accompanied today by some officials from the Department. They are:

- Mr. Tom Whelan, Principal Office in the Finance Unit
- Dr. Paul Alexander, Senior Statistician in the Statistics Unit
- Ms. Valerie Kirwan, Principal Officer with responsibility for Finance in the Planning and Building Unit
- Ms. Anne Murray, Principal Officer in the Public Service Reform Programme Office; and
- Mr Pdraig MacFhlannachadha, Assistant Chief Inspector in the Department.

The Department welcomes the opportunity to provide the Committee with our responses to the questions raised on the 2022 Public Service Performance Report.

At the outset, I would note that the Department of Education is actively working with our colleagues in the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in relation to the Public Service Performance Report process. We recognise the importance of ensuring that the Department’s key indicators and outputs are provided as part of the ongoing annual Estimates process.

As has been noted elsewhere, the creation of the Public Service Performance Report is part of a process which aims to continuously improve and refine the information included in the Revised Estimates and in the Public Service Performance Report itself in order to inform the consideration of these matters.

The process is undertaken with an emphasis on providing measurable and quantitative performance indicators. This includes information in regard to performance budgeting. In recent years, it has also included information in relation to equality budgeting.

As part of this and other processes, the Department of Education has increased the amount of published information and data that it makes available regarding the performance of the Education system in Ireland. For example, the Department regularly publishes education statistical reports such as the Education Indicators for Ireland. The publication of such reports supplements the key indicators that are included in the Revised Estimates Volume. The format of the Revised Estimates Volume does not allow for the inclusion of the full comprehensive set of indicators that may be available, but instead focusses on those considered most aligned with the overall level of expenditure in the Vote.

As the members of the Committee will be aware, there has been a number of reforms to the overall budgetary framework in recent years in order to support greater transparency and provide the basis for a whole of year engagement between Government Departments and Oireachtas Committees. These changes include:

- Performance and Equality Budgeting;
- Mid-Year Expenditure Reports;
- the Public Service Performance Report
- Spending Review Papers
- Independent scrutiny by the Parliamentary Budgetary Office, including PBO papers

The Minister and Ministers of State in the Department have attended various Committee meetings to discuss expenditure matters relating to the Education Vote. The Minister has assured the Committee of her commitment to accountability in relation to the management of the system and the measurement and management of performance in the system.

In relation to the performance indicators, the Department is committed to reviewing the performance indicators and related metrics included in the Revised Estimates Volumes. We have noted the comments and queries raised by members of the Committee in relation to the 2022 Public Service Performance Report and will take account of these in future iterations of the Report. Where appropriate, the Department will include additional indicators linked to particular strategic and policy initiatives.

Part of this process will involve taking account of the size of particular areas of expenditure in the context of the overall scale of the Vote. As the Committee

members will be aware, the majority of the Department's Vote is accounted for by pay and pensions in the education sector.

The metrics outlined in the Revised Estimates Volume for 2023 will be reviewed as part of the process of drafting the Revised Estimates Volume for 2024.

The Department is very aware of the importance of the work that is done in schools across the country on a daily basis. We are committed to using processes such as the Public Service Performance Report to inform our decision making in relation to the funding of the system and progressing the policy objectives outlined by the Minister.

In conclusion, I can assure the Committee that this Department is fully committed to further developing and enhancing the performance metrics associated with the annual estimates process. Through this, we aim to improve clarity and transparency regarding the uses to which the resources invested in the system are put.

My colleagues and I look forward to answering the Committee members' questions.

**Go raibh maith agaibh.**