

“Excellence through Collaborative Leadership and Management”

Description of Scheme

Introduction

It is a stated objective of the Action Plan for Education 2018 to make the Irish Education and Training service the best in Europe by 2026. Key objectives for 2018 are to build leadership capacity and to expand and develop initiatives to promote innovation and excellence in schools. It is acknowledged that the changing educational landscape presents significant challenges for leadership and management teams in primary and post primary schools. The introduction of new policies in areas such as Digital Learning, STEM, the expansion of policy in Literacy and Numeracy, the embedding of SSE and DEIS demands more innovative and responsive approaches to educational leadership and management at school level. The essential purpose of educational leadership and management is to promote learning by students and teachers alike. In order to do this effectively, schools need to be professional learning organisations, skilled in leading and managing change.

Through the effective work of CSL, JCT and PDST, aspiring and serving leaders are well supported in their professional development along the continuum of their careers. The setting out of a leadership and management framework in schools as provided for in Circular 63/17 and 03/18 as well as the publication of *Looking at our School 2016*, provide a structure and impetus for schools to respond to their individual needs in a strategic and creative manner.

In keeping with the Department’s vision of encouraging innovation and promoting excellence in leadership, the Department is now inviting schools to participate in a pilot scheme designed to support projects that involve innovative approaches to school leadership and management. The pilot scheme is designed to facilitate schools in harnessing and optimising internal leadership, management capacity and collaboration at all levels, in order to:

- Improve learning experiences and outcomes for students and pupils
- Strengthen school planning
- Strengthen the impact of effective leadership on teaching and assessment practices
- Build leadership capacity of teams in schools
- Enable schools to engage with the school community through exchanging ideas, sharing experiences and innovative practice, and fostering external partnerships

The scheme will comprise a national programme of projects operating at a local level. Each project will explore approaches to school leadership and management which involve and empower all school leadership teams in participating schools. Therefore schools will be invited to engage in innovative clusters with a shared vision for school improvement. For the

purposes of this proposal, a cluster is defined as a collection of **between three and six schools** which will collaborate in the design, delivery, evaluation and dissemination of the outcomes of these innovative projects.

The scheme will initially be introduced on a pilot basis. The pilot, including the application phase, will take place from November/December 2018 with a view to planning and implementation of the projects from February 2019. The pilot phase will run until June 2020.

The pilot scheme will be subject to an external evaluation, which will require the active participation of all cluster members. The evaluation will run for the project duration, with a report expected to issue by July 2020.

What is a cluster?

A cluster will typically consist of between three and six schools collaborating on the design, implementation and dissemination of an innovative project under the scheme. Support for the clusters will be coordinated locally through the Education Centre network.

Clusters can consist of primary schools only, post-primary schools only, or, a combination of primary post primary schools. In selecting the projects/clusters to participate in the scheme, the Department will seek to have all three configurations represented in the pilot. Furthermore, priority will be given to applicant clusters containing at least one DEIS school.

Clusters should nominate a lead school. The lead school will provide a “cluster coordinator”; who will be responsible for managing the day-to-day operation of the project and will act as a single point of contact for the Education Centre.

Schools/clusters can be drawn from existing networks or result from the creation of new ones. The operation of the cluster may be enhanced by collaboration with a third level institution and/or industry. It is envisaged that these links will be facilitated through the Education Centre network.

What is a project?

The Department is keen to learn from the project. To that end, participating schools will be expected to report regularly to the Department on progress made using a self-evaluation process. The Department expects to be informed by the innovative approaches, clusters adopt to demonstrate some or all of the following:



- Collaboration within and between schools focusing on the enhancement of distributed leadership in the participating schools
- The impact of effective leadership on teaching, learning and assessment in the participating schools
- The involvement of learners in participating schools and evidence of the impact their participation has on their learning - specifically how the learner experience changes as a result of their school's participation in the project
- Effective collaboration among participating schools
- Defined outcomes
- How the outcomes of the projects can be applied to the wider system

Project topics can address, but are not limited to, the following:

- Effective leadership and management of curricular change (e.g. Politics and Society, the Primary Languages Curriculum, Junior Cycle Framework, Senior Cycle review etc.) in ensuring better outcomes for learners
- Effective leadership and management to enable key policy initiatives to have an impact on learning in schools (e.g. *Looking at Our Schools 2016*, the Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023, School Self Evaluation, Literacy and Numeracy, STEM, The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, DEIS etc.)

In order to enhance project planning and implementation it is envisaged that the projects may involve:

- Collaboration between schools and the third-level sector
- Collaboration between schools and industry/business
- Engagement within the school community and between school communities

Ideally the approach adopted will involve clustered schools collaboratively identifying and agreeing issues to be addressed and worked on together through the lifetime of the project to develop and implementing solutions.

Application Process

Schools should form clusters (from previous or existing clustering arrangements or by forming new ones) with indicative Project Outlines developed.

Prior to the application closing date, information seminars will be held in Education Centres to assist with any queries schools might have on the scheme.



Cluster applications:

Schools should come together to work on an agreed project. A lead school should be nominated, a co-ordinator, and representatives from member schools identified. **One application per cluster should be completed by the lead/cluster co-ordinating school and agreed by all schools participating in the cluster.**

The cluster should provide a Project Outline and Plan through the online application form:

The Project Outline and Plan, should include:

- A short summary of the project
- The reasons for undertaking the project
- The intended impact of the project on the leadership of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly as it relates to learner experiences and outcomes
- Project methodology (how the cluster envisages project implementation)
- A proposed project schedule. This should include planned progress and deliverables in each year, with milestone dates, outcomes and details of ongoing monitoring
- A project communications plan - to detail how the collaboration will be facilitated and managed (via an Education Centre for example)
- Roles and responsibilities of each member school
- Defined outcomes, to include how those outcomes will be communicated and disseminated (e.g. good practice videos, resources made available online, professional networks, etc.)
- A proposed evaluation and assessment model for the project, during (monitoring) and on completion
- Likely relevance and application for wider system
- Any other relevant information, including any existing links with a third level institution, local education centre, local industry, previous/existing projects etc.

Selection Process

For this scheme, the Department is seeking a purposive sample of schools. The primary aim of the scheme is to demonstrate the innovative use of effective management in teaching, learning and assessment, collaborative practice and the impact on learner experience.

In selecting the clusters, the Department would aim to have the following represented;

- Primary, Post-Primary and cross- sectoral configurations
- Effective leadership and management of curricular change (e.g. Politics and Society, the Primary Languages Curriculum, Junior Cycle Framework, Senior Cycle review etc.) in ensuring better outcomes for learners
- Effective leadership and management to enable key policy initiatives to have an impact on learning in schools (e.g. Looking at Our Schools 2016, Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023, School Self Evaluation, Literacy and Numeracy, STEM, The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020, DEIS etc.)

Note: It is intended to prioritise applications from clusters which include at least one DEIS school.

Supports provided for the clusters

Selected clusters can expect supports to include the following:

- Opening Seminar/training event, to include inputs on project management and facilitated collaborative planning
- Ongoing access to a project facilitator appointed by CSL
- Access to DES support services to support the particular needs of the cluster
- Third level and Industry/business support facilitated by the local Education Centre

Education Centres will also host cluster meetings, if required and will facilitate regional dissemination events to showcase the learning from the pilot towards the end of the pilot phase.

Schools should also consult the Looking at our Schools 2016 and Circulars 63/2017 and 03/2018. Schools should pay due cognisance to the schools own self evaluation process in formulating their project plan.

Time

- The expectation is that the cluster co-ordinator will require one hour per week to administer the project, amounting to some 10 days/60 hours over the projects duration -the specific allocation of time will depend on the cluster requirements
- Primary teaching principals, acting as cluster coordinators, will be allocated one day per month;
- Cluster meetings will take place outside of school time
- It is expected that the opening seminar/training event will take place in early 2019

Proposed Schedule for Scheme

Application period:	November/December 2018
Information sessions:	12 th to 20 th November 2018
Closing date for receipt of applications:	19 th December 2018
Selection of clusters:	December 2018
Announcement of participating Clusters:	January 2019
Opening event:	February 2019
Project planning and implementation:	February 2019 to June 2020
External Evaluation:	Ongoing from February 2019
Regional showcase events:	April/May 2020

Links to supporting documentation:

Application Form: https://www.cslireland.ie/images/downloads/leadershipclusters/Application_Form.docx

Description of Scheme: https://www.cslireland.ie/images/downloads/leadershipclusters/Description_of_the_Scheme.pdf

Role of Cluster Coordinator: https://www.cslireland.ie/images/downloads/leadershipclusters/Role_of_Cluster_Co-ordinator.pdf

Role of Facilitator: https://www.cslireland.ie/images/downloads/leadershipclusters/Role_of_the_Facilitator.pdf

Role of Education Centre: https://www.cslireland.ie/images/downloads/leadershipclusters/Role_of_the_Education_Centre.pdf



Looking at our Schools: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Post-Primary-schools.pdf>

Circular 63/17: https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0063_2017.pdf

Circular 03/18: https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0003_2018.pdf Looking at our Schools: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/Looking-at-Our-School-2016-A-Quality-Framework-for-Post-Primary-schools.pdf>

Circular 63/17: https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0063_2017.pdf

Circular 03/18: https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0003_2018.pdf

List of Acronyms

CSL - Centre for School Leadership

DES - Department of Education and Skills

DEIS - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

JCT - Junior Cycle for Teachers

PDST - Professional Development Service for Teachers

STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics