

Assessment of DEIS Programme

Template for Stakeholder Consultation

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Part A-ESRI Report '*Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS*'

Part B-Observations on DEIS - Current Provision

Part C-Suggestions for interventions to Combat Educational Disadvantage into Future

Written submissions may be in English or Irish.

It is intended to place the submissions on the internet.

Information in relation to this submission may be made available to any person who makes a request under the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003.

Submissions should be made by email (Microsoft Word or equivalent) entitled '*Organisation Name/Acronym-DEIS Consultation Submission*' by 5pm Friday 22nd May 2015 at the following e-mail address: DEIS_consultation@education.gov.ie

Part A-ESRI Report 'Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS'

Observations / Comments on ESRI Report 'Learning from the Evaluation of DEIS'

(This section relates to Report Observations only)

Remarkable Success against the backdrop of Child Poverty Increases

The ESRI 2015 report highlights a number of significant successes of DEIS:

- * Attendance rates have improved in urban Band 1 primary schools
- * The gap in retention rates between DEIS and non DEIS has narrowed significantly over time; from 22 per cent at senior cycle for the 1995 school entrant cohort to 10.5 per cent for the 2008 cohort.
- * DEIS urban primary – further improvements in reading and maths scores between 2010 and 2013 (Weir & Denner 2013)
- * Early School Leaving national rates: Ireland
11.6 % 2009
9.7 % 2012

Yet it does not situate this success against the backdrop of increased poverty rates for children in Ireland since 2008 that are the highest increases in the EU - which makes the success of DEIS even more remarkable:

- * The AROPE indicator is defined as the share of the population in at least one of the following three conditions: 1) at risk of poverty, meaning below the poverty threshold, 2) in a situation of severe material deprivation, 3) living in a household with a very low work intensity. From 2008 to 2011, the AROPE for children rose in 21 EU Member States
- * Eurostat: The largest increases in the AROPE since 2008 were in Ireland (+11.0 percentage points (pp) up to 2010) and Latvia (+10.4pp). They were closely followed by Bulgaria (+7.6pp), Hungary (+6.2pp) and Estonia (+5.4pp).

The ESRI Report gives insufficient emphasis to the EU Policy Context in this Area: DEIS Needs to be firmly stated as a priority area for government investment in light of EU Policy Context and EU2020 *Headline* Target for Early School Leaving

Early School Leaving is the highest priority at EU2020 targets level – Early School Leaving is one of only two *headline* targets for education for EU2020. It is the only one directly affecting children and young people in education and health for EU2020. The ESRI report gives insufficient emphasis to the EU Policy Context in this Area.

Recognise government commitment to early school leaving as EU2020 *headline* target (8% Ireland, 10% across EU) in the Government's own EU2020 National Reform Programme document sent to the European Commission in April 2011. It is notable that these commitments made in April 2011 explicitly refer to pupil-teacher ratios as part of the State's commitment to the EU2020 headline target for early school leaving of 10%

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nrp/nrp_ireland_en.pdf

The Irish State signed up to the EU COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on policies to reduce early school leaving COM (2011) 19 final SEC (2011) 98 final SEC(2011) 97 final SEC(2011) 96 final which must be considered as part of DEIS II and was overlooked in the ESRI review. The European Network of Education Councils (EUNEC), of which the Irish Teaching Council is a member, has issued an agreed position statement on early school leaving (2013). Key aspects of this EUNEC statement that offer a more holistic context are:

'The statement considers early school leaving from a holistic perspective... recognizing the need to 'improve school climate, class climate' and to 'support pupils to deal with social problems, emotional and mental health'. It acknowledges the need for 'a warm and supportive relationship between teachers and pupils', as well as 'collaboration' between schools and 'family and social services' which recognize the respective boundaries between each'.

This has initial teacher education and professional development implications for teachers that need to be encompassed within a DEIS review and which are not directly addressed in the ESRI report.

Resist a 'some are more equal than others' principle

The following extracts from the ESRI report are highly problematic and need to be firmly rejected by policy makers:

ESRI (2015): '...question as to the overall aim of the DEIS programme. DEIS aims could be framed in two ways. Firstly, the goal may be to reduce or eliminate the overall gap in achievement between DEIS and non-DEIS schools. This would be an extremely ambitious agenda as it would mean reducing overall differences in educational outcomes between social class groups within and between schools' (p76).

ESRI (2015): 'the goal may be to reduce the negative effect of the concentration of disadvantaged students; in other words, the aim may be to reduce the gap in achievement between working-class students in DEIS schools and working-class students in non DEIS schools. The DEIS programme was explicitly motivated by the existence of a 'multiplier effect' in schools with a high concentration of disadvantage. Thus, this would seem to be a fairer test of the success of DEIS' (pp.76-77).

A two-tier system amounts to a form of socio-economic apartheid. It is unacceptable that any Departmental goal would be established and entrenched in policy making that would accept lower standards for schools in areas due to poverty and social exclusion. Resources need to be put into such schools to attain the goal of education equality rather than to abandon such a goal that would not cherish all of our children equally.

Part B-Observations on DEIS - Current Provision

Observations of Current Programme i.e. Experience of Implementation / Interventions / Outcomes

(This section relates to experience of DEIS programme observations only)

The role of the School Completion Programme has been widely acknowledged as important to the success of DEIS. In December 2014 IMPACT prepared a report setting out the achievements and potential of the School Completion Programme. The report is set out below minus the appendices.

DEIS FOCUS: School Completion Programme: Key Issues in Educational Disadvantage

The School Completion Programme is an integral component of the DEIS Programme. The strengths and potential of SCP (School Completion Programme) project work in supporting Irish young people at risk of early school leaving and educational disadvantage are many and varied. Analysis of national statistical data on retention rates in both DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) and non-DEIS Post-Primary schools shows how SCP has impacted positively on retention. The focus of SCP on attendance and participation is equally as important.

Established in 2002, SCP was a radical departure from earlier initiatives in that it clustered schools to 'have a significant positive impact on levels of young people's retention in primary and second level schools and on numbers of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle, or equivalent.'¹ In fulfilling this objective, the programme coordinates school-based interventions that target those pupils most at risk of developing the kinds of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that hinder academic achievement and the experience of engaging positively in the educational environment. SCP offers an extensive array of in-school, after-school, out-of-school and holiday period support services aimed at enhancing pupil participation in education. These interventions are designed to address the needs of target pupils in each local area, as identified in each case by the local stakeholders. SCP projects may be delivered on either an individual or whole-class basis.²

Each of the 124 SCP cluster arrangements nationwide is engaged in a tailored response to their respective school communities which involves vital links with educational stakeholders and families, as well as professional services provided by members of the local community. These links are crucial, not just in supporting targeted pupils, but in developing mutually beneficial relationships which contribute to the overall well-being of the wider communities served by the schools. These stakeholders in turn value and depend on SCP to address the needs of the school community as they arise and feedback at local level is consistently positive with regard to support services provided by SCP.

SCP projects are ideally situated to systematically identify target pupils at an early stage in the primary education setting. Interventions designed to address these pupils' needs can be quickly implemented and the target pupils can be tracked as they transfer from primary to post-primary schools. Projects can be delivered by school-based teams and are integrated within the existing school structures, thereby eradicating the need for protracted assessment procedures and

¹ See 'National overview of the School Completion Programme for reporting period 2012-2013', Child and Family Agency (Appendix #1)

² See 'Activities in the School Completion Programme' (Appendix #2) for a comprehensive list of SCP services

consultation time-frames. SCP interventions are action-oriented, child-centred and needs-based, and as such, are best suited for the immediate tackling of issues affecting pupil participation in the educational context. These conditions are key to achieving tangible results for young people. Many SCP staff are qualified in professional fields such as psychology, local and community development, education, social and health care. This means that dedicated support teams employed by SCP have immeasurable potential to provide targeted support across a broad range of disciplines.

Retention

Current statistical data on national retention rates illustrates the progress that has been made in tackling educational disadvantage in recent years. The national Leaving Certificate retention rate stands at just over 90%, with early-school leaving numbers comparing favourably amongst the other countries in the European Union.³ Although the retention rate in DEIS schools is around 10% lower than the national average, ‘the improvement in DEIS schools’ retention rates in recent years has been significantly higher than the overall improvement nationally.’⁴

Figure 1

Percentage increase in Junior Cert Retention in DEIS schools between 2005 and 2006	Percentage increase in Junior Cert Retention in non-DEIS schools between 2005 and 2006
1.49%	0.42%
Percentage increase in Leaving Cert Retention in DEIS schools between 2005 and 2006	Percentage increase in Leaving Cert Retention in non-DEIS schools between 2005 and 2006
1.69%	1.03%

The above table illustrates one example of DEIS schools’ improved retention rates at both Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate.⁵ Data for the subsequent cohort, that of 2007, reflects the most recent statistical analysis and reveals a continued trend of increase in retention in both DEIS and non-DEIS schools. DEIS schools for this time period continue to outperform non-DEIS schools in terms of improvement. This decreases the gap between school categories by a further .5% in one year. Both reports used for the purposes of analysis highlight that the majority of dropout across the board tends to occur between year 1 and year 2 of senior cycle.

As SCP provides support services to DEIS and non-DEIS schools alike, it can be deduced that the programme has contributed to both sets of figures and therefore to favourable increases in each case. Minister Ruairi Quinn’s acknowledgment of SCP as counting amongst the ‘key contributors to the improvements being achieved’ is encouraging.⁶ These results are indeed positive, particularly in view of the fact that they have been achieved in a climate of incremental reductions to SCP funding since 2008, amounting to around 30% at the present day.

SCP is responsive to quickly changing needs during the school year and can adapt easily to meet critical demands and respond to unforeseen events in the lives of the school community. SCP has changed the way schools operate. Principals feel that the SCP personnel are able to access vital information about the family and home life of the children that they or the school would not otherwise be able to. SCP personnel offer schools a more informal form of communication with parents of children who are targeted. SCP had brought a new dimension of community into the

³ See ‘Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools: 2007 Entry Cohort’ (January 2014), p. 16

⁴ Ibid, see p. 13 (Appendix #3)

⁵ See ‘Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools: 2005 and 2006 Cohorts’, November 2012 for full set of data (Appendix #4)

⁶ See Minister’s comments in ‘Learning from DEIS’, Marino Institute of Education’, Thursday 15 May 2014 (Appendix #5)

schools in the cluster. SCP activities were seen as allowing parents to see the schools in a new light.

SCP is seen as a crucial complement to other aspects of DEIS provision, with principals reporting that their schools would not have access to these supports in the absence of SCP. There is broad consensus that the value of SCP rests in its emphasis on addressing the needs of at risk children at an early stage and in its flexibility to respond to local needs at the school and community level. SCP provides a means to address socio-emotional difficulties which are a barrier to school engagement and learning. It is crucial that the potential for local flexibility be retained in SCP.

SCP has had a positive impact on attendance, on making school a more positive experience for students and on junior cycle retention.

SCP currently co-ordinates the provision of school meals in most SCP clusters. As such, it makes a huge contribution to the alleviation of food poverty in our DEIS schools. SCP works collaboratively and in a complementary way with other DEIS initiatives such as DEIS Planning/SIPs; HSCL; Guidance enhancement and literacy and numeracy supports.

SCP is a key DEIS initiative and should be more closely identified as such and more closely integrated with other DEIS actions and supports under the Department of Education and Skills. Part of the remit of SCP is also to positively influence educational policy.⁷ Local Coordinators of the SCP advance the conviction that increased diminution of funding to support programme interventions nationally can only serve to stymie the recent improvements to Irish retention rates announced by Minister Quinn 2014.⁸ However, at greater risk is the diminishing of the quality of service provision to the most disadvantaged in the Irish educational context.

⁷ See 'National overview of the School Completion Programme for reporting period 2012-2013', Child and Family Agency (Appendix #1)

⁸ See Minister Quinn's comments in 'Learning from DEIS', Marino Institute of Education, Thursday 15 May 2014 (Appendix #5)

Part C- Suggestions for Future interventions to Combat Educational Disadvantage

Suggestions for future identification of schools

and/or

Suggestions for interventions that might be included in any future 'DEIS' programme

(This section relates to suggestions for future Model of DEIS only)

The strain of the economic crash requires recognition of gaps in DEIS I that have become even more pronounced since then. There is an urgent need to remedy Gaps in DEIS I – and recognise accentuated complexity of needs since DEIS I due to the economic crash. The DEIS review must address complex needs in the system such as mental health, food poverty. Three priority areas needing to be urgently addressed are:

- 1) Food poverty – Hunger prevention in schools centred on needs of child
- 2) Emotional and mental health supports, including multidisciplinary teams (+NBSS for primary)
- 3) Arts and social inclusion in education strategy

Children going hungry in Irish schools (see background data) impacts upon their well-being, concentration and attention levels, learning and motivation, as well as heightening risk of aggressive behaviour in class and with peers. A systematic national strategy to prevent hunger in school is not currently in place. Current initiatives include the School Meals Programme funded by the Department of Social Protection and Breakfast clubs facilitated by School Completion Programme through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Yet these are not systematically available for all children in need. Not every School Completion Programme includes breakfast clubs and school participation in the School Meals Programme is varied and requires a school principal to apply to be part of it. Unlike countries such as Britain, France and Poland, Irish schools have poor infrastructure for meals in schools, with little investment historically in kitchen facilities in schools.

IMPACT seeks the following response to this urgent issue:

- ☑ A National Strategy for Hunger Prevention in Schools
- ☑ One Government Department to be responsible for developing the strategy, implementation and monitoring of this national strategy.
- ☑ A specific civil servant to have responsibility for this issue for the primary school age group (5-12)
- ☑ Establishment of a Food Forum to address the issue of hunger in schools
- ☑ Ensuring children's needs are met in a systematic rather than ad hoc way regarding hunger prevention in schools and quality of food

Proposed key features of a National Strategy for Hunger Prevention in Schools

Key benefits of an integrated national strategy:

- ☑ Educational outcomes from preventing hunger in schools/ improved school attendance, behaviour and performance and prevention of early school leaving
 - ☑ Health issues / healthy food to prevent childhood obesity
 - ☑ Life skills / food awareness for children, family and the wider culture, opportunities for developing cooking skills on the part of students and for social interaction in school
 - ☑ Employment/ investment in kitchen infrastructure in school buildings, staff in school kitchens
- Implementation issues
- ☑ investment in building kitchens in schools through a national building programme of

infrastructure investment: priority given to schools most in need and new school buildings, though with long term aim of all schools having kitchens, as a combination of both a targeted and universal approach

☐ responsibility for project management of kitchens in schools must be delegated and not be additional work for either principals, teachers or other school staff☐ the use of vouchers to avoid stigma where parents who can afford to pay would also have school meals for their children through a voucher system

☐ physical space to store, cook, distribute and eat food.

☐ opportunities to empower parents within the school regarding use of kitchens and nutrition (cooking and healthy eating) courses

There is a real need to bring investment in kitchens and food poverty strategy up to standards of UK, France and many other EU countries

IMPACT is of the view that the provision of school meals would best be run through the Department of Education. DEIS schools should be targeted first for improved provision. SCP should be directly involved. Funding should be made available for the provision of staff, facilities and other overheads. One reason that some SCP programmes do not provide meals is that the overheads involved in operating such a programme cannot be met from the food budget and in a lot of cases it can cost several thousand euro over and above the funding for the actual food to run the programme. There isn't sufficient monies in SCP budgets to cover such costs any more. There are inequalities in the system. For example, if a school received a budget before the recession years it is not now allowed to apply for extra funding even if the growth in the school population or the fact that the school was originally considered most in need due to the nature of the school population.

Background data on hunger in Irish schools

Based on data collected in 2010 from 12,661 10-17 year olds in Ireland from randomly selected schools throughout the country (Callaghan et al. 2010), 20.9% of schoolchildren in Ireland report going to school or bed hungry because there is not enough food at home. This figure represents a slight increase from 16.6% in 2006. More boys (22.4%) report that they go to school or bed hungry than girls (19.3%). More children in the 10-11 year old age group report going to school or bed hungry at 26.8%, which is an increase from 18.3% in 2006.

Children who report going to school or bed hungry are more likely to report having bullied others. These figures are of serious concern. However, they are likely to be an underestimate of the current situation as the effects of austerity budgets have come into force. A 2013 IPPN survey of over 600 primary school principals found that over 20% of primary principals observed an increase in children coming to school hungry.

Even before the current economic recession, differences between 7 DEIS Dublin primary schools ranged from 6% to 33% of pupils stating they were either often, very often or everyday too hungry to do their work in school (Downes & Maunsell 2007). It is evident that concerns regarding hunger continue into secondary school, with a conservative estimate of at least 17% of students in one DEIS secondary school stating that they were either often, very often or every day too hungry to do their work in school (Downes & Maunsell 2007). In a different Dublin area approximately 18% of the 6th class pupils attending school on the given day stated that they were either often, very often or every day too hungry to do their work in school – this figure was notably higher in 3 of the 4 schools where 21%, 25% and 25% of pupils stated that they were either often, very often or every day too hungry to do their work in school (Downes, Maunsell & Ivers 2006). Friel & Conlon (2004) observed in an Irish

context, 'At a policy level, food poverty per se has not received much attention and explicit efforts to alleviate the adverse implications of food poverty are sparse'. It is to be recognised that the School Meals Programme and National School Completion Programme plays a key role in preventing hunger in schools but a wider national strategy is needed.

The recent national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020, Better outcomes, brighter futures acknowledges the 'challenge of food poverty' and its impact on children's health and educational outcomes(p.53). It offers the following commitment to 'Continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the School Meals Programme and consider inclusion of DEIS schools not currently benefiting under the programme, subject to resources becoming available' (p.133). It is of concern that not only is this a limited commitment in scope and ambition, also weakened by the qualification 'subject to resources being available', it is notable that this commitment is only treated in this strategy as being one that is the responsibility of the Department of Social Protection - with no commitment to it being the responsibility of either the Departments of Education, Health or Children and Youth Affairs. A more systemic and far-reaching response is required than that envisaged in this strategy.

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Downes, P & Maunsell, C. (2007). Count us in: Tackling early school leaving in South West Inner City Dublin: An integrated response. Dublin: Commissioned by the South Inner City Community Development Association.

Friel, S. & Conlon, C. (2004). Summary of Food Poverty and Policy. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency & St. Vincent de Paul Society

IPPN (2013). Survey of School Principals, Conference data.

2) Emotional and mental health supports, including multidisciplinary teams (+NBSS for primary)

Poverty impacts on mental health, mental health impacts on early school leaving

Mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, disruptive behavior, eating disorders, or posttraumatic stress disorder, can negatively impact on a child's school success, as well as general well-being (World Health Organization, 2003; Kessler, 2009). Children living in low-income families are especially vulnerable to mental health difficulties (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2001; Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009). The huge socio-economic disparities in levels of illness across the lifespan are well documented (Townsend and Davidson, 1992; Acheson, 1998). Children in the child welfare system, who come primarily from poor families, have a greater prevalence of mental health problems compared with those in the general population (Leslie et al., 2004; Dore, 2005). Graham and Easterbrooks (2000) found that insecurely attached children at higher economic risk had higher levels of depression than insecurely attached children at lower economic risk.

The EU Commission Staff Working Paper (2010) on early school leaving adopts a holistic approach to early school leaving, giving cognisance to the need for emotional supports:

"Difficulties at school often have their roots outside. Solving problems at school cannot be done effectively without tackling the range of problems that put children in difficulty, which can include drug or alcohol use, sleep deficits, physical abuse and trauma. Some of the most successful measures

have been those which provide a holistic solution by networking different actors and so support the whole person. Partnerships at the local level seem to be highly effective ways of doing this”.

It is notable that the Working Paper explicitly recognises that early school leaving ‘can be part of a situation of serious social, academic and/or emotional distress’. Significantly, this is reiterated in the Commission Proposal for a Council Recommendation (2011) on early school leaving:

“Targeted individual support integrates social, financial, educational and psychological support for young people in difficulties. It is especially important for young people in situations of serious social or emotional distress which hinders them from continuing education or training”.

Emotional and mental health supports were largely overlooked in DEIS (Downes 2008). These are directly related to issues of early school leaving. As part of DEIS II, there is a strong need for further strategic integration between Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, and schools and to ensure that Tusla as a whole has a direct focus on social inclusion and early school leaving prevention issues for its key outcomes. Emotional and mental health support services in schools, at both primary and postprimary levels are manifestly inadequate.

There is a need for a national prevention and early intervention focus with multidisciplinary teams as part of DEIS II

- To engage directly with problems related to early school leaving, for example, trauma, bullying, mental health difficulties, language development, parental support, sleep deficits, risk of substance misuse, suspension/expulsion, conflict with teachers
- *Outreach work to reach the most extremely marginalised families – not simply those of moderate risk
- Each family has one ‘lead professional’ to link them with others (Edwards & Downes 2013a)
- *The NBSS (National Behavioural Support Service) needs to be extended to DEIS primary schools

The Final Report of the EU Commission’s Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving (‘Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support’ November 2013) emphasises the need for multidisciplinary teams in and around schools

“8. Promote and support multi-professional teams in schools to address ESL. Cooperation should be centred on schools. Their boundaries should be opened up to enable them to include other professionals (as teams) such as social workers, youth workers, outreach care workers, psychologists, nurses, speech and language therapists and occupational guidance specialists in efforts to reduce ESL²⁶. Schools should be encouraged to develop strategies to improve communication between parents and locally based community services to help prevent ESL.”

Other countries such as Denmark have a multidisciplinary team for every school. They are commonplace in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and in parts of Britain (Edwards & Downes 2013; EU Commission Thematic Working Group Report 2013). The municipality of Eindhoven has chosen for a family support policy based on multifunctional services directly linked to primary schools in SPIL Centres. This choice had been made based on the principle of the early detection of children at risk as early as possible and as close to the family as possible. The main reason for this is that schools, day care centres and kindergartens are places with the best access to ‘find’ children at risk and their parents (Eurochild 2011). Community based family support centres, with multidisciplinary teams linked with preschools and schools, with a focus on child and parent mental health, emotional support and school attendance are needed as part of a cross-department strategy

for DEIS II. Between 2006 and 2012 approx. 3,000 of the total 9,000 child care centres in the German federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) are being developed into certified “Familienzentren” (family centres). Family centres are designed to bundle services for families in the local community. The concept of the state programme “Familienzentrum NRW” acknowledges the significance of early support and intervention for children and families (Eurochild 2011). A multidisciplinary team serving a cluster of DEIS schools to work with children and families of the most complex needs is a clear policy priority for DEIS II.

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3) Arts and social inclusion in education strategy

There is currently no Arts and social inclusion in education strategy at national level.

The EU COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on policies to reduce early school leaving (2011) recognises ‘2.2 INTERVENTION POLICIES aim to avoid early school leaving...

(5) Extra-curricular activities after and outside school and artistic, cultural and sport activities, which can raise the self-esteem of pupils at risk and increase their resilience against difficulties in their learning’.

The EU COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER Reducing early school leaving
Accompanying document to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving (2010) states:

‘3.3.1.6. Extra-curricular activities

63. Activities after and outside school can raise self-esteem, improve motivation and support learning processes. The aim of such activities is on the one hand to keep children off the street, and on the other hand to provide them with the support (supervision of homework, recreational activities etc.) that more fortunate children receive from their families. The importance of non-formal and also non-academic education for reducing ESL is uncontested’

There is also a real concern that the arts have been somewhat marginalised at a curricular level due to the national literacy and numeracy strategy (O’Breachain & O’Toole 2013), rather than integrating the arts into literacy approaches. Under *Breaking The Cycle* there was a recognition of cultural disadvantage and that children are not getting to experience the Arts at home. This is missing from DEIS. DEIS places much more emphasis on literacy and numeracy whereas *Breaking the Cycle* aimed to teach these through the Arts. A distinct funding strand needs to be given to experience the Arts and develop confidence in children – the benefits are seen across the whole curriculum and in terms of increased attendance. Arts education constitutes one-eighth of the curriculum time so one-eighth of the funding should be allocated to it. School is a safe place for many and an ideal place to explore the Arts. The School Completion Programme offers a key component of an arts strategy and there is scope for expanding provision in every local SCP subject to the provision adequate funding.

A wide range of educational theorists and educational psychologists recognise the danger of labelling students as failures (e.g. Glasser 1969; Warnock 1977; Handy & Aitken 1990; Kellaghan et al 1995; Kelly 1999) with the consequent knock-on effect of early school leaving. The arts offer approaches with no ‘right answer’ and go beyond a failure based model. They can build on strengths (Halpern 2000), develop multiple intelligences, social and emotional competences, cultural expression, personal fulfilment, concentration and cognitive skills, as well as confidence, leadership and active citizenship. The Arts can engage a wide cohort of students who are otherwise disaffected from the school system.

EU COMMISSION STAFF WORKING PAPER Reducing early school leaving
Accompanying document to the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving (2010)

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