



Northern Ireland Audit Office

Closing the Gap – Social Deprivation and links to Educational Attainment



REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL
5 May 2021



Northern Ireland Audit Office

Closing the Gap – Social Deprivation and links to Educational Attainment

Published 5 May 2021

This report has been prepared under Article 8 of the Audit (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 for presentation to the Northern Ireland Assembly in accordance with Article 11 of the Order.

K J Donnelly CB
Comptroller and Auditor General

Northern Ireland Audit Office
5 May 2021

The Comptroller and Auditor General is the head of the Northern Ireland Audit Office. He, and the Northern Ireland Audit Office are totally independent of Government. He certifies the accounts of all Government Departments and a wide range of other public sector bodies; and he has statutory authority to report to the Assembly on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and other bodies have used their resources.

For further information about the Northern Ireland Audit Office please contact:

Northern Ireland Audit Office
106 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1EU

Tel: 028 9025 1000
email: info@niauditoffice.gov.uk
website: **www.niauditoffice.gov.uk**

© Northern Ireland Audit Office 2021

Contents

	Page
Abbreviations	7
Key Facts	9
Executive Summary	12
Part 1: Introduction	17
Background	18
Objectives and Outcomes	18
Social Deprivation and Underachievement	20
Measures of Social Deprivation	21
Social Deprivation Funding	22
Scope and Methods	23
Part 2: Interventions	25
Introduction	26
Targeting Social Need	26
TSN Funding	27
TSN Accountability	27
The Department's TSN Planner	29
NIAO Survey on TSN funding in schools	30
Sure Start	30
Sure Start Performance Measurement	32
Part 3: Effectiveness to date	35
Introduction	36
Assessment	36
Targets	37
The Attainment Gap between FSME and Non-FSME pupils at Key Stages	40
Key Stages 1 to 3	40
Key Stage 4	42
NIAO TSN Survey	45
Survey findings	45
Sure Start	50
NIAO discussions with academics	53

Contents

	Page
Part 4: Current Actions	55
New Decade, New Approach	56
The Education Transformation Programme	57
The Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team	58
Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) Database for Northern Ireland	60
Appendices	61
Appendix 1: Study Methodology	62
Appendix 2: The Department of Education's 2019-20 funding programmes targeting socially deprived children	63
Appendix 3: TSN 2019-20 funding and allocation	68
NIAO Reports 2020 and 2021	69

Abbreviations

C&AG	Comptroller and Auditor General
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CCMS	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
CCP	Childcare Partnership
CFS	Common Funding Scheme
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (Republic of Ireland)
Department	Department of Education
DfE	Department for Education (in England)
DE	Department of Education
DHSS (now DoH)	Department of Health and Social Services (now Department of Health)
EA	Education Authority
ELB	Education and Library Board
EPI	Education Policy Institute
ES Programme	Extended Schools Programme
ESaGS	Every School a Good School
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate
FSME	Free School Meal Entitlement
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HSCB	Health and Social Care Board
IAS	Internal Audit Service
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KS	Key Stage
LEO	Longitudinal Educational Outcomes
LMS	Local Management of Schools
LoP	Level of Progression
NDNA	New Decade, New Approach

Abbreviations

NI	Northern Ireland
NIAO	Northern Ireland Audit Office
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
NIMDM	Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OBA	Outcome Based Accountability
OCR Nationals	Oxford, Cambridge and RSA National
ODP	Outcome Delivery Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PfG	Programme for Government
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
SAT	Standard Attainment Test
SDP	School Development Plan
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SLC	Speech, Language and Communication
SOA	Super Output Area
TED Team	Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team
TSN	Targeting Social Need
UK	United Kingdom
UU	Ulster University

Key Facts

£913 million

The amount of Targeting Social Need funding provided to schools in the 15 years between 2005-06 and 2019-20.

96,686

The number of pupils with Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) in 2019-20.

6%

The percentage of schools that input information to the Department's TSN Planner for the 2018-19 academic year.

49.5%

The proportion of school leavers with Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) achieving at least five GCSEs A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and Maths in the 2018-19 academic year, compared with a target of 60 per cent.

**32.1
percentage
points**

The attainment gap between Non-FSME and FSME school leavers in 2005-06 as measured by the proportion of school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and Maths.

**29.0
percentage
points**

The attainment gap between Non-FSME and FSME school leavers in 2018-19 as measured by the proportion of school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and Maths.

Executive Summary

Introduction

1. The Department of Education (the Department) has an annual budget allocation of over £2 billion and provides funding for a range of interventions targeted at children who are socially deprived or who live in a disadvantaged community, to help raise attainment in numeracy and literacy and narrow the gap in educational outcomes. In 2019-20, the Department provided £138 million to schools and bodies in support of these aims (6.8 per cent of its overall budget), using Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) and the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures (NIMDM) as measures of social deprivation. Targeting Social Need (TSN) and Sure Start funding account for 73.7 per cent of the total amount provided by the Department in 2019-20.

Targeting Social Need

2. Since the Department introduced a Common Funding Scheme (CFS) for grant-aided schools, in April 2005, it has provided over £913 million of TSN funding to schools. However, there is no requirement for schools in receipt of TSN funding to spend it solely on supporting pupils from socially deprived backgrounds. Only 11 per cent of respondents to an NIAO survey of schools indicated that their school used TSN funding to support only pupils from socially deprived backgrounds.
3. Since 2010, schools have been required to account for their use of TSN funding as part of the School Development Plan (SDP) process. However, the SDP information has not been collated. As a result, the Department does not know what schools are spending TSN funds on, nor how effective schools are in addressing underachievement in pupils from socially deprived backgrounds.
4. Uptake of a new TSN planner, designed to capture a range of information about the use and the impact of TSN funding, has been poor, with only six per cent of schools returning data in respect of the 2018-19 academic year. This is an unacceptable return rate. The Department advised that uptake was impacted by the timing of the introduction of the Targeting Social Need Planner during teachers' action short of strike.

Sure Start

5. Although the Sure Start programme had started in 2000, a review of the programme in 2015 concluded that the information collected on Sure Start projects' outputs and activities did not provide the data needed to assess the effectiveness of the support provided. However, the report noted that the Department, in conjunction with the Health and Social Care Board, had begun to address the absence of outcome data in 2014 through the development of an Outcomes Framework.
-

6. In response, a steering group was set up to oversee the implementation of the review's recommendations and the Department recorded all actions as complete in November 2018. Sure Start projects now use a number of recognised measurement tools to assess and record the development of parents and children involved in the projects. The Outcomes Framework, and progress since 2015-16, led to the development of an Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) Scorecard, first used in 2018-19. The Department and the Health and Social Care Board are now better able to assess whether expected policy outcomes of the Sure Start programme are being achieved.

Performance against Targets

7. Educational attainment, including that of pupils with FSME, has improved in recent years. However, despite the significant funding provided by the Department to address educational underachievement, the Northern Ireland Audit Office's (NIAO) analysis of performance data indicates that the attainment gap between non-FSME and FSME pupils increases as they progress through compulsory education, and that there has been a persistent gap in examination performance at age 16.
8. In the 2018-19 academic year, only 49.5 per cent of school leavers with FSME achieved at least five GCSEs including English and Maths, compared with a Departmental target of 60.0 per cent and a 78.5 per cent attainment rate for non-FSME school leavers.
9. The attainment gap between non-FSME and FSME school leavers has not changed significantly in the last 15 years. The gap between the percentage of non-FSME and FSME school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs including English and Maths fell slightly, from 32.1 percentage points in 2005-06 to 29.0 percentage points in 2018-19.
10. Due to the long running teachers' industrial action, fewer than 15 per cent of schools submitted key stage data for the 2018-19 academic year. In addition, the Department does not have key stage data to demonstrate whether the performance of FSME pupils at individual schools is improving as result of funding provided.

Current Actions

11. The Department has a number of planned actions to address the attainment gap. In July 2020, the Minister for Education appointed an Expert Group to examine the links between persistent educational underachievement and socio-economic background. This Expert Group, which was identified as a priority of the 'New Decade, New Approach' document, is expected to report its findings, including an action plan, to the Minister in May 2021.
-

Executive Summary

12. The Department has been reviewing the Common Funding Scheme a part of its Transformation Programme and its Tackling Educational Disadvantage (TED) team has been developing a draft strategy to reduce educational disadvantage, taking into account lessons learnt from programmes in other jurisdictions.
13. A Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) database, which is currently proposed for Northern Ireland, could assist the Department in assessing the long-term impact of the Sure Start programme on educational outcomes as a child progresses through the school system and on their subsequent career path.

Coronavirus Pandemic

14. School closures, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, have resulted in the need for remote learning. In recognition that all households do not have the same level of access to resources, particularly internet connection and devices such as tablets and laptops, the Department has asked that schools give consideration at all times to ensuring availability of resources for pupils without ready online access, including through distribution of hard-copy versions of learning materials. The Department's scheme to provide IT devices and Wi-Fi access (vouchers or MiFi devices) to educationally disadvantaged and vulnerable learners has provided over 11,000 devices to date and remains open.
15. The pandemic is likely to have a negative impact on the learning outcomes, mental health and wellbeing of all children and young people but may have a greater impact on those pupils who were already disadvantaged.

Overall Conclusion on Value for Money

16. Although a broad range of factors contributes to educational attainment, including school leadership, classroom teaching, and parental and community involvement, the Department is unable to demonstrate the effectiveness of its two main funding interventions, accounting for almost £102 million per annum that is provided to address the educational attainment of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.
 17. TSN funding and Sure Start projects have been in place for many years but the Department and the Health and Social Care Board have been slow to introduce arrangements which could help them to assess the effectiveness of these interventions and whether they are contributing to the achievement of required outcomes.
-

18. The educational attainment of all school leavers has increased in recent years with the improvement in the performance of FMSE school leavers exceeding that of non-FSME school leavers. However, there has only been a marginal narrowing of the educational attainment gap between FSME and non-FSME school leavers as measured by the Department's target of attaining five or more GCSEs including English and Maths, with the long-term trend being a gap of approximately 30 percentage points.
19. The Departmental objectives for funds targeted in this area are to help raise attainment in numeracy and literacy for children who are socially deprived or who live in a disadvantaged community and to narrow the gap in educational outcomes. As a result of the issues identified in this report, we consider that the Department is unable to demonstrate that value for money is being achieved in the allocation of these funds.

NIAO Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Department should ensure that all schools provide sufficient and timely data using the online TSN planner to enable the Department to demonstrate whether TSN funding is successfully targeting and improving educational outcomes of pupils from socially deprived backgrounds.

Provision of information on the use of TSN funds should be mandatory and the Department should consider what measures and sanctions need to be taken against those schools that fail to provide it.

Recommendation 2

The Department, in conjunction with the Health and Social Care Board, should ensure that all expected policy outcomes are achieved for the Sure Start programme and projects and that appropriate measurement tools are in place to demonstrate this.

The Department should consider how existing Sure Start data can be used to demonstrate the impact of the programme on educational attainment as children progress through compulsory education.

Executive Summary

Recommendation 3

The Department should ensure that schools provide an assessment of the level of progression achieved by every pupil who is in the final year of Key Stage 1, 2 or 3 in accordance with the statutory requirement to do so and on a timely basis.

The Department should consider what measures and sanctions need to be taken against those schools that fail to comply with this statutory requirement.

Recommendation 4

The Department should obtain, and analyse, the Key Stage assessment data for individual schools, which is already provided to the CCEA. This will assist the Department in determining whether the performance of FSME pupils at individual schools is improving as a result of the TSN funding provided. This, in conjunction with the information provided by schools on their use of TSN funding, will help the Department to identify the most effective interventions for the support of disadvantaged pupils and to share best practice.

Recommendation 5

Given that under Local Management of Schools arrangements there is no requirement for schools in receipt of TSN funding to spend it solely on supporting pupils from socially deprived backgrounds, the Department should consider whether the TSN factor is the most appropriate funding method to address the educational attainment gap as part of the review of the Common Funding Scheme.

Part One: Introduction

Background

- 1.1 The Department of Education's (the Department) primary statutory duty is to promote the education of the people of Northern Ireland and to ensure the effective implementation of education policy. A range of arm's length bodies, including the Education Authority (EA), supports the Department in delivering its functions. In 2019-20, the Department's gross expenditure was £2.32 billion.

Objectives and Outcomes

- 1.2 In June 2018, the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) published a cross-departmental Outcomes Delivery Plan (ODP) as a basis for delivering public service in as effective and co-ordinated a manner as possible. The ODP, which is based on the Northern Ireland Executive's existing framework of outcomes, sets out the actions that all departments put in place to progress the previously agreed Programme for Government objective of "Improving wellbeing for all - by tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth".
- 1.3 The Department's Permanent Secretary is the "Outcome Owner" for Outcome 12 - "*We give our children and young people the best start in life*", overseeing the work aimed at achieving this Outcome. Progress in achieving this Outcome is determined using six population indicators, including two key measures in relation to educational outcomes:
- the percentage of school leavers achieving at Level 2¹ or above, including English and Maths; and
 - the gap between the percentage of non-Free School Meal Entitlement (non-FSME) school leavers and percentage of Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) school leavers achieving at Level 2 or above, including English and Maths.
- 1.4 The Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 requires the Northern Ireland Executive to adopt a strategy setting out how it proposes to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people. Pending the formation of a Northern Ireland Executive to adopt a strategy, the Department published a cross-departmental Children and Young People's Strategy in December 2019. The strategy outlines how all government departments, agencies and those who provide children's services will work together to deliver better outcomes for all children and young people, and links directly to the draft Programme for Government outcomes.

¹ In Northern Ireland, most qualifications taken through work, school, college or university, fit into one of nine levels. The higher the level, the more challenging the qualification. Examples of Level 2 qualifications are: GCSE grades A*- C; intermediate apprenticeships; Level 2 awards, diplomas and certificates; OCR Nationals; NVQs; Essential Skills; and Music grades 4 and 5.

- 1.5 The Department also has a number of key policies and strategies aimed at improving the quality of education and educational outcomes and reducing educational inequalities, including:
- ‘Every School a Good School: A policy for school improvement’ (2009), which aims to support schools and teachers in their work to raise standards and overcome barriers to learning that some pupils may face.
 - The ‘Count, Read: Succeed’ (2011) strategy, which aims to support teachers, parents and school leaders in their work to raise pupil attainment in numeracy and literacy and to narrow the gap in educational outcomes.
 - Learning to Learn – A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning’ (2013), which aims to ensure all children have equal opportunities to achieve their potential through high quality early years education and learning experiences. One of the key actions included in the Framework is to review how early years education and learning services are effectively targeted to address barriers to learning and enhance access and equity.
- 1.6 One of the Department’s six Corporate Goals in 2019-20 was “Closing the performance gap, increasing access and equality” (**Figure 1**):

Figure 1: The Department’s Corporate Goal 2019-20 - Closing the performance gap, increasing access and equality

Corporate Goal	Related Strategic Objectives 2019-20
<p>Closing the performance gap, increasing access and equality – addressing the underachievement that can hold our children and young people back; ensuring that young people who face barriers or are at risk of social exclusion are supported to achieve to their full potential; and ensuring that our services are planned effectively on an area basis to provide children and young people with full access to high quality learning experiences, both in school and out of school.</p>	To expand the network of sustainable schools.
	To encourage, facilitate and promote shared education and encourage and facilitate integrated and Irish-medium education.
	To improve developmental and learning outcomes for children and young people who are underachieving.
	To ensure tailored or specialist support is provided to those children and young people who need it.

Source: Department of Education Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20.

Part One: Introduction

Social Deprivation and Underachievement

- 1.7 The link between social deprivation and educational underachievement has been highlighted by a number of public sector and other bodies.
- 1.8 Outcome 5 of the Outcomes Delivery Plan 2018-19, "*We are an innovative, creative society where people can fulfil their potential*", acknowledges that the qualifications that young people achieve as they go through formal education are a strong predictor of their life chances. Whilst qualifications are never a full account of a young person's achievements, skills and attributes, good educational attainment outcomes support people to succeed economically, are linked to better health, and open up opportunity.
- 1.9 In 2013, the Public Accounts Committee opined that at every stage of schooling, Northern Ireland's poorest children are likely to do worse and make less progress than their better-off classmates².
- 1.10 The link between underachievement at age 16 and socio-economic background is stronger in Northern Ireland than in many other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries³. Furthermore, the development gap between the most and least advantaged in society exists from the earliest point of a child's education⁴.
- 1.11 This educational attainment gap represents a cost to Northern Ireland. In 2013, Save the Children UK reported that successfully closing the gap in Northern Ireland could result in an estimated increase in economic gains of around £400 million in 2013, rising to £1.3 billion by 2030⁵.
- 1.12 Research undertaken by the Education Policy Institute (EPI) showed that in England over the period 2007-2016, disadvantaged pupils fell behind their more affluent peers by around two months each year over the course of their secondary school education⁶.

2 Report on Improving Literacy and Numeracy Achievement in Schools, NIA 116/11-15, June 2013.

3 Tackling the Poverty-Related Gap in Early Childhood Learning in Northern Ireland, Save the Children, December 2017.

4 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2013 report.

5 Too Young to Fail: Closing the education achievement gap in Northern Ireland, Policy Brief, Save the Children UK, October 2013.

6 Closing the Gap? Trends in Educational Attainment and Disadvantage, Education Policy Institute, August 2017.

Measures of Social Deprivation

- 1.13 Social deprivation is a broad term referring to the combination of factors that prevent a person from having easy and frequent access to the many different aspects of their culture and society. It is included in a broad network of correlated factors, including mental illness, poverty, poor education, and low socio-economic status, that contribute to social exclusion.
- 1.14 The Department uses FSME and Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures (NIMDM) as measures of social deprivation.
- 1.15 In 2019-20, of the 340,786 pupils in grant-aided schools, 96,686 (28.4 per cent) had FSME (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Free School Meal Entitlement in grant-aided schools: 2015-16 to 2019-20

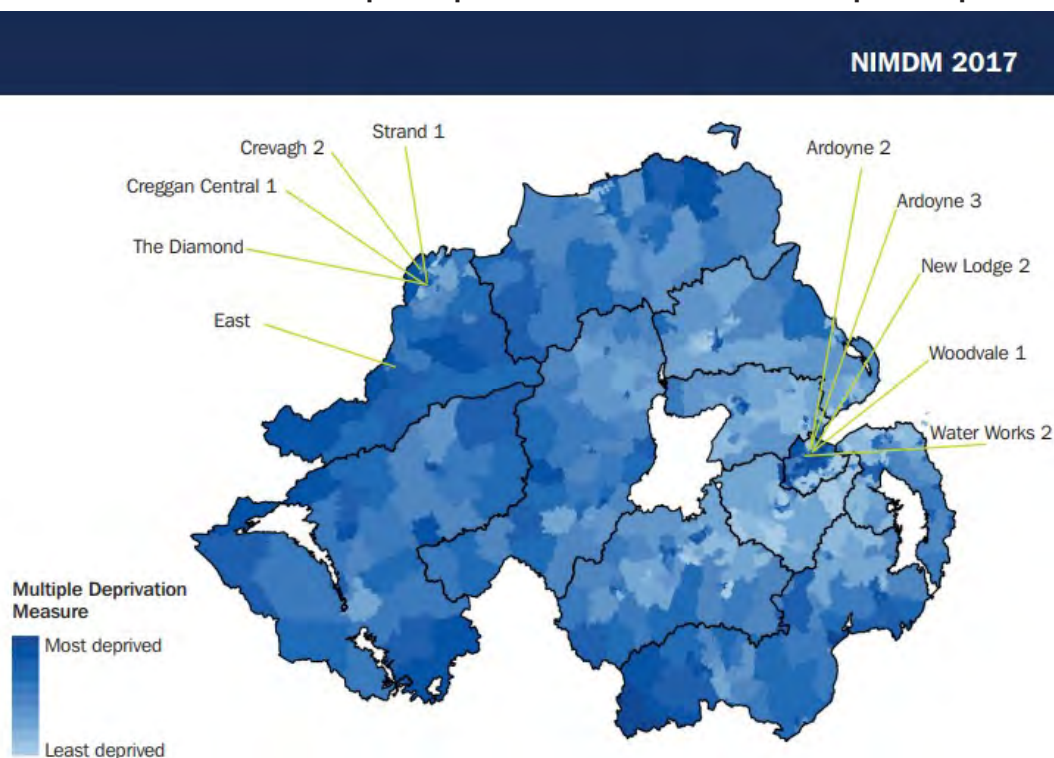
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total enrolment number	330,411	332,986	335,570	338,275	340,786
Number of pupils entitled to free schools meals	101,063	102,127	100,254	99,142	96,686
Percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals	30.6	30.7	29.9	29.3	28.4

Source: Department of Education.

Part One: Introduction

- 1.16 NIMDMs are a relative measure of deprivation⁷. The measures split Northern Ireland into 890 spatial areas known as 'Super Output Areas' (SOAs). Five of the top ten most deprived SOAs are in Belfast – **Figure 3**.

Figure 3: Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2017 - Super Output Areas



Source: Neighbourhood Statistics (NISRA): Website: www.nisra.gov.uk/ninis
Based upon Crown IP with the permission of Land & Property Services under delegated authority from the Keeper of Public Records, @ Crown copyright and database right 2021.

Social Deprivation Funding

- 1.17 In 2019-20, the Department provided funding of over £138 million for a range of interventions targeting children who are socially deprived or who live in a disadvantaged community, in order to help raise pupil attainment in numeracy and literacy and narrow the gap in educational outcomes (**Figure 4**). This funding represented 6.8 per cent of the Department's resource budget of £2,038 million. Two interventions, Targeting Social Need (TSN) and Sure Start, account for almost £102 million (73.7 per cent) of the targeted funding of £138 million.

⁷ This means that it is possible to say that one area is more or less deprived than another, but it is not possible to say how much more or less deprived it is than another. The measure provides a spatial ranking at a single point in time.

Figure 4. Two interventions account for 74 per cent of total social deprivation funding

PROGRAMME/INTERVENTION	£'000 FUNDING IN 2019-20	
Targeting Social Need	76,400	
Sure Start	25,500	
Pre-school Education Programme	15,300	
Extended Schools	9,200	
Youth Service	3,800	
Early Years Pathway Fund	3,000	
Nurture Groups	2,300	
Bright Start School Age Childcare Grant Scheme ¹	1,100	
Other ²	1,700	
TOTAL	138,300	

NOTE

¹ Funding not included within the Department's baseline budget. DE Childcare Unit secures the required funding from Delivering Social Change Central Funds, managed by The Executive Office (TEO).

² There are a further eight smaller programmes on which expenditure was incurred during 2019-20. A full list of these programmes and the expenditure incurred is provided at Appendix 2.

Source: Department of Education.

Scope and Methods

- 1.18 This report examines how the Department ensures that the funding provided to improve educational attainment of children from socially deprived backgrounds is being monitored and evaluated effectively to achieve the required outcomes.
- 1.19 The report looks at educational attainment up to Year 12 (Key Stage 4), which is the last year of compulsory education.
- 1.20 The report is structured as follows:
- **Part 2** focuses on the two largest interventions, TSN and Sure Start, setting out their objectives and monitoring arrangements.
 - **Part 3** considers the effectiveness of funding, drawing upon performance data, a survey of schools by the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) and visits to a number of Sure Start projects.
 - **Part 4** examines the Department's current and proposed actions to address the performance gap and assess the effectiveness of interventions.

Our study methodology is set out in **Appendix 1**.

Part Two: Interventions

Introduction

- 2.1 Over the years, many programmes and interventions funded by the Department have focused attention on the needs of disadvantaged children and young people. This part of the report looks at the Department's two largest interventions by value, TSN and Sure Start, which account for 73.7 per cent of the Department's £138 million targeted funding (see **paragraph 1.17**). It also considers how the Department ensures that the funding provided in relation to these interventions is being monitored and evaluated effectively to achieve the required outcomes. Details of other programmes and interventions funded by the Department are provided in **Appendix 2**.

Targeting Social Need

- 2.2 A TSN policy was launched in February 1991 to tackle significant differences in the socio-economic profiles of the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland. In July 1998, a New TSN policy was launched to tackle social need and social exclusion in Northern Ireland.
- 2.3 In April 2005, under the provisions of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, the Department implemented a Common Funding Scheme (CFS) to establish a system for funding all grant-aided schools on a consistent and equitable basis, irrespective of location or management type⁸. The Department's TSN funding is distributed to schools through the CFS⁹. The Department advised that a key principle for the CFS is that sustainable schools should be funded according to the relative need of their pupils and in a way that enables the effects of social disadvantage to be substantially reduced.
- 2.4 In 2013-14, following a review¹⁰, the Department made a number of changes to the CFS. The review focused on targeting resources to help schools provide support for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and reduce the level of educational underachievement¹¹. The review also introduced two funding streams, one for Nursery and Primary schools and one for Post-primary schools. In 2019-20, over £76 million of TSN funding was allocated to schools under the CFS, an increase of 25 per cent on the £61 million allocated in 2013-14, prior to the review. Over the same period the Aggregated Schools Budget, delegated to schools under the CFS, increased by £106.5m (9.5 per cent).

8 A number of factors impact on the funding allocated to each school under the CFS, including: the total amount of the budget allocated to schools; the number of pupils attending the school; the number of pupils with additional educational or social needs attending the school; and the size of the school premises.

9 Prior to the CFS, the (former) five Education and Library Boards and the Department operated seven different formulae under Local Management of School arrangements. Each of these formulae included TSN factors linked to FSME.

10 The Salisbury Report – An Independent Review of the Common Funding Scheme, January 2013.

11 The Education and Library Boards already allocated funds to schools in respect of TSN prior to the introduction of the CFS. For example, Education and Library Boards allocated a total of £39 million to schools via the TSN factor of their funding formulae in 1998-99 when the New TSN policy was introduced.

TSN Funding

- 2.5 The TSN funding provided to schools under the CFS comprises three elements:
- a Social Deprivation element;
 - an Additional Social Deprivation element; and
 - an Education Attainment element.
- 2.6 The Social Deprivation element “recognises the additional costs faced by schools in educating children from socially deprived backgrounds, regardless of ability, and the particular challenges faced in schools with high proportions of children from such backgrounds.”¹² In 2019-20 this element was £56.59 million.
- 2.7 In 2014-15, the Minister determined that a £10 million fund be set aside for ‘Additional Social Deprivation’. Each year since then, £5.5 million has been available to Nursery and Primary schools and £4.5 million to Post-primary schools. The Department advised the NIAO “There is no difference in terms of the objectives of the additional £10 million of funds allocated i.e. as with main TSN monies, it is made available to enable schools to support pupils from deprived backgrounds”.
- 2.8 The Educational Attainment element recognises the additional support required by Post-primary school pupils performing below the expected level for their age, regardless of social background. In 2019-20 this element was £9.83 million.
- 2.9 Each year TSN funding represents over six per cent of the funds allocated to schools. Since the introduction of the CFS in 2005, the Department has provided over £913 million of TSN funding to schools. A breakdown of the £76.42 million TSN funding provided to schools in 2019-20 and the allocation method is summarised in **Appendix 3**.

TSN Accountability

- 2.10 Under Local Management of Schools (LMS) arrangements, Boards of Governors and school principals have the autonomy to make decisions on resource allocation and priorities, to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their school. The Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 placed a duty on the Board of Governors of a school, through the scheme of management, to prepare and periodically revise a School Development Plan (SDP). Subsequent legislation in 2005 and 2010¹³ set out detailed requirements regarding the preparation and content of SDPs. An SDP should bring together a school’s priorities, the main measures it will take to raise standards, the resources dedicated to these and the key outcomes and targets it intends to achieve.

12 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/common-funding-scheme-2019-2020-final-draft.pdf>

13 The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 – http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2005/303/pdfs/nisr_20050303_en.pdf and The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 – http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2010/395/pdfs/nisr_20100395_en.pdf.

Part Two: Interventions

- 2.11 Following the introduction of the CFS in 2005-06, the Department undertook a 'TSN Accountability' reporting exercise, collating and summarising schools' TSN expenditure. The analysis also recorded the number of schools that over or under spent their budget allocation.
- 2.12 Following the 2010 changes in SDP requirements (see **paragraph 2.10**) and the publication of 'Every School a Good School (ESaGS) School Development Planning' guidance in the same year, every school receiving TSN funding is required to account for their use of these funds within the school development planning process. The ESaGS 2010 guidance states that schools "*may find it helpful to use the template provided at Annex H to provide information on how the funds have been deployed to tackle educational underachievement and to support pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds*". Annex H indicates that the use of TSN funds should be analysed in the following categories:
- extra staff
 - to create smaller classes
 - to provide specialist support for learning needs
 - to provide pastoral care and home-school liaison;
 - staff development programmes linked to TSN;
 - curriculum materials and equipment for additional educational needs; and
 - other.
- 2.13 The ESaGS 2010 guidance states, "The 'TSN Accountability' reporting exercise, which was previously completed separately as part of the LMS Outturn reporting process, will now form part of the annual reporting process for every School Development Plan". However, although schools are required to submit their SDPs to the EA, or in the case of Catholic maintained schools to the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) each year, a central record of what schools use TSN funds for or how effectively they have been used has not been prepared since the changes in guidance in 2010.
- 2.14 The EA advised that it "does not collate/monitor or report TSN expenditure except as part of a school's overall LMS operating budget. TSN funding is reflected in incoming budget lines for each school, but there is currently no way to track TSN spend going out through existing EA financial systems, as these monies are not recorded separately within the overall school budget i.e. TSN straddles a wide range of uses – e.g. utility costs, staff costs, interventions, transport, physical resources/equipment etc."
-

The Department's TSN Planner

- 2.15 In recognition of the weaknesses in accountability for TSN funding, in October 2018, the Department introduced new arrangements, referred to as the TSN Planner, to capture a range of information about the use and impact of TSN funding. The Department advised that the aim of the Planner is to:
- ensure that TSN funding is successfully targeting pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and is addressing underachievement;
 - provide assurance that the TSN policy is working and that schools can demonstrate improvements in educational outcomes;
 - demonstrate the impact of the redistribution of resources in target schools, and on the system as a whole; and
 - ensure that effective practice is identified which can then be disseminated and promoted to all schools.
- 2.16 The Department advised that “Work to develop the online TSN planner to improve the collection of data about TSN funding began in 2014/15. Considerable consultation was undertaken with primary and post-primary schools to ascertain how they used the funding and to develop a planner that would provide the required information without increasing bureaucratic burden for schools.”
- 2.17 The Department advised that teachers’ industrial ‘action short of strike’ had a significant impact upon the number of schools using the TSN Planner, with only 67 schools completing the TSN Planner to show how they used their TSN funding to support pupils in their school in the 2018-19 academic year. This represents a response rate of six per cent of schools. Consequently, the Department’s Internal Audit Service (IAS) concluded, “*the Department does not have sufficient information to draw any meaningful conclusions*”¹⁴. The Department advised that when sufficient data has been input, the TSN planner will enable it and schools to learn which interventions provide the greatest benefit to pupils.
- 2.18 The lack of information and accountability on the use of TSN funding by schools means that the Department is unable to determine whether funds have been used for the intended purposes and demonstrate whether these funds are contributing to the achievement of Departmental aims and objectives.

14 ‘Internal Audit Review of Interventions for Disadvantaged Pupils’ issued in February 2020.

Part Two: Interventions

Recommendation 1

The Department should ensure that all schools provide sufficient and timely data using the online TSN planner to enable the Department to demonstrate whether TSN funding is successfully targeting and improving educational outcomes of pupils from socially deprived backgrounds.

Provision of information on the use of TSN funds should be mandatory and the Department should consider what measures and sanctions need to be taken against those schools that fail to provide it.

NIAO Survey on TSN funding in schools

- 2.19 In the absence of sufficient departmental data, the NIAO issued a short survey to obtain an understanding from schools on how they spend TSN funding and get schools' views on the impact of this funding. Our findings are discussed at **Part 3** of this report.

Sure Start

- 2.20 Sure Start is a programme targeted at parents and children under the age of four living in (at least) the top 25 per cent most disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland¹⁵. Sure Start projects funded under the programme deliver a wide variety of services which are designed to support children's learning skills, health and well-being, and social and emotional development.
- 2.21 The Sure Start programme was implemented in 2000 by the then Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)¹⁶ as one of the actions under its New TSN Action Plan¹⁷. The Action Plan also required DHSS to measure the extent to which inequalities were being reduced, by ensuring that a method of monitoring and evaluation was built into all New TSN-related interventions, including Sure Start.
- 2.22 Responsibility for the strategic development of the Sure Start Programme transferred to the Department of Education in November 2006. Since then, Sure Start funding has increased from £9.3 million to £27.4 million in 2020-21. The Department advised that the increase in funding reflects Ministerial decisions to significantly expand the geographical coverage of Sure Start services. Expansion has increased the number of Sure Start projects to 38, from 23 in 2006. The number of children and families supported has increased from circa 17,000 to circa 39,000 during this period.
- 2.23 The Department's role with regards to Sure Start is to support its strategic policy development and oversee implementation of the Programme in collaboration with the Health and Social Care

15 This refers to Northern Ireland's most disadvantaged wards and Super Output Areas (SOAs) as measured by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation measure (NIMDM) 2010.

16 Now the Department of Health (DoH).

17 Objective DHSS 4 – To improve access to good quality childcare and family support, targeting those in greatest need.

Board (HSCB)¹⁸. It secures funding, makes payments to the HSCB and seeks assurances that appropriate arrangements are in place to deliver Sure Start and to safeguard the use of public money. The HSCB delivers the operational aspects of Sure Start on behalf of the Department, working closely with the 38 projects. Its role includes the allocation, management and oversight of departmental funding. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) is in place between the Department and the HSCB setting out accountability and governance arrangements. The HSCB is required to provide pre-interim, interim and annual assurances to the Department that Sure Start projects administer the funding awarded within the aims of the Sure Start programme and in accordance with the principles of regularity, propriety and value for money.

2.24 Although services offered by Sure Start projects reflect and respond to local needs of parents and children, every project must provide the following core elements:

- home based support for families who could benefit from Sure Start;
- support to families and parents;
- healthcare and advice from local healthcare professionals, including midwives and health visitors;
- support for good quality play, learning and childcare experiences for children both at home and together with other children in group activities;
- support for speech, language and communication; and
- support for all children in the community and recognising their different needs.

2.25 The expected policy outcomes for Sure Start¹⁹ are:

- improved language skills;
- early identification of developmental delay;
- enhanced parenting skills;
- improved access to services; and
- effective integrating services.

18 The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) is a statutory organisation which arranges or 'commissions' health and social care services for the population of Northern Ireland. The HSCB is accountable to the Health Minister, for turning their vision for health and social care into a range of services that deliver high quality and safe outcomes for patient and service users, are good value for the taxpayer, and comply with statutory duties. In 2015, the then Health Minister announced that the HSCB would be closed and its functions would in the future be delivered by the Department of Health and the Public Health Agency. The anticipated closure date of the HSCB is March 2022.

19 Sure Start Governance and Accountability Guidance issued by the Department of Education May 2017.

Part Two: Interventions

Sure Start Performance Measurement

- 2.26 The HSCB assesses the performance of Sure Start projects against targets agreed with the Childcare Partnership (CCP) managers²⁰. The targets of each Sure Start project are different and are based on the needs identified in the Sure Start area and the expected policy outcomes (see **paragraph 2.25**).
- 2.27 Projects collate significant information on activities and outputs, which they report to the HSCB, through the CCP Managers. Information provided by the projects includes annual business plans, quarterly returns and monitoring and evaluation returns on the services provided.
- 2.28 In accordance with the SLA (see **paragraph 2.23**), the HSCB is required to provide the Department with assurance over the operational management of the Sure Start Programme. An annual certificate provides assurance that, collectively, the activities of all projects have effectively contributed to the achievement of Sure Start outcomes and aims. In accordance with the 'Sure Start Governance and Accountability Guidance', the HSCB considers that achievement of the agreed objectives, based on activities and outputs, is an indicator that the anticipated outcomes of the programme are being achieved.
- 2.29 An independent review²¹ of the Sure Start Programme, commissioned by the Department in 2015, found that there was inconsistency across projects on when and what outcome data was collected in support of performance measurement. The review concluded that the information collected on activities and outputs did not provide the data needed to assess the effectiveness of the support provided and that the majority of the data relating to the service provision outcomes was qualitative, such as parental satisfaction surveys.
- 2.30 The review also noted that outcomes focused on measuring percentages such as skills/knowledge gained by parents or change in behaviour, but did not measure the social, emotional and cognitive development of children or the literacy and numeracy skills that are critical to demonstrating the impact of Sure Start. The lack of outcome data at a Sure Start project level made it difficult to undertake a comparative analysis across the projects.
- 2.31 The review noted that the Department had developed an Outcomes Framework in 2014, implementation of which would provide better evidence of the successful implementation of the Sure Start services with an increased focus on outcomes as opposed to activity measures.
- 2.32 The independent review recommended that the Department / HSCB develop a suite of tools and processes to allow robust evidence of Sure Start outcomes. In response, the Department set up an Implementation Steering Group to oversee planned actions and outputs. Among the key developments set out in the implementation plan were:
- the parental satisfaction survey;

20 The CCP Managers are HSCB employees and have responsibility for ensuring that Sure Start projects comply with the policy and financial requirements of the Department and the HSCB.

21 'Independent review of the Sure Start Programme', RSM McClure Watters (Consulting), February 2015 - <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/final-report-review-of-sure-start.pdf>

- the introduction of Outcomes Star software, to provide aggregated, anonymised progress data across all Sure Starts;
- the development of a report to present annual achievements of the Sure Start Programme; and
- additional guidance regarding the use of evaluation tools.

The Department indicated that all planned actions had been implemented by November 2018 and that work would continue on an ongoing basis to develop the implemented areas. In addition, implementation of the recommendations had created the structures on which to build further good practice.

- 2.33 In response to the independent review recommendation, Sure Start projects are now using a number of recognised measurement tools, to assess and record the development progress of parents and children involved in the projects. These include the Wellcomm Early Years speech and language toolkit (since 2016-17) and the Outcomes Star tool set (introduced as a pilot in 2017-18 and 2018-19 and rolled out across all projects in 2019-20).
- 2.34 As a result of the Framework and the progress since 2015-16, the measurement tools have enabled the HSCB to improve reporting of the impact of Sure Start projects that had previously focused on outputs and activities. The first 'Sure Start Annual Report Card 2018/19' (also referred to as the Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) Scorecard), developed by the Department in collaboration with HSCB, includes the results of the Sure Start Regional Parent Survey in 2016-17 and the Outcomes Star and Wellcomm analysis for the 2017-18 academic year. It indicates that significant proportions of service users are better off because of their attendance at a Sure Start project. For example, 966 (74 per cent) of the 1,305 children attending a Developmental Programme for 2-3 year-olds (DPF 2-3YO), who were tracked using the WellComm Early Years toolkit during the 2017-18 academic year, had improved. The Outcomes Star toolkit indicated that Child Development had improved for 60 per cent of families attending a Sure Start project.
- 2.35 In addition, the WellComm Early Years toolkit indicated that there was a 24 per cent increase in the number of children whose language development is age appropriate and a 22 per cent reduction in children with significantly delayed Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) because of attending a DPF 2-3YO during 2017-18.
-

Part Two: Interventions

- 2.36 The Department advised that since 2015-16, it records whether a child attended a Sure Start project when they enter compulsory education as part of the Schools' Census. However, the subsequent educational attainment of such pupils is not monitored. As a result, the long-term impact of the Sure Start programme on educational outcomes as a child progresses through the school system is not known.

Recommendation 2

The Department, in conjunction with the Health and Social Care Board, should ensure that all expected policy outcomes are achieved for the Sure Start programme and projects and that appropriate measurement tools are in place to demonstrate this.

The Department should consider how existing Sure Start data can be used to demonstrate the impact of the programme on educational attainment as children progress through compulsory education.

Part Three: Effectiveness to date

Introduction

- 3.1 In this Part of our report, we consider the effectiveness of the interventions funded by the Department, drawing upon performance data, an NIAO survey of schools in receipt of TSN funding and visits to Sure Start projects.

Assessment

- 3.2 Primary and Post-primary education in Northern Ireland is broken into six stages (**Figure 5**):

Figure 5: Primary and Post-primary Education Stages

Education Phase	Year and Age	Stage
Primary Education	Years 1 and 2 (ages 4-6)	Foundation Stage
	Years 3 and 4 (ages 6-8)	Key Stage 1
	Years 5-7 (ages 8-11)	Key Stage 2
Post-primary Education	Years 8-10 (ages 11-14)	Key Stage 3
	Years 11 and 12 (ages 14-16)	Key Stage 4
	Years 13 and 14 (ages 16-18)	Post-16 (non-compulsory) provision

Source: NIAO, based on Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment curriculum information.

- 3.3 Legislation²² requires a school principal to arrange for pupils in the final year of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 to be assessed in the cross-curricular skills of Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT and for assessment results to be reported to the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment²³ (CCEA).
- 3.4 The aim of assessment is to facilitate the monitoring of standards over time to inform the development of policy and practice leading to better pupil outcomes. The CCEA has a range of tools and resources to support assessment in the classroom, including the 'Guide to Assessment: Supporting Schools in meeting Statutory Requirements for Assessment and Reporting', which was issued following the introduction of new assessment arrangements in 2012.
- 3.5 Teachers draw on their professional judgement to assess pupils in relation to the expected Levels of Progression (LoP) for all three cross-curricular skills for each Key Stage.
- 3.6 Although formal assessment, using LoP, was introduced in the 2012-13 school year for Communication and Using Mathematics, it was not introduced for Using ICT until the 2016-17

²² The Education (Levels of Progression for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012.

²³ The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), which was established on 1 April 1994, is a non-departmental public body reporting to ("sponsored by") the Department of Education.

school year. The CCEA advised the NIAO that the late introduction of the Using ICT assessment was initially to allow for the arrangements for Communications and Using Mathematics to be in. In 2014-15, the then Education Minister agreed to place it on hold for a further year, primarily to allow the CCEA to conduct a review of the content of the Using ICT skill. The Minister agreed to a further deferral for the 2015-16 school year, to allow the Department to engage with the teaching unions to prepare schools for full statutory implementation.

- 3.7 School leavers, Key Stage 4 and above, are assessed by their performance in public examinations at GCSE (or equivalent), or at A-level (or equivalent) if they remain in the education system post-16 years of age.
- 3.8 The NIAO noted that, in contrast to other jurisdictions, Northern Ireland does not have a national examination programme for primary-school pupils. Primary schools in England and Wales use the National Curriculum Tests (commonly referred to as Standard Attainment Tests or SATs), while the Scottish National Standardised Assessment reintroduced compulsory national assessment in 2017. These national examination programmes allow comparisons to be made between children against the average attainment expectations for their respective age group. We asked the Department why an examination programme for primary-school pupils has not been introduced in Northern Ireland. The Department advised that the “assessment programme” used in Northern Ireland is the End of Key Stage Assessments using Levels of Progression (as set out at **paragraphs 3.3 to 3.6**).

Targets

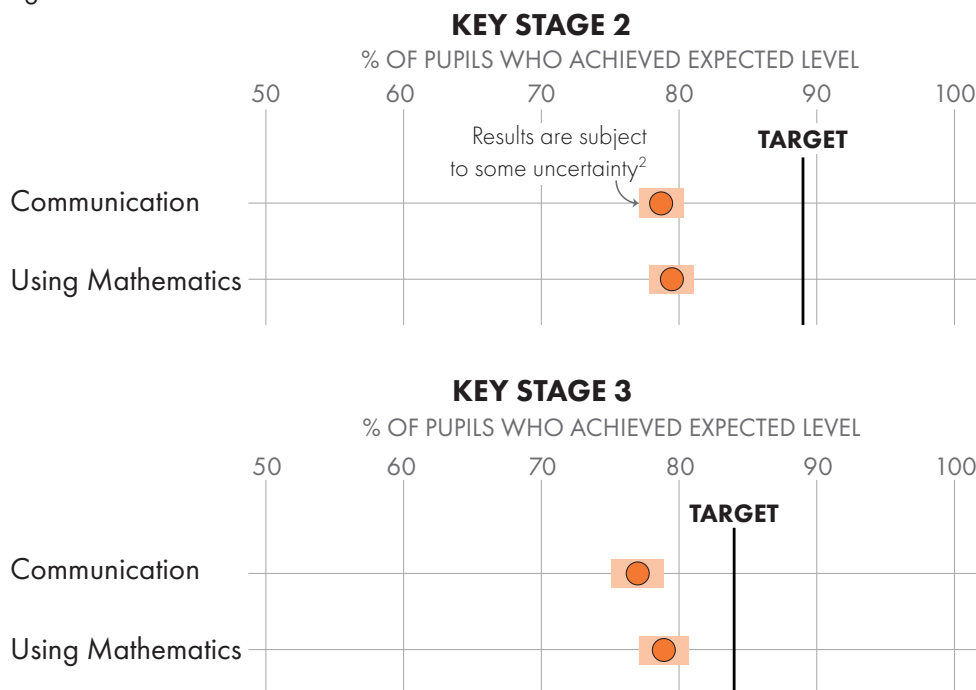
- 3.9 The Department’s 2011 strategy ‘Count, Read: Succeed – A Strategy to improve outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy’ sets out its targets for the levels of achievement expected in the long term if the Department was to be successful in meeting its aims of raising overall standards of achievement in literacy and numeracy and closing the gap in achievement.
- 3.10 The Department tracks whether the strategy is delivering the intended improvements in literacy and numeracy by monitoring progress and publishing performance against the Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 targets²⁴ in its Annual Report and Accounts. The latest published performance is set out in **Figures 6 and 7**.
- 3.11 **Figure 6** shows that for the 2018-19 academic year, actual performance was below the target for all Key Stage 2 and 3 milestones.

24 No targets were set for Key Stage 1 in ‘Count, Read: Succeed – A Strategy to improve outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy’

Part Three: Effectiveness to date

Figure 6. Key Stage 2 and 3 performance is lower than targeted levels

Departmental estimates for 2018-19 show the number of pupils achieving the expected standards in Communication and Using Mathematics are lower than targeted in both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3¹.



NOTE

¹ No targets were set for Using ICT in 'Count, Read: Succeed - A strategy to improve outcomes in Literacy and Numeracy'.

² Due to the effects of industrial action, key stage performance data is weighted to account for non-response bias. Accordingly, the estimates provided in the table represent the mean figures drawn from the sample and are subject to associated confidence intervals.

Source: Department of Education.

- 3.12 The provision of End of Key Stage Assessment to the CCEA has been mandatory since January 2013²⁵. However, as indicated in **Figure 6**, teachers 'action short of strike' impacted upon the submission of assessment data to the CCEA, with only 14 per cent of Primary schools and 15 per cent of Post-primary schools providing returns for the 2018-19 academic year. Although the data collected allows the Department to identify the attainment of FSME pupils and non-FSME pupils at each Key Stage, the CCEA does not currently provide Key Stage assessment data for individual schools. Consequently, the Department does not have data that demonstrates whether the performance of FSME pupils at individual schools is improving as result of the TSN funding provided and the intervention used by the schools to support disadvantaged pupils.

- 3.13 The Department advised the NIAO that the Teachers' Pay and Workload Agreement (the Agreement) that brought an end to the industrial action on 28 April 2020, includes a commitment to undertake reviews in nine areas including a review of the current system of statutory assessment (Review of Assessment) and a wider review of the accountability framework within the education sector. However, due to the other pressing issues and work pressures since the Agreement was reached, none of the nine reviews has yet commenced. The Department also advised that the Agreement includes a specific stipulation that the current operational arrangements for assessment at individual school level will remain unchanged pending the outcome of the Review of Assessment.

Recommendation 3

The Department should ensure that schools provide an assessment of the level of progression achieved by every pupil who is in the final year of Key Stage 1, 2 or 3 in accordance with the statutory requirement to do so and on a timely basis.

The Department should consider what measures and sanctions need to be taken against those schools that fail to comply with this statutory requirement.

Recommendation 4

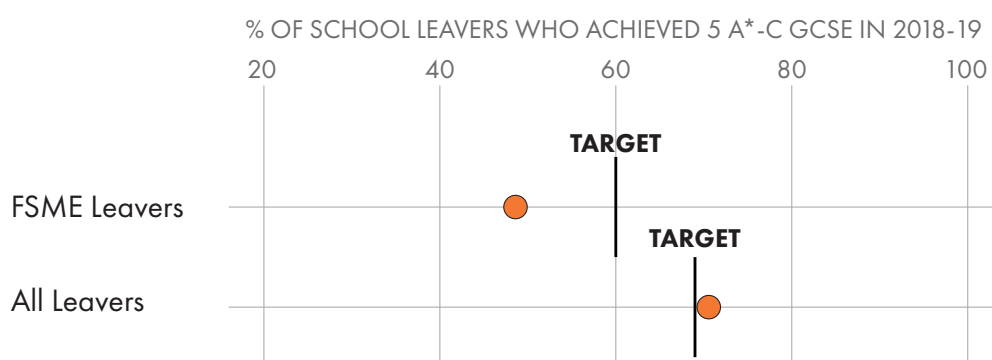
The Department should obtain, and analyse, the Key Stage assessment data for individual schools, which is already provided to the CCEA. This will assist the Department in determining whether the performance of FSME pupils at individual schools is improving as a result of the TSN funding provided. This, in conjunction with the information provided by schools on their use of TSN funding, will help the Department to identify the most effective interventions for the support of disadvantaged pupils and to share best practice.

- 3.14 **Figure 7** shows that in the 2018-19 academic year the overall GCSE attainment (Key Stage 4) exceeded the milestone for the year. However, the percentage of school leavers with FSME achieving five GCSEs A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and Maths fell significantly short of the milestone for the year.

Part Three: Effectiveness to date

Figure 7. GCSE performance amongst school leavers with FSME falls short of the performance target

Performance levels are assessed through measurement of the proportion of school leavers who achieve five GCSE A*-C (or equivalent) including in English and Mathematics.



Source: Department of Education.

The Attainment Gap between FSME and Non-FSME pupils at Key Stages

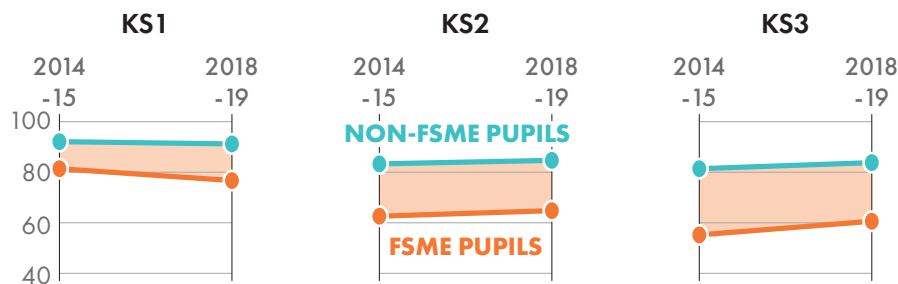
3.15 As indicated at **Paragraph 3.12**, the CCEA provides the Department with an analysis of attainment data for pupils with and without FSME.

Key Stages 1 to 3

3.16 The data available for the last five academic years in respect of Communication skills shows that the attainment gap between FSME and non-FSME pupils at Key Stage 1 has increased from 10.7 percentage points in 2014-15 to 14.5 percentage points in 2018-19. During the same period, the gap at Key Stage 2 has remained relatively constant at around 20 percentage points. Although the attainment gap between FSME and non-FSME pupils at Key Stage 3 reduced by 3.0 percentage points over the five-year period, it has fluctuated and was 23.2 percentage points at the end of the 2018-19 academic year - **Figure 8**.

Figure 8. There has been a persistent performance gap between FSME and non-FSME pupils at all stages in Communication

% OF PUPILS ATTAINING REQUIRED SKILLS IN COMMUNICATION AT KEY STAGE LEVELS:



NOTE

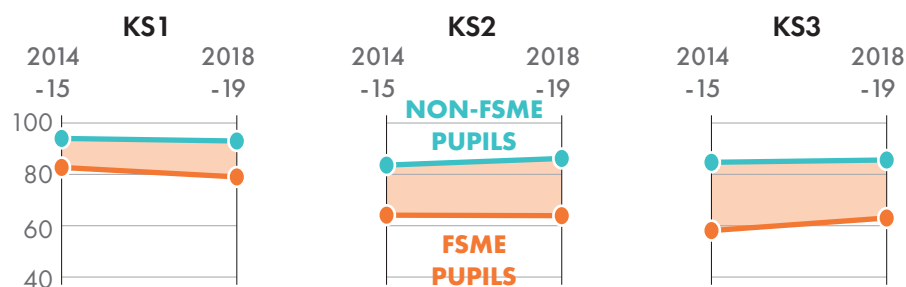
Due to the effects of industrial action, Key Stage performance data is weighted to account for non-response bias. Accordingly, the estimates provided in the table represent the mean figures drawn from a sample and are subject to associated confidence intervals.

Source: Department of Education.

- 3.17 The attainment gap for Using Mathematics at Key Stages 1 and 2 also increased during the five academic years ending 2018-19. However, whilst the attainment gap for Using Mathematics at Key Stage 3 decreased over the five-year period, the gap was over 22 percentage points at the end of the 2018-19 academic year – **Figure 9**.

Figure 9 . There has been a persistent performance gap between FSME and non-FSME pupils at all stages in Using Mathematics

% OF PUPILS ATTAINING REQUIRED SKILLS IN USING MATHEMATICS AT KEY STAGE LEVELS:



NOTE

Due to the effects of industrial action, Key Stage performance data is weighted to account for non-response bias. Accordingly, the estimates provided in the table represent the mean figures drawn from a sample and are subject to associated confidence intervals.

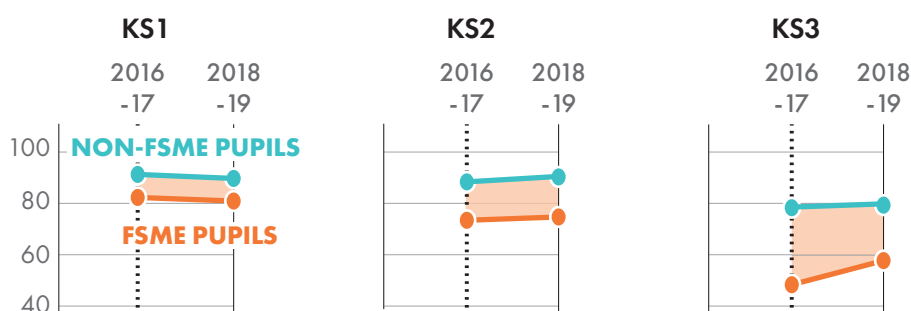
Source: Department of Education.

- 3.18 As indicated at **paragraph 3.6**, formal assessment of Using ICT only began in 2016-17. Therefore, it is not possible to assess whether the gap in attainment has narrowed in any meaningful way. However, like Communication and Using Mathematics, the attainment gap in Using ICT between FSME and Non-FSME pupils was more than 20 percentage points at the end of the 2018-19 academic year (**Figure 10**).

Part Three: Effectiveness to date

Figure 10. There has been a persistent performance gap between FSME and non-FSME pupils at all stages in Using Information and Communication Technology

% OF PUPILS ATTAINING REQUIRED SKILLS IN USING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AT KEY STAGE LEVELS^{1&2}:



NOTE

¹ Formal assessment of Using Information and Communication Technology only commenced in 2016-17.

² Due to the effects of industrial action, Key Stage performance data is weighted to account for non-response bias. Accordingly, the estimates provided in the table represent the mean figures drawn from a sample and are subject to associated confidence intervals.

Source: Department of Education.

Key Stage 4

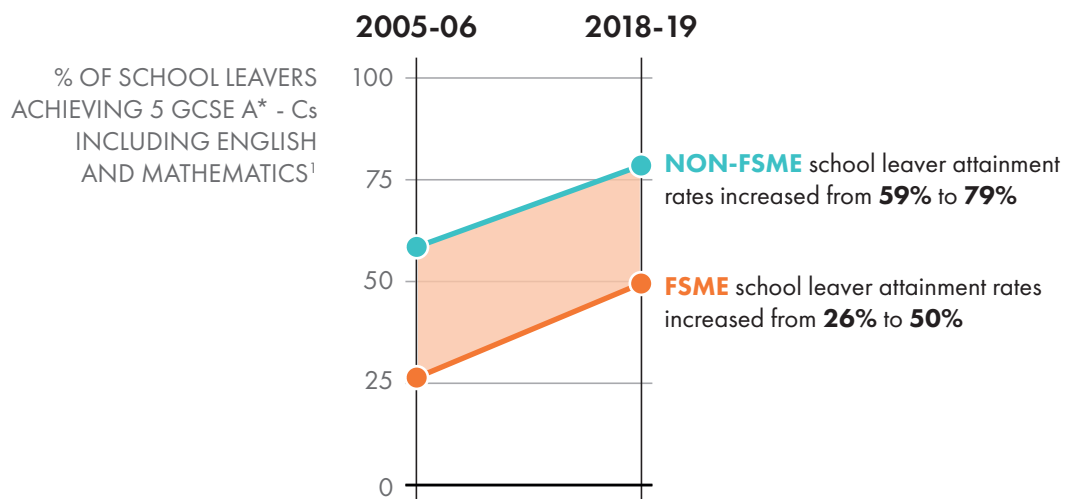
3.19 Data compiled by the Department shows that the educational attainment of all school leavers has increased greatly over the over the period 2005-06 to 2018-19, with the percentage of both FSME and non-FSME school leavers achieving five GCSEs A*-C (or equivalent) including GCSEs in English and Maths increasing by 20 percentage points or more (**Figure 11**). We asked the Department why educational attainment for all school leavers had increased in the last 15 years. The Department advised us that "It is difficult to be precise about all the factors involved in the steady increase in performance over the past 15 years. However we can confidently say that, based on DE's "STAR" Case Studies paper²⁶, it is a combination of factors including:

- Strong, committed and visible leadership;
- Committed teachers and staff;
- High expectations of and aspirations for all pupils;
- Effective pastoral care and positive behaviour management;
- Broad and balanced curriculum with a focus on literacy and numeracy and wider enrichment activities;

- Skilled use of data to track pupil performance;
- Cross-phase links to support transition and to identify, apply and share best practice;
- Effective use of outside interventions;
- Good links with parents, communities and employers; and
- A well-informed and skilled Board of Governors committed to supporting the school”.

Figure 11. There has been a persistent gap in GCSE attainment rates between FSME and non-FSME school leavers

Whilst attainment rates have steadily increased for both groups over the last 15 years, the gap between them has remained relatively consistent.



NOTES

¹ Attainment rates include school leavers who achieve equivalent qualifications.

² Analysis excludes school leavers at special and independent schools.

Source: Department of Education.

- 3.20 Despite the funding allocated and the Department’s aim to close the gap in attainment, the attainment gap between FSME and non-FSME school leavers has only decreased by 3.1 percentage points, from 32.1 percentage points in 2005-06 to 29.0 percentage points in 2018-19.
- 3.21 The Department uses the Key Stage data to provide each school with annual benchmarking data, which enables them to compare performance in assessments and public examinations

Part Three:

Effectiveness to date

with schools in similar circumstances. The latest data published in respect of the 2018-19 academic year²⁷ shows that where the proportion of pupils with FSME increases, GCSE attainment declines (**Figures 12 and 13**).

Figure 12: Grammar School GCSE Attainment in 2018-19 by FSME banding

Percentage of Pupils with FSME	Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*- C including GCSE English and GCSE Maths
0.00 to 9.99	97.1
10.00 to 19.99	95.2
20.00+	86.3

Source: Department of Education.

Figure 13: Non-grammar School GCSE Attainment in 2018-19 by FSME banding

Percentage of Pupils with FSME	Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent at Grades A*- C including GCSE English and Maths
00.00 to 29.99	66.9
30.00 to 39.99	52.2
40.00 to 49.99	52.0
50.00+	48.4

Source: Department of Education, Circular 2020/10 – School Development Planning and Target Setting (Post-primary).

- 3.22 The Department advised the NIAO that the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report²⁸ shows that the reading attainment of the most disadvantaged pupils in Northern Ireland is higher than that of the most disadvantaged pupils in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, which “suggests that policies which target disadvantage in Northern Ireland may have had a positive impact in raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.” The PISA report also considered that “The gap in performance between the most and least disadvantaged pupils in Northern Ireland was relatively low. Pupils in Northern Ireland were relatively well able to overcome the disadvantages of their background, that is, for pupils in Northern Ireland, socio-economic background was a less good predictor of scores than for pupils across the OECD.”

27 Circular 2020/10 – School Development Planning and Target Setting (Post-primary), September 2020 - Circular 2020/10 – School Development Planning and Target Setting (Post-Primary) | Department of Education (education-ni.gov.uk).

28 ‘Achievement of 15-year-old pupils in Northern Ireland: PISA 2018’, National Foundation for Educational Research, December 2019. PISA is a study of educational achievement organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Every 3 years PISA tests 15-year-old pupils from all over the world in reading, mathematics and science.

NIAO TSN Survey

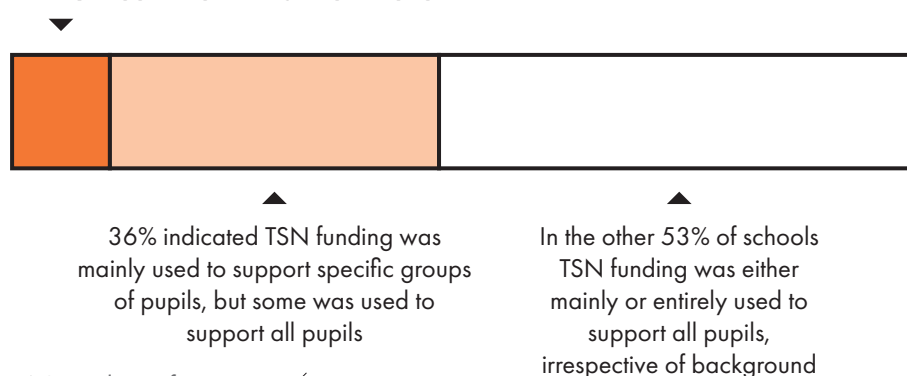
- 3.23 In the absence of a central record of how schools use TSN funding (see **paragraph 2.14**) and few schools using the TSN Planner in 2018-19 (see **paragraph 2.17**), the NIAO compiled a short survey to gain some insight from school leaders on the application and impact of TSN funding.
- 3.24 The NIAO issued the online survey to 1,092 Primary and Post-primary schools. We received 275 responses, of which 185 respondents were in receipt of TSN funding. For ease of analysis, we combined the responses from the Nursery and Primary sectors and analysed only the complete responses received (102 complete, 9 per cent of the total schools surveyed). We did not calculate a non-response bias.

Survey findings

- 3.25 When asked about their use of TSN funding, only 11 per cent of respondents indicated that their school used this funding to support specific groups of pupils as intended²⁹ (**Figure 14**). Nineteen per cent said they used it to support all pupils i.e. the use of funding was not specifically targeted. The NIAO noted that under Local Management of Schools, Boards of Governors and school principals have the autonomy to make decisions on resource allocation and priorities in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools (see **paragraph 2.10**). Consequently, there is no requirement for schools in receipt of TSN funding to spend it solely on supporting pupils from socially deprived backgrounds.

Figure 14. Less than half of schools responding to our survey indicated that TSN funding was used solely or mainly to support specific groups of pupils

Only 11% of respondents indicated their school used TSN funding to only support specific groups of pupils as intended



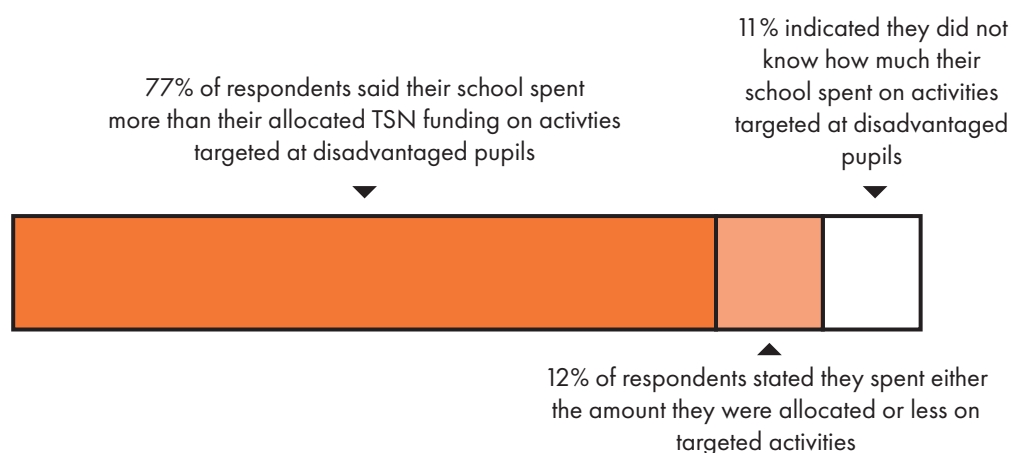
Source: NIAO analysis of survey responses.

²⁹ The Social Deprivation and Additional Social Deprivation elements of TSN funding are provided to cover the additional costs in educating pupils from socially deprived backgrounds. The Educational Attainment element of TSN is provided for pupils performing below the expected level for their age, regardless of social background.

Part Three: Effectiveness to date

- 3.26 Although over 77 per cent of respondents said they spent more than their allocated 2018-19 TSN funding on targeted activities, 11 per cent of respondents did not know how much they spent on activities targeted at disadvantaged pupils (**Figure 15**).

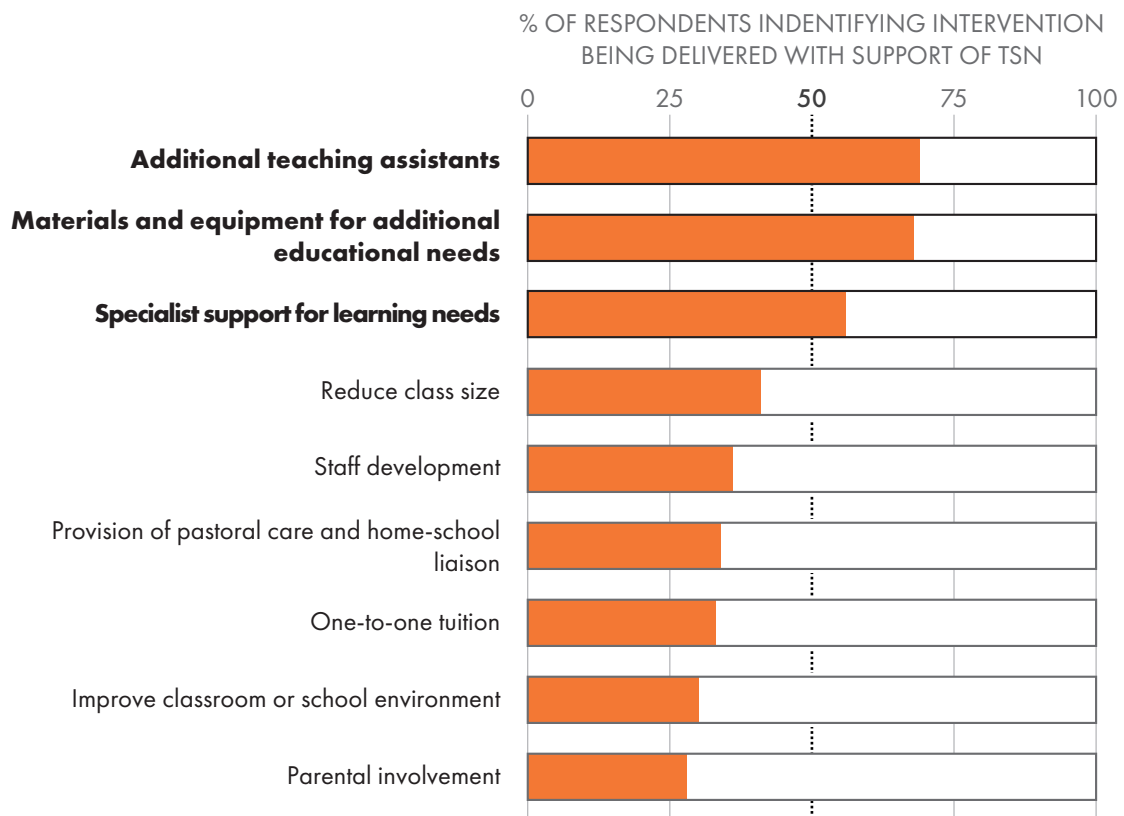
Figure 15. Three quarters of schools responding to our survey reported spending more than their allocated TSN funding on activities for disadvantaged pupils



Source: NIAO analysis of survey responses.

- 3.27 Responses to our survey indicated that schools use a range of interventions to support disadvantaged pupils, with additional teaching assistants and curriculum materials and equipment for additional educational needs topping the list (**Figure 16**).

Figure 16. Over half of respondents indicated that TSN funding was used for three main interventions



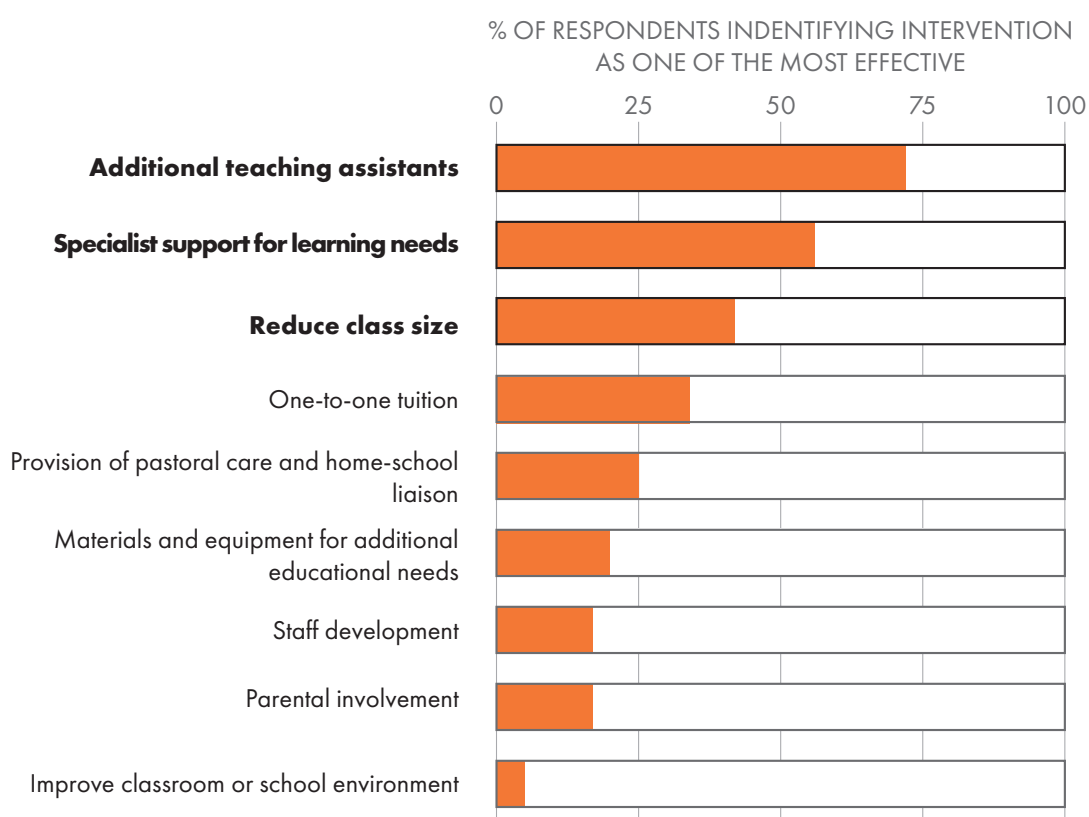
Source: NIAO analysis of survey responses.

- 3.28 Twenty-one respondents provided additional comments, indicating how they spend the funds. This included social work provision, counselling and targeted language programmes. Approximately one-third of the additional comments cited insufficient funding, with a number advising that the funding forms part of their general school budget and is not spent in any specific way.
- 3.29 We also asked schools for their opinion on the three most effective support interventions. Almost 72 per cent of respondents identified 'additional teaching assistants' as the most effective intervention. 'Specialist support for learning needs' (56 per cent) and 'reduced class sizes' (42 per cent) were ranked second and third respectively (**Figure 17**).
- 3.30 The NIAO noted that fewer than 20 per cent of respondents considered curriculum materials and equipment for additional educational needs to be one of the three most effective interventions (**Figure 17**). However, when asked what they spent TSN funding on, over 68 per cent of respondents indicated that they used it to purchase materials and equipment for

Part Three: Effectiveness to date

additional educational needs (**Figure 16**). However, given the response rate to the survey it may be inappropriate to draw conclusions based on responses to these two separate survey questions.

Figure 17. Three interventions were identified by respondents as being one of the most effective interventions

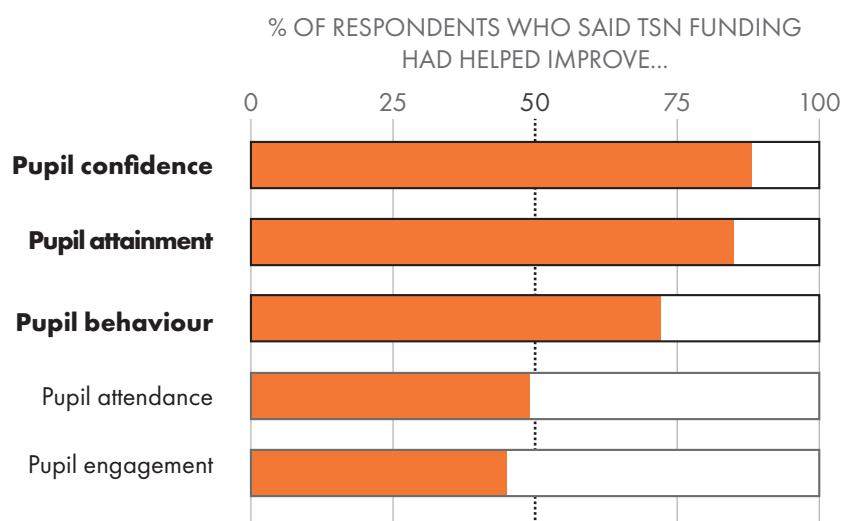


Source: NIAO analysis of survey responses.

- 3.31 The additional comments revealed differing approaches adopted by the schools to deal with their and their pupils' circumstances. However, a number indicated that their adopted interventions benefitted not just socially deprived, but all pupils.

- 3.32 We asked school leaders for their view on the impact of TSN funding. Almost 85 per cent of respondents considered that pupil attainment had improved. They also considered that pupil behaviour and confidence had also improved. Seven per cent of respondents did not have a view on the impact, whether positive or negative, of TSN funding (**Figure 18**).

Figure 18. School leaders responding to our survey identified three main areas where they felt TSN has a positive impact on students

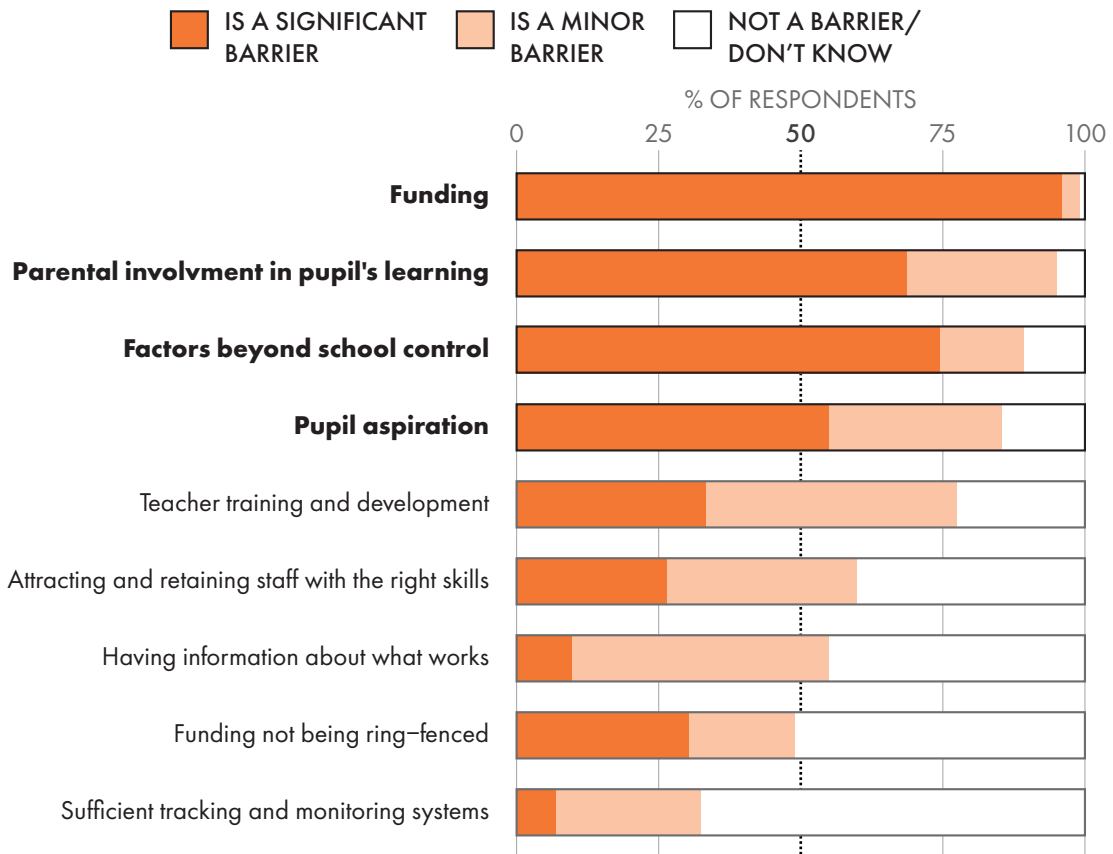


Source: NIAO analysis of survey responses.

- 3.33 Finally, we asked about the main barriers to raising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. Over 95 per cent of respondents identified funding as the most significant barrier to attainment (**Figure 19**). Additional comments also indicated that parental involvement and factors beyond the school's control, such as mental illness and family issues, are major barriers to progress.

Part Three: Effectiveness to date

Figure 19. Over half of respondents to our survey identified four issues as being major barriers to raising attainment of FSME pupils



Source: NIAO analysis of survey responses.

Sure Start

3.34 As indicated in **paragraph 2.29**, prior to 2015, performance measurement of Sure Start projects had focused on activities and outputs, rather than outcomes. To learn how Sure Start projects monitor effectiveness, and to gain an understanding of the impact projects have on children and parents, NIAO staff met with groups of staff and parents at five different Sure Start projects, covering both urban and rural settings, across each of the five health trust areas (**Figure 20**).

Figure 20: Sure Start projects visited by the NIAO

Project Name	Health Trust Area
SMILE Sure Start	Belfast Childcare Partnership Region
Bangor Sure Start	South Eastern Childcare Partnership Region
Dalriada Sure Start (Rural)	Northern Childcare Partnership Region
Clogher Valley Sure Start (Rural)	Southern Childcare Partnership Region
Waterside Sure Start	Western Childcare Partnership Region

Source: NIAO.

- 3.35 Our discussions indicated that staff are dedicated, parents rely on the services provided and that more parents and children could be helped if additional resources were available – **Figures 21 and 22**. Overall, the views are comparable with the findings from previous reviews³⁰ and evaluations of Sure Start³¹.

Figure 21: Key comments reflecting our discussions with Sure Start staff

Source: NIAO discussion with Sure Start staff.

30 The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an evaluation of five Sure Start projects between January and March 2018 - <https://www.eti.ni.gov.uk/publications/surestart-evaluation-report>.

31 In April 2017, the Health and Social Care Board reported the findings from a survey of Sure Start parents covering service use, satisfaction, perceived benefits of using Sure Start and suggestions for improving the service. The level of satisfaction with the individual services was very high and, overall, 83 per cent of parents rated their local Sure Start as excellent.

Part Three: Effectiveness to date

Figure 22: Key comments reflecting our discussions with Sure Start parents



Source: NIAO discussion with parents attending Sure Start projects.

3.36 Support for parents and promoting the development of speech, language and communication skills are a high priority in all of the Sure Start projects visited by the NIAO. Discussions with Sure Start staff indicated that, in addition to outcome measurement tools introduced by the HSCB, such as Wellcomm Monitoring and Outcome Star, they also use 'in-house' developed evaluations of services provided and record achievement against output targets, such as registrations and attendance, on the 'Sure Start Play' database. At a project level, staff evaluate groups/services using available tools/evaluations, such as:

- evidence based parenting programmes like Incredible Years and Nurturing, which come with inbuilt tools to measure impact/parental journey;

- the Language Profile, a Speech, Language and Communication (SLC) tool, used for assessment of bilingual children; and
- surveys to gauge parental satisfaction and to get feedback on changes made in the delivery of services.

However, as with the services provided, monitoring of the impact varies from one Sure Start project to another.

NIAO discussions with academics

- 3.37 As part of our review, we met with academics from Northern Ireland's two universities, Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Ulster University (UU), to discuss their ongoing work in education and their thoughts on narrowing the attainment gap between FSME and non-FSME pupils.
- 3.38 Both academics indicated that the issues of poverty and educational attainment needed to be addressed early in a child's life and that there is no simple solution to addressing the attainment gap. Both academics also advised that parental and community engagement were required to address the issue.
-

Part Four: Current Actions

- 4.1 This Part of our report identifies the actions either proposed or currently being taken forward by the Department in addressing the attainment gap. The Department has indicated that the Coronavirus pandemic has delayed progress or resulted in the suspension of some programmes.

New Decade, New Approach

- 4.2 The 'New Decade, New Approach' (NDNA) document, published in January 2020, set out the deal to restore devolved government in Northern Ireland, including priorities for transforming public services.
- 4.3 One of the NDNA's education priorities was to establish an Expert Panel to examine and propose an Action Plan to address links between persistent educational underachievement and socio-economic background.
- 4.4 The Minister of Education appointed a six-member Expert Panel in July 2020. The Expert Panel will:
- examine the links between persistent educational underachievement and socio-economic background;
 - give particular consideration to the long-standing issues facing working class, Protestant boys, and specific actions to address this particular gap;
 - produce an interim report;
 - draw up an Action Plan for change that will ensure all children and young people, regardless of background, are given the best start in life; and
 - estimate the cost of implementing the Action Plan.
- 4.5 The Expert Panel will report to the Minister and a final report, including the Action Plan, is expected by the end of May 2021. A Reference Group of key stakeholders from government departments, statutory agencies, schools, the community and the voluntary sector is available to support the Expert Panel in developing the Action Plan. The Panel has sought the views of schools, parents, children and young people via workshops and a survey.
-

The Education Transformation Programme

- 4.6 The Department established an Education Transformation Programme in 2018-19 to review aspects of the existing education system; identify where improvements can be made; and deliver a managed programme of transformation for the benefit of children and young people. This Programme was established in the absence of Ministers.
- 4.7 One of the projects commissioned by the Education Transformation Board was the 'Transition of Children into Education' Project which aims to ensure that all children achieve their full potential by being prepared, supported and encouraged to learn for their transition into education. The initial findings of this project were the need for earlier identification of, and support for, children's needs through coordinated universal and targeted early years' services, resulting in a reduction in the need for later targeted interventions.
- 4.8 As part of the Transformation Programme, the Department was also reviewing the Common Funding Scheme.
- 4.9 In March 2020, the Education Minister Education suspended the Transformation Programme, including the Review of the Common Funding Scheme (RCFS) Project due to the COVID-19 pandemic with staff redeployed to business critical areas. Following advice from the Programme Board, the Minister agreed to close the Programme in March 2021. This was due to funding uncertainty, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and linkages with the forthcoming independent review of education. The Department advised that the closure of the Programme does not mean an end to transformation or reform, rather it will be delivered using a different approach. Previous projects will be delivered to a point where the Minister can make a determination on key necessary actions and next steps.

Recommendation 5

Given that under Local Management of Schools arrangements there is no requirement for schools in receipt of TSN funding to spend it solely on supporting pupils from socially deprived backgrounds, the Department should consider whether the TSN factor is the most appropriate funding method to address the educational attainment gap as a part of the review of the Common Funding Scheme.

Part Four: Current Actions

The Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team

- 4.10 The Department’s Tackling Educational Disadvantage (TED) team, established in May 2017, has been developing a draft strategy to reduce educational disadvantage. Work undertaken to date includes stakeholder engagement to identify key challenges, and options have been explored for further development around three key themes:
- continuous improvement in teaching and learning;
 - better joined-up thinking, partnership working and use of budgets; and
 - meeting the needs of all children.
- 4.11 The draft strategy sets out the wide range of issues associated with educational underachievement due to socio-economic disadvantage; what the Department is currently doing in terms of policies and programmes; and whether there is a more effective way of doing things.
- 4.12 The TED team advised that it has been liaising with the Department for Education (DfE) in England with regards to Opportunity Areas³² and the Department of Education and Skills in the Republic of Ireland on the impact of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme³³.
- 4.13 From its work to date, the team has concluded that there is considerable merit in some form of holistic wrap-around service for schools, drawing on what has been learnt from existing Departmental programmes and merging them together to form a “Birth to Brilliance” investment programme. The design of this investment programme will draw upon programmes in other jurisdictions (see **paragraph 4.12**).
- 4.14 The Minister of Education is currently considering the TED team’s draft strategy. The Department told us that this is highly likely to be superseded by the Expert Panel’s Action Plan (see **paragraph 4.3**).
- 4.15 In addition to its existing policy and programme responsibilities, the TED team is considering further proposals aimed at tackling educational disadvantage and has been responding to issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic – **Figure 23**.

32 A key aim of Opportunity Areas is to build young people’s knowledge and skills and provide them with the best advice and opportunities. DfE works with each Opportunity Area to respond to local priorities and needs.

33 The DEIS programme is aimed at providing support to schools with high concentrations of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are at risk of educational failure. All schools in the programme receive a range of additional resources including additional staffing, funding, access to literacy and numeracy programmes, and assistance with activities such as school planning.

Figure 23: Additional proposals to tackle disadvantage and close the attainment gap

Programme	Proposal
Covid-19	<p>As part of efforts to respond to Covid-19 and the associated period of school closures, the Minister of Education introduced a suite of additional measures to address the impact on children’s learning and help them re-engage with education. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for schools to purchase on-line resources to assist children going into Year 7, in the 2020-21 academic year, in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills; • funding for the provision of approximately 50 Summer Schools (offered by schools on a voluntary basis) to enable Year 5, 6 and 7 pupils to take part in a range of activities which gets them socialising again, learning and having fun; and • the “Engage” programme to support the provision of additional teaching resources in all schools to help pupils engage with learning following the Covid-19 lockdown period and with settling back into school life. This will be of particular benefit to children from disadvantaged backgrounds who may have been acutely affected. The new programme is now in place and will include a focus on supporting the curriculum through additional literacy and numeracy, health and wellbeing and nurture support. <p>The Minister has allocated a total budget of £12 million for these measures and programmes.</p>
Replacing the Extended Schools (ES) Programme	<p>The team has been considering making a number of changes to the ES Programme, which has been in place for more than a decade, making it a new “Partners in Education” programme. Potential policy changes (which are subject to the views of the Education Minister and public consultation) include extending the eligibility period, refocusing the programme towards more collaboration between schools through clustering, and seeking to reduce the administrative burden on schools.</p>
PEACE PLUS	<p>The TED Team is currently exploring options for a funding proposal to the PEACE PLUS Programme³⁴. While the Department’s thinking on this is currently at an early stage, such a proposal could invest specifically in literacy and numeracy support, with equality of opportunity at its core, to support underachieving children throughout Primary and Post-primary schools.</p>

Source: Department of Education.

34 PEACE PLUS is a new EU cross-border programme that will contribute to a more prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The Special EU Programmes Body is currently involved in the development of the PEACE PLUS Programme: 2021-2027.

Part Four: Current Actions

Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) Database for Northern Ireland

- 4.16 A Longitudinal Educational Outcomes Study was established in Great Britain in 2015, when legislation³⁵ authorised the linkage of education data, benefits and training data and Revenue and Customs information for the purposes of assessing the effectiveness of educational provision.
- 4.17 The legislation that underpins data sharing in Great Britain is not in effect in Northern Ireland. Consequently, the Department for the Economy is currently working with colleagues across the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the wider UK government to establish data sharing agreements that will allow the creation of a Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) database for Northern Ireland. The purpose of the LEO database will be to:
- provide statistical information to support education and career decisions;
 - evaluate and monitor the impact of education or training on outcomes and help to support the outcomes based approach of the draft Programme for Government; and
 - support government decision making which will lead to improved services.
- 4.18 The NIAO notes that the proposed LEO database specification includes the inclusion of information on whether a child is 'Registered with a Sure Start project' or 'Previously attended a Sure Start Development Programme for 2-3 year olds'. The aim of including this data is to allow comparisons between educational attainment and career paths of Sure Start and non-Sure Start attendees. The Department advised us that work on the LEO database will be completed during the next Administrative Data Research (ADR) NI 2021-26 funding period and that a steering group will be set up once a Project Initiation Document is agreed.

35 The Small Business, Employment and Enterprise Act 2015 and sections 87-91 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

Appendix One: Study Methodology (Paragraph 1.20)

The study included the following methods for gathering evidence:

- Discussions with key staff at the Department of Education and the Health and Social Care Board.
 - Discussions with academics at Queen’s University Belfast and Ulster University.
 - Discussions with staff and parents at five Sure Start projects.
 - A survey of schools in receipt of TSN funding.
 - Review of documentation, including Department of Education policies and strategies and pupil performance data.
-

Appendix Two:

The Department of Education's 2019-20 funding programmes targeting socially deprived children (Paragraph 2.1)

Policy/Programme	2019-20 Funding	Description
The Extended Schools (ES) Programme	£9.153 million	<p>ES funding allows those schools serving the most disadvantaged areas to offer a wide range of services or activities outside of the normal school day to help meet the learning and development needs of pupils, their families and local communities.</p> <p>Activities or services provided include breakfast or homework clubs, sport, art, drama, ICT, programmes for parents and families and community use of school premises</p>
Youth Service	£3.764 million	The programme is targeted at areas ranked in the top 25 per cent for Multiple Deprivation. The programme is aimed at developing personal and social skills and encouraging engagement/re-engagement in positive learning within a non-formal setting.
Early Years Pathway Fund	£3 million	The Pathway Fund supports providers of services for children aged 0 – 4 across Northern Ireland to deliver high quality early education and learning where there is a risk of children not reaching their full educational potential.
Nurture Groups	£2.25 million	Nurture Groups are a short-term, focused intervention designed to address the needs of pupils in Years 1 to 3 facing learning barriers because of poor or missing attachment experiences in their very early years.
Pre-School Education Programme	£15.350 million	This universal programme aims to provide one year of funded pre-school education for every child in its immediate pre-school year whose parents want it. Children from Socially Disadvantaged Circumstances are prioritised during the admissions process.

Appendix Two:

The Department of Education's 2019-20 funding programmes targeting socially deprived children (Paragraph 2.1)

Policy/Programme	2019-20 Funding	Description
Bright Start School Age Childcare Funding	£1.1 million	<p>As part of the first phase of the Executive Childcare Strategy, the pilot Bright Start School Age Childcare (SAC) Grant Scheme was launched in 2014. The SAC Grant Scheme provides financial support to settings providing school age childcare in disadvantaged areas, rural communities and on the schools estate.</p> <p>The pilot Scheme is now closed for any new applications. The Scheme has provided an estimated 2,500 childcare places in the targeted areas, with approximately 95% of settings located in disadvantaged areas or supporting disadvantaged families.</p> <p>Further grant funding schemes for the childcare sector will be considered as part of the development of the Executive Ten Year Childcare Strategy.</p>
Full Service Programmes	£770,000	<p>DE is currently working with the Education Authority and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools to deliver two 'Full Service' programmes in areas suffering from severe socio-economic deprivation: The Full Service Extended Schools based at the Boys' and Girls' Model Schools in North Belfast and a Full Service Community Network in West Belfast. Each programme is allocated £385,000 per year.</p> <p>Both Full Service programmes provide additional services and activities to help raise aspirations and improve levels of educational attainment for disadvantaged children and young people.</p>

Policy/Programme	2019-20 Funding	Description
North Belfast Primary Principals Support Programme	£250,000	<p>The North Belfast Primary Principals Support Programme came about because of concerns regarding the level of deprivation in the area's schools and the impact this was having on the children in classrooms.</p> <p>The programme aims to put in place a set of short-term interventions that would be effective in supporting school Principals in the area to address key needs such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for school/family linkages where immediate intervention is required to address short-term needs; • additional support for emotional health and wellbeing; • additional intervention support for literacy and numeracy throughout a child's education; and • additional behavioural school-based support for classroom teaching. <p>Twenty-one schools in North Belfast are also using funding provided under the programme to introduce parental engagement for the first time, while others are using it to enhance current provision.</p>
West Belfast Sharing the Learning Programme	£200,000	<p>The Programme aims to raise attainment levels across the education spectrum for children and young people experiencing disadvantage through poverty, exclusion, and social emotional behavioural difficulties. Learning is shared via presentations, meetings and media coverage. The West Belfast Partnership Board's approach has been shared with other communities in Belfast and further afield.</p> <p>There is focus on literacy, numeracy and IT skills for children and young people; and programmes providing additional support prior to GCSE examinations. There is also a focus on curriculum support for parents and carers, recognising them as the primary educators of their children.</p>

Appendix Two:

The Department of Education's 2019-20 funding programmes targeting socially deprived children (Paragraph 2.1)

Policy/Programme	2019-20 Funding	Description
Key Stage 2 and 3 Literacy and Numeracy Project	£155,000	<p>The objectives of this project are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and maintain effective cross-phase collaborative networks of teachers, middle leaders and schools; • support and build capacity in teachers by providing Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) in identified aspects of literacy and numeracy; and • research and review the impact of the project on the learning outcomes for children and young people to provide clear direction for EA and DE.
Extended Services Funding	£133,000	<p>Extended Services funding is offered to eligible non-statutory pre-school education settings in the Pre-school Education Programme (PSEP), to help overcome barriers to learning and improve the life chances of disadvantaged children. The aim of the funding is specifically to address underdeveloped social, emotional, communication and language skills of young children. Eligibility criteria mirrors that of the Extended School Programme.</p>

Policy/Programme	2019-20 Funding	Description
West Belfast Community Project	£80,000	<p>The Department has funded the West Belfast Community Project since 2013. The Project is moving away from 'initiatives' towards a more robust supported pathway for children, young people and families through the "Zone". This is a "framework in a place" based approach to transform the lives of children and young people in the Greater Shankill area.</p> <p>The Project has enabled the Zone to engage with many statutory and voluntary bodies, as well Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast.</p> <p>Through the current Integrated Services for Children and Young People Programme, the Project has worked with close to 1,000 families in a holistic wrap around approach, supporting families through a process of weekly home visits.</p>
Public Engagement Advertising Campaigns	£161,000	<p>DE has been promoting the importance of parental engagement for a number of years, through its "Education Works" and "Miss School. Miss Out" campaigns. In June 2019, the Department published, "Give Your Child a Helping Hand – Top Tips for Parents", aimed at helping the parents of children aged 0-4.</p>

Source: Department of Education.

Appendix Three:

TSN 2019-20 funding and allocation (Paragraph 2.9)

	Nursery & Primary Stream	Post-primary Stream
Social Deprivation element	<p>Social disadvantage is determined using FSME, with nursery children also being assessed against parents in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or Income Support (IS).</p> <p>Each year the Department establishes three Funding Bands, as outlined in the Common Funding Scheme. Funding is allocated incrementally to schools based on the appropriate weightings and cash values applied to each band to determine the associated per pupil funding.</p> <p>2019-20 allocation = £39.43 million</p>	<p>Social disadvantage is determined using FSME.</p> <p>Each year the Department establishes three Funding Bands, as outlined in the Common Funding Scheme. Funding is allocated incrementally to schools based on the appropriate weightings and cash values applied to each band to determine the associated per pupil funding.</p> <p>2019-20 allocation = £17.16 million</p>
Additional Social Deprivation element	<p>Funding is distributed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Nursery schools and nursery classes within Primary schools based on the proportion of identified additional needs – JSA/IS or FSME; and (ii) Primary school pupils based on the proportion of identified additional needs using FSME. <p>Each year 10 per cent of the funding is distributed to Band 1 schools; 30 per cent to Band 2 schools; and 60 per cent to Band 3 schools in line with the focus on increased funding support to those schools with the greatest concentration of pupils identified as most socially deprived.</p> <p>2019-20 allocation = £5.50 million</p>	<p>Social disadvantage is also determined FSME.</p> <p>Each year 100 per cent of this funding is distributed to Band 3 schools in line with the focus on increased funding support to those schools with the greatest concentration of pupils identified as most socially deprived.</p> <p>2019-20 allocation = £4.50 million</p>
Educational Attainment element	<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Funding is distributed based on weighted Key Stage 2³⁶ assessment results for English and Maths or weighted Key Stage³⁷ assessment results for Senior High schools.</p> <p>2019-20 allocation = £9.83 million</p>

Source: Department of Education.

36 Key Stage 2 covers Primary school Years 5, 6 and 7.

37 Key Stage 3 covers Post-primary Years 8, 9 and 10.

NIAO Reports 2020 and 2021

Title	Date Published
2020	
Injury on duty schemes for officers in the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Prison Service	10 March 2020
Governance issues in Sport Northern Ireland	11 March 2020
Reducing costs in the PSNI	28 April 2020
The National Fraud Initiative: Northern Ireland	11 June 2020
The LandWeb Project: An Update	16 June 2020
Raising Concerns: A Good Practice Guide for the Northern Ireland Public Sector	25 June 2020
Addiction Services in Northern Ireland	30 June 2020
Workforce planning for nurses and midwives	31 July 2020
Impact Review of Special Educational Needs	29 September 2020
Generating electricity from renewable energy	13 October 2020
Capacity and Capability in the Northern Ireland Civil Service	17 November 2020
Managing Attendance in Central and Local Government	23 November 2020
Managing Children who Offend: Follow-up Review	01 December 2020
2021	
Management and Delivery of the Personal Independence Payment Contract in Northern Ireland	23 March 2021



Published and printed by CDS

CDS 249503

