

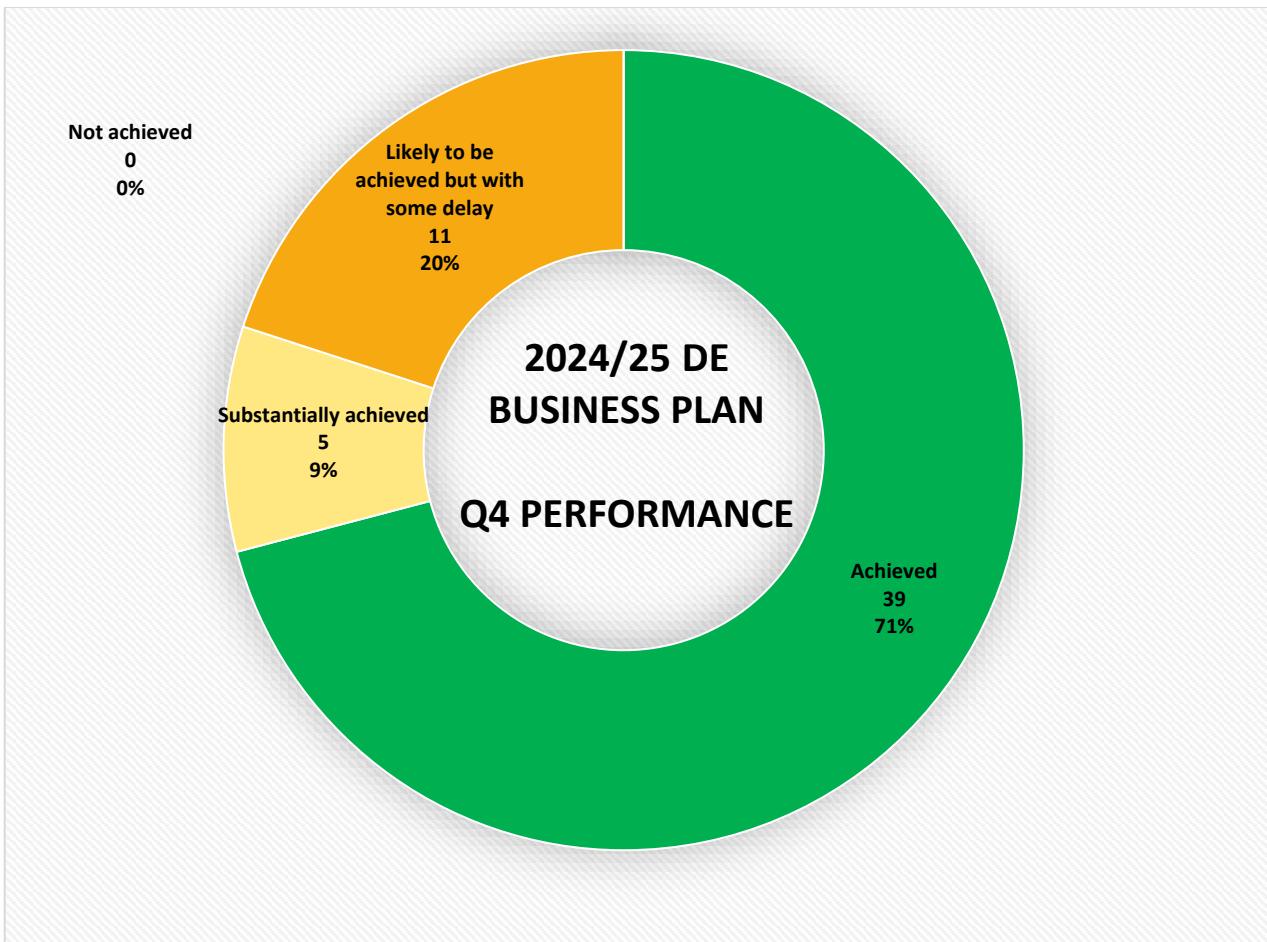


DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BUSINESS PLAN  
**2024/25 END-YEAR MONITORING REPORT**

## Summary

The table below sets out a summary of end-year performance against 2024/25 Business Plan actions:

Descriptor	Circumstances for use	End-year Outturn Position (Number)	End-year Outturn Position (Percentage)
Achieved (Green)	When the action has been completed in full within the business year.	39	71%
Substantially achieved (Amber)	When a substantial part of the action has been delivered within the business year.	5	9%
Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Orange)	When the action has not been fully achieved by the end of the business year, but some progress has been made and it is being carried forward to be completed in the next business year.	11	20%
Not achieved (Red)	When the action has not been achieved by the target date and is not being revised or carried forward to the next business year; or When no progress was made on the action during the business year, but it is being carried forward to the next business year.	0	0
<b>Total</b>		55	100%



## Business Plan Strategic Priorities and Actions with End-Year Ratings and Comments

### **CHAMPIONING the needs and aspirations of all our children and young people and the positive impact of education**

We want our Department and all our education partners to put children and young people at the core of everything we do. By 2028 we aspire to:

- a) Put the interests of children and young people first and provide them with a greater voice in shaping their own future;
- b) Develop a properly resourced education system that actively seeks to promote the benefits that education brings to our society.

Action #	What we are going to do	Status	Comments (at 31 March 2025)
<b>C1</b>	We will make the case for the required level of investment in education, including capital, as part of a future executive budget process.	Achieved (Green)	While a small degree of uncertainty remains, the Education Authority (EA) has indicated that on the balance of probability, it does expect to be able to manage its projected overspend and operate within budget. Notwithstanding, this update is being provided before full and final outturn for the year has been reported by the EA (and indeed all other DE business areas and other ALBs).
<b>C2</b>	We will engage with all relevant stakeholders to develop a 10-year capital investment strategy.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Orange)	Engagement has commenced and an initial 10-year capital investment strategy has been drafted, however this is still at an early stage of development. During the past year, the Directorate has been balancing competing priorities for delivery with understaffing due to both vacancies and staff absence, including at senior management level, which has delayed completion of the strategy. The likely timescale for completion is by close of quarter 3, 2025.

C3	We will assess the findings and recommendations of the Independent Review of Education, working with stakeholders to make appropriate preparations for future implementation, in advance of Ministerial and Executive decisions.	Achieved (Green)	Ministerial statement made on 21 October 2024.
C4	We will further develop the Executive Children and Young People's Strategy (CYPS) 2020-2030 monitoring and reporting structures to facilitate input from non-statutory partners and focus cooperative effort on priority areas.	Achieved (Green)	The first report on the operation of the Children's Services Cooperation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 (the legislative basis of the CYPS) was published by the Executive in July 2024 as required by the legislation. The second meeting of the CYPS Monitoring and Reporting Board was held on 30 September 2024 with the Board receiving an update on proposals to support further development of monitoring and reporting structures. The Board was provided with an update on this work on 6 March 2025 including plans for further engagement with lead officials of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. This work is ongoing and monitoring and reporting structures will be subject to further development in 2025/26.
C5	We will seek to agree an NICS Policy Statement on Participation accompanied by a set of policy principles with the aim of improving engagement with children and young people, ensuring their views are sought, listened to, and acted upon in policy development and decision making.	Achieved (Green)	The NICS Policy Statement on Participation and associated policy principles were edited into one succinct document and were circulated by the Minister of Education to Executive colleagues in February 2025. The final set of agreed principles will be published imminently.

## **HELPING all our children and young people by supporting their well-being and learning**

We want to unite families, communities and educators around a shared vision to nurture healthy, confident children and young people, supported to learn and equipped to lead fulfilling lives. By 2028 we aspire to:

- a) Ensure every child and young person with additional or Special Educational Needs (SEN) has their needs identified and assessed as early as possible and receives provision which is timely and appropriate;
- b) All our children and young people enjoy active lives and healthy minds;
- c) All children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are able to participate fully in education, leading to improved learning outcomes.

Action #	What we are going to do	Status	Comments (at 31 March 2025)
<b>H1</b>	We will implement proposals from the End-to-End review of SEN that will deliver transformational change to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEN.	Achieved (Green)	The Minister published the SEN Reform Agenda and associated 5 year delivery plan on 4 February 2025 which is the out workings of the End-to-End Review of SEN.
<b>H2</b>	We will take forward a programme of work alongside Department of Health (DoH) colleagues in relation to children and young people with SEN and disabilities within special schools to address findings and recommendations from the End-to-End Review of SEN.	Achieved (Green)	The Minister published the SEN Reform Agenda and associated 5 year delivery plan on 4 February 2025 which is the out workings of the End-to-End Review of SEN.
<b>H3</b>	We will work with partners to ensure the continued implementation of a new SEN Framework.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Orange)	A small number of minor issues still need to be resolved in the draft SEN Regulations and we continue to liaise with Departmental Solicitors Office and EA.

<b>H4</b>	<p>We will collaborate with DoH colleagues to develop and agree a programme of early intervention to ensure that the Special Educational needs of children and young people are identified and assessed early and that appropriate supports are provided for their learning and development.</p>	Achieved (Green)	<p>The SEN Reform Agenda and Delivery Plan 2025-2030 have been approved by the Minister and were published on 4 February 2025. These include a range of early intervention actions to be delivered over the next 5 years, and have been agreed with DoH / Public Health Agency. DE and DoH will work closely together in implementation of these actions. A number of early intervention projects focused on children with SEN have been delivered with Early Learning and Childcare funding including the Pre-school Education Inclusion Support fund, Language Launchpad project, resource funding to support children with SEN in the early years in special schools and specialist provisions.</p>
<b>H5</b>	<p>We will work with the Education Authority (EA) to review the planning process for placing children with a statement of SEN and develop a strategy that will improve longer term planning and ensure children with SEN receive timely confirmation of a placement which meets their needs.</p>	Achieved (Green)	<p>The SEN Reform Agenda and 5 year Delivery Plan were published on 4 February 2025 and contain a range of actions to improve the planning process for placing children with a statement of SEN to ensure children with SEN receive timely confirmation of a placement which meets their needs. 99.7% of children with a statement of SEN at key transition points had a confirmed placement by September 2024. The EA's SEN Capacity Programme team is leading on the placement of children for September 2025.</p>
<b>H6</b>	<p>We will hold a public consultation on school uniform policy, with a view to presenting an options paper for policy change to the Education Minister.</p>	Achieved (Green)	<p>The analysis report on the School Uniform consultation was published 12 December 2025. This work has resulted in the School Uniforms (Guidelines and Allowances) Bill being Introduced to the Assembly on 18 February 2025. The second stage debate on the Bill was held 3 March 2025 and it is currently at Committee Stage.</p>

H7	We will complete the review of the eligibility criteria for free school meals and uniform grants by March 2025.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Orange)	The public consultation closed on 14 February 2025 and officials are currently analysing the responses. It is planned that Minister's agreement to publishing a summary of the consultation responses will be sought in the coming weeks. The Minister will also be provided with detailed analysis of the policy options for change, taking into account the consultation responses, to enable him to take a final decision on the way forward for this review. This would enable this action to be completed in quarter 1 of the 2025/26 year.
H8	We will work with partners to ensure the continued implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the joint Department of Education (DE)/DoH Children & Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework.	Achieved (Green)	DE and DoH continued to fund projects under the joint Framework during 24/25. Monitoring of projects is undertaken through existing governance structures including termly updates and annual outcomes-focused Plans (academic year). There were 7 projects operational in 2024/25: Emotional Wellbeing Teams in Schools (EWTS), RISE NI KS2 expansion, REACH, Being Well Doing Well (BWDW), The Attach Programme (TAP), Text-a-Nurse and the Enhanced School Nursing Pilot. The Enhanced School Nursing Pilot ended December 2024 (not considered feasible to scale-up) and the Text a Nurse service ended March 2025 (not considered value for money taking account of number of service users).
H9	We will action 'A Life Deserved' education recommendations for Children Looked After and work in partnership with EA, DoH and other departments and agencies to facilitate collaboration on joint actions.	Achieved (Green)	The Primary Children Looked After Advisory Service (PCLAAS) is continuing with delivery of the implementation plan agreed. DE continues to monitor the progress being made alongside the PCLAAS.

<b>H10</b>	<p>We will progress a place-based intervention programme in collaboration with schools, the voluntary and community sector and other Departments to enable children and young people to develop and progress, which will include learning from effective practice during Covid-19.</p>	Achieved (Green)	<p>The first tranche of Shared Island funding was received from the Department of Education (Ireland) in December 2024. Engagement with stakeholders in each of the localities has continued from December to March 2025. This engagement is supporting the formation of Locality Reference Groups for each locality and the development of Strategic Area Plans. Ministerial agreement has been secured on a range of aspects of the programme and the Programme Board and Advisory Forum met in January and February respectively. Information on developing a RAISE Strategic Area Plan and the available budget for each RAISE Locality was published on the DE website on 12 March 2025.</p>
<b>H11</b>	<p>We will develop and roll out a pilot scheme of the use of mobile inhibiting devices in a small number of post primary schools to inform future policy decisions in this area.</p>	Achieved (Green)	<p>Procurement process to appoint supplier complete. Successful supplier to be appointed and evaluation framework developed. Pilot scheduled to run in schools from September 2025 until March 2026.</p>

## INSPIRING all our children and young people to make a positive contribution to society

We want an outward-looking and engaged Department, working in partnership with others, to raise aspirations and develop children and young people to make valuable contributions to society. By 2028 we aspire to:

- (a) Encourage more children and young people from different backgrounds to engage together, building societal cohesion and learning to understand, respect and celebrate difference;
- (b) Provide all children and young people with the opportunity, knowledge, skills, experience and support to equip them to make a positive contribution to the economy and society.

Action #	What we are going to do	Status	Comments (at 31 March 2025)
I1	We will continue to deliver the actions in 'A Fair Start', maximise completion of Targeting Social Need Plans and take forward interventions to support children and young people impacted by social disadvantage in collaboration with other Departments and the voluntary and community sector.	Substantially achieved (Amber)	Work continues to progress on the 46 actions within "A Fair Start" this year. as funding was limited, progress did not have the predicted impact, as highlighted in the Report. Targeting Social Needs Planner completion continues to be relatively low, due to a number of factors. The current completion rate is 18% of Nursery, 34% of Primary and 29% of Post Primary.
I2	We will work with the Department for the Economy (DfE) to take forward the recommendations in the Careers Advisory Service Review, 'A Fair Start' and the 14-19 Framework.	Achieved (Green)	Final draft forward workplan being developed for presentation to Minister. A number of Year 1 actions have been progressed including work with careers teachers to develop a careers education framework and the implementation of Drawing Your Future work to support careers in primary schools.
I3	We will publish a revised sixth form policy.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Orange)	Impacted by deployment of resources on other areas. Ministerial priority on Careers Education impacted on available resources. Also impacted by ongoing work on 16-18 compulsory school age legislation.

I4	We will complete our sectoral inputs to the Northern Ireland Climate Action Plan and we will continue to consider how children and young peoples' knowledge and understanding of green growth and climate change can be enhanced through the school curriculum.	Achieved (Green)	DE input provided enabling the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to produce a draft Northern Ireland Climate Action Plan.
I5	We will continue work on a review of Priorities for Youth and co-design of new/updated policy with a view to having identified policy options and commenced a draft of a new youthwork policy.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Orange)	Significant progress has been made, but in response to requests from both the Young People's Reference Group and the Policy Reference Group subgroup for additional time to fully consider the issues, there has been a small delay in commencing a draft of the new policy drawing upon the options considered by the Policy Reference Group/subgroups. The Young People's Reference Group have delivered their vision and purpose of youth work and recommendations for what young people require from a new policy.
I6	We will support the delivery of Youth interventions and the community/school-based Wrap-around programme to support the inter-Departmental Fresh Start Agreement / Tackling Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime Programme.	Achieved (Green)	The Phase 2 actions have been achieved. The Executive have however agreed a final Phase 3 over the period April 2025-March 2027. Work has been progressing to implement this next phase.
I7	We will work with stakeholders to consider the SEN legislative and policy position as part of the development of the 'Towards Inclusion' Roadmap.	Achieved (Green)	The European Agency has presented the final report. Recommendations will be used, in collaboration with colleagues across the department to inform and shape delivery and implementation of the SEND Reform Agenda & Delivery Plan.
I8	We will deliver on the actions in the DE Integrated Education Action plan and take forward implementation of the Integrated Education Act.	Achieved (Green)	Public consultation was launched on a revised Strategy and action Plan on 27 March. A draft survey of parents has been provided to Minister for approval.

I9	<p>We will continue to embed Shared Education in the education system through implementation of the Mainstreaming Shared Education Strategy Phase Two Delivery Plan; and develop and support school relationships in Shared Education Campus Projects under the 1st and 2nd Calls and progress the Shared Education Campus programme.</p>	Achieved (Green)	<p>Implementation of the Mainstreaming Shared Education (MSE) Strategy Phase Two Delivery Plan continues, overseen by the MSE Oversight Group, with actions expected to be complete/ongoing by the end of phase two, in June 2025. Limavady SEC is now complete with construction underway at Ballycastle SEC and business case development ongoing at Brookeborough SEC. The Department is providing ongoing support to the SEC schools through resource funding provided by The Executive Office to ensure the necessary relationships are developed and strengthened to allow the campuses to operate successfully. A five year independent outcomes based evaluation is underway at Limavady, with the year 1 draft findings recently submitted.</p>
I10	<p>We will continue to work with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) and other partners to deliver actions to provide focused support for Irish-medium education in the form of educational resources, Initial Teacher Education, Teacher Professional Learning and leadership training.</p>	Achieved (Green)	<p>Focused support for the sector is ongoing. Strategic plan still under development. CnaG is working with DE on strategy development over the next two years.</p>
I11	<p>We will work with the EA to ensure the effective implementation of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016</p>	Achieved (Green)	<p>DE continues to support the Addressing Bullying in Schools Team (ABSIT) to deliver in the areas of training, referral response and sharing evidence of best practice. Work is being progressed by the Department on a number of fronts with a view to ensuring that it has access to comprehensive data to better understand the frequency, motivations and methods of bullying type behaviour, as well as to assess implementation of the Act in schools across</p>

			Northern Ireland, including: development of an outcomes-focussed reporting approach with ABSIT; inclusion of questions as part of a wider Education and Training Inspectorate pilot to help determine how schools are fulfilling their statutory obligations in relation to implementing the Act, in terms of recording of all incidents of bullying, and development, implementation, monitoring and review of addressing bullying policies and procedures; inclusion of a range of questions in relation to bullying type behaviour for the first time in the 2024 School Omnibus Survey covering school's awareness of the Act and its statutory duties, effectiveness of implementation, and incidents of bullying type behaviour methods and motivations; exploration of the scope to access anonymised regional bullying data from schools through the digitisation of the Bullying Concern Assessment Form as part of the Education Information Solutions (EdIS) digital change programme.
I12	We will develop proposals for changes to the Newcomer Policy for Ministerial consideration.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay  (Orange)	Submission drafted on Newcomer policy change proposals completed, to take account of the latest policy context and up-to-date information. Submission will go through internal approval processes before being submitted to Minister in April 2025.
I13	We will progress the review of the Traveller in Education Framework in line with the agreed action plan.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay	While work has not progressed as quickly as planned, a forward work plan has been agreed internally to ensure this work progresses in the new financial year.

		(Orange)	
I14	We will contribute to the achievement of DE-related actions within racial equality and refugee integration strategies in line with agreed action plans.	Achieved (Green)	Contributing to development / implementation of the refugee integration strategy and racial equality strategy on an ongoing basis as appropriate, subject to funding.

## Meeting the **LEARNING** needs of our children and young people and developing their knowledge and skills, enabling them to fulfil their potential

We want every child to enjoy a high-quality education and learning experience from Early Years to post primary. By 2028 we aspire to:

- (a) An inclusive curriculum that gives equal emphasis to skills and knowledge and empowers all children and young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives;
- (b) Develop an Early Years partnership approach – educators, health providers, parents, families and communities working together to ensure all children are supported in their early learning so they are at their appropriate stage of development when they reach school age;
- (c) Reduce the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people's learning, and embed improvements in education delivery arising as a result of the pandemic;

Action #	What we are going to do	Status	Comments (at 31 March 2025)
L1	We will develop an Executive Early Learning and Childcare Strategy.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay  (Orange)	Minister has announced that a draft Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Strategy will be published in the autumn. Ongoing data collection gathered through the Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme (NICSS); the outcome of the business support scoping exercise due end March 2025, and the findings of Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) parental survey due April/May 2025, will inform the strategy proposals. Work is also progressing through the cross departmental ELC Task and Finish Group in conjunction with stakeholders and specific sub-groups, to develop the draft ELC Strategy.
L2	We will progress the End-to-End Review of School Improvement, jointly with the EA and collaboratively with all stakeholders.	Substantially achieved  (Amber)	Many aspects of the End-to-End Review are now part of the Minister's new TransformED strategy for teaching and learning excellence including a number of key actions such as the new school improvement

			<p>policy, inspection legislation and a review of accountability arrangements. An implementation plan for the strategy is under development and will include timelines for the publication of the draft school improvement policy and delivery plan during 2025, which are considered the key outputs of the Review.</p>
<b>L3</b>	We will complete phase one of a review of arrangements for statutory assessment at Key Stages 1 – 3 by developing policy proposals.	Achieved (Green)	<p>In January 2025, the Minister agreed policy proposals for three year interim arrangements for statutory Key Stage assessments from 2025-26 to 2027-28 with an initial focus on literacy and numeracy. The policy arrangements were announced on 19 March 2025 via a written assembly statement and letter to schools. Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) has been commissioned to implement the arrangements.</p>
<b>L4</b>	We will work with Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to develop a programme of work to review/reform qualifications at Key Stage 4 and post 16.	Achieved (Green)	<p>Over the past year the Department has worked with CCEA on a range of projects to gather evidence to provide the basis for a longer term programme of review and reform of qualifications. This includes working with CCEA to plan for a review of its specifications, developing proposals for a qualifications policy framework that will provide the basis for the regulatory framework which in turn will provide the basis for reviewing CCEA specifications. OECD are in the final stages of completing an international comparative research project that will provide further evidence to inform a programme of reform, and the review of CCEA Regulation, commissioned jointly by DE and DfE is also nearing completion. Officials have now embarked upon a</p>

			round of engagements with school leaders through Area Learning Communities to gather further evidence of the issues educators feel need to be addressed through a programme of review and reform - this engagement is due to extend to the end of the school year. While this action extends beyond this financial year, there has been extensive work completed this year that will contribute to the development of the longer term programme.
<b>L5</b>	We will monitor, review and support effective development and implementation of the Northern Ireland Curriculum by developing and providing appropriate and timely guidance, professional support and resources in curricular areas of focus including Modern Languages, Digital Skills and Green Growth.	Achieved (Green)	Work for 2024/25 progressed on schedule.
<b>L6</b>	In collaboration with DoH, we will make learning and development support available to c.41,500 children aged 0-3 facing educational disadvantage, through the targeted Sure Start programme.	Achieved (Green)	Additional Sure Start budget of £3.1m from the Early Learning and Childcare Strategy helped to stabilise and expand existing provision, enabling continued learning and development support to c.41,500 children aged 0-3 facing educational disadvantage.
<b>L7</b>	To resume partially Statutory Key Stage Assessment arrangements for 2024/25 through teacher assessment for Communication and Using Mathematics only.	Achieved (Green)	Letters issued to schools resuming the 2024/25 statutory Key Stage assessment arrangements through teacher assessment of component areas of Communication and Using Mathematics in October 2024. CCEA are issuing communication to schools in April 2025 to advise for the academic year 2024/25, schools should upload the levels for pupils in Year 4, Year 7 and Year 10 through C2k by 30 May 2025.
<b>L8</b>	We will work with the CCEA to ensure awarding of fair and robust qualification outcomes in	Achieved	Summer 2024 awarding was successfully delivered, as were the first two exam series of the 2024/25

	August 2024 and agree awarding arrangements for summer 2025.	(Green)	academic year - modular exams in November and February. CCEA is on track for delivery of the summer 2025 exam series.
<b>L9</b>	We will support children's learning and development in early years through the implementation of Fair Start early years actions	Achieved (Green)	Early years actions within Fair Start are on track for achievement.
<b>L10</b>	We will provide a place in an education setting for every child whose parent applies through the pre-school (target age applications only), primary or post-primary admissions processes.	Achieved (Green)	A small number of children remained unplaced by September for admission to pre-school and Year 8. These parents were provided information on how to apply for places that remained available and where those places were. Those children of compulsory school age who were still to secure a place were referred to the EA's Education Welfare Service in September 2024.
<b>L11</b>	We will consult on a revised and refreshed Attendance Strategy and develop resources for use by schools and parents to support regular attendance at school.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Orange)	The draft Attendance Strategy has not been submitted to the Minister yet as further revisions need to be made to the document. We are continuing to engage with stakeholders to that end. New resources have been issued to schools this year to help improve pupil attendance and support continues to be provided to schools, as and when required.
<b>L12</b>	We will phase in a standardised session length of at least 4.5 hours per day for all pre-school pupils with 100 pre-schools approved to provide new/additional 4.5-hour pre-school places from September 2025.	Achieved (Green)	106 settings have been approved for standardisation from September 2025.
<b>L13</b>	The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) will undertake a comprehensive programme of work aligned to system need and DE and other commissioning Departments' priorities to inform policy, improvement and practice.	Achieved (Green)	From April 2024 to February 2025 inspection activity resumed in schools and continued across all phases of education and training; ETI undertook over 170 inspections during 2024/25, including follow-ups. ETI's work during 2024/25 also includes the

			publication of a series of phase insight reports, dissemination events, professional learning for impact, and policy advice. From February a number of school inspections were impacted by Action Short of Strike; ETI has completed its programme of work in this context.
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## DELIVERING an effective, child-first, collaborative and high-quality education system

We want a sustainable education system which is appropriately resourced, works in partnership, invests in its workforce and is committed to excellence and equity. By 2028 we aspire to:

- (a) Deliver more modern, sustainable schools and other education settings, which are committed to excellence and equity for every learner;
- (b) Deliver a highly skilled, motivated and high-functioning education workforce, which is provided with adequate support and training to enable it to meet the needs of every learner and stakeholder it serves;
- (c) Deliver an efficient and sustainable education system which works in partnership to meet the needs of children and young people.

Action #	What we are going to do	Status	Comments (at 31 March 2025)
D1	We will take the necessary actions to effectively prioritise the Education budget; ensure that we invest in key Education priorities and apply sound financial controls.	Achieved (Green)	DE presently expects EA to manage its residual pressure of c£20m and operate within budget this year. However, again, even if DE does stay within budget, it is unlikely to do so with the required level of investment in education. Education's capital budget, similarly, does not provide the required level of investment for the sector. Notwithstanding, DE continues to make the case for the required level of investment as was the case for the recent 2025/26 budget process.
D2	We will continue to implement the Learning Leaders (LL) Strategy, through consultation, awareness raising and developing a Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) framework and delivery model through the End-to-End review of School Improvement.	Achieved (Green)	The Minister's Education Strategy includes a key action to refresh the LL Strategy and this process has begun. The draft TPL Framework (which was to be issued for consultation separately) along with the LL related work completed as part of the School Improvement End-to-End Review have all been incorporated into an initial draft of the refreshed strategy. Review of Teacher Induction is complete and recommendations being implemented alongside the key actions in the Education Strategy.

D3	<p>Following the 2021, 2022 and 2023 Pay Agreement we will develop a framework to address the recommendations contained in the 8 completed Workforce Reviews and we will continue to develop industrial relations with our teaching workforce and teaching trade unions.</p>	Achieved (Green)	<p>The long running pay and grading dispute by education support staff was ended by the acceptance of the terms of a Pay and Grading Review by the Joint Negotiating Council (JNC) unions. This agreement provided relief to school support staff through a significant investment in pay along with restructured pay scales to improve the recruitment and retention of staff in the future. On 4 April 2025 a pay settlement was agreed by the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC). This agreement included a pay increase of 5.5% along with a series of joint commitments to address teachers' workload concerns.<sup>1</sup></p>
D4	<p>We will use available capital investment to ensure schools remain open and safe for all pupils; provide better access to education for pupils with Special Educational Needs; and enhance facilities and ICT infrastructure to support delivery of the Northern Ireland curriculum and improve pupil outcomes.</p>	Achieved (Green)	<p>The closing 2024/25 capital budget for Education is £336.7m: an initial capital budget of £254.3m Executive funding (this included a ring-fenced allocation of £20m in respect of the Strule Programme which has reduced to £13.1m), an additional £15m Executive capital from the June monitoring round, £12.5m Executive capital from the January monitoring round, £58.1m Fresh Start Funding and adjustments due to technical transfers to and from the Department. The budget strategy, approved by the Minister, allowed for a £25m capital overcommitment (not incl receipts) at initial allocation stage. This was to allow for fluctuations/slippage across programmes. This overcommitment has been proactively reduced each month and is currently £1.868m at end of February</p>

<sup>1</sup> Whilst the target was not achieved as of 31 March, it was achieved by the end of the financial year.

			2025 inclusive of pressures across all programmes, showing a substantial reduction from the £24.9m pressures detailed at quarter 3. We anticipate a balanced budget at year end. Overall, DE's budget strategy for 2024/25 may be summarised as meeting existing contractual requirements for Major Works; School Enhancement and ICT projects; as well as ensuring schools remain safe and open, and that required adaptations and additional places are provided for those children with SEN to be delivered through our SEN Capital Investment Programme and to deliver a range of new curriculum-led programmes. However, a wide range of important education projects are not being progressed. The Department has continued to control capital expenditure to achieve a balanced capital budget.
<b>D5</b>	We will, together with the EA, progress all actions within the Landscape Review Action Plan, to include people and culture, data, partnership, service delivery and customer excellence.	Substantially achieved (Amber)	Projects 1, 4, 5 and 7 are either complete or substantially complete. A position paper outlining the approach to closing off all outstanding actions within the Action Plan (pertaining to Projects 2, 3 and 6) has been drafted – once Ministerial approval is given, the outstanding actions will be progressed under business-as-usual and/or monitored through existing channels, with the Oversight Group stood down.
<b>D6</b>	We will work with area planning stakeholders to deliver the aims and objectives of the Sustainable Schools Policy, the Strategic Area Plan and the Strategic Area Plan for Special Education, ensuring that Operational Plan 2 (1 September 2024 to 31 August 2026) focuses on sustainable provision in primary and post-	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Orange)	Operational Plan 2 was published on 16 January 2025. The focus of the plan will have its foundations within the Sustainable Schools Policy for primary and post primary schools and the SEN Frameworks for Special Schools and Specialist Provision in Mainstream Schools taking forward priorities:

	primary schools and supports and meets the needs of all children including those with SEN.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For special schools and specialist provision in mainstream schools to address capacity to seek to ensure all pupils have access to a placement at their nearest suitable school: strategically plan for additional special school places for September 2026 and beyond; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide 3-19 pathways within a single school or through collaborative provision;</li> <li>identify geographical, sectoral and linguistic inconsistencies in the availability of Specialist Provisions; and</li> <li>establish Specialist Provisions to meet projected demand, address inconsistencies (geographical, sectoral, linguistic) and ensure key stage pathways, including Post16;</li> </ul> </li> <li>Primary and post primary schools to provide a network of viable and sustainable schools that are of the right type, the right size, located in the right place at the right time with a focus on raising standards over the two years, 2024-26. As this plan was delayed in being published - this is likely to have a knock on effect in progressing the workstreams contained within the Plan.</li> </ul>
D7	We will oversee effective governance within all our Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs), including the completion of Partnership Agreements.	Substantially achieved (Amber)	The Department has undertaken effective oversight and governance of its ALBs throughout the year, with the 24/25 Mid-Year Governance Statements for all ALBs completed within required timescales and all scheduled Governance & Accountability Review (GAR) meetings completed (with the exception of EA, whose second GAR was cancelled. The third CCEA GAR is due to be held in April 2025). All

			2024/25 ALB Business Plans were approved or agreed. Partnership Agreements are in progress for all ALBs (except General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland, which will not have a Partnership Agreement until a replacement organisation is in place). Most are nearing completion, with a draft Partnership Agreement completed for all organisations except Middletown Centre for Autism. It is anticipated that all Partnership Agreements will be completed and in place by Autumn 2025.
<b>D8</b>	We will continue to progress work and consult on a suitable replacement model for the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) and to prepare the necessary primary legislation this will require. In the interim we will maintain robust oversight for the continuing work of the body.	Achieved (Green)	The Business case was approved and Ministerial options paper submitted. The Minister decided on 4 March to proceed with the recommended option which will see GTCNI, retained and enabled to deliver all of its statutory functions. Subject to securing the required approvals to legislate, drafting of the Bill will commence shortly.
<b>D9</b>	In conjunction with Management Side, we will lead the implementation of the Fair Employment (School Teachers) Act (NI) 2022 across the education system in Northern Ireland to ensure the legislative requirements are operational by May 2024.	Achieved (Green)	There have been no issues and progress will continue to be monitored. The EA is responsible for preparing and submitting the annual monitoring return to the Equality Commission for teachers in controlled schools and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools is responsible for carrying out this function for teachers in Catholic maintained schools. All other schools with over ten staff are required to submit monitoring returns to the Equality Commission.
<b>D10</b>	We will progress the development and delivery of a new DE People Plan, through a renewed Staff Engagement Forum.	Achieved (Green)	The Staff Engagement Forum (SEF) is progressing the delivery of the new DE People Plan, with new actions and objectives being added on an ad hoc basis. The SEF has already delivered on a number

			of actions within the Plan and will be moving into 2025/26 with good momentum.
<b>D11</b>	We will produce a new informed equality action plan which will help to address inequalities across education.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay  (Orange)	Work has now been completed on the Audit of Inequalities despite the absence of a DE Equality Unit Officer however this has slowed down work on the Equality Action Plan.
<b>D12</b>	We will continue to promote the completion of Child Rights Impact Assessment training in order to support policy and decision making.	Substantially achieved  (Amber)	The Department's use of the Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) is continuing to develop and Children and Young People's Strategy Team continues to provide assistance on their use. The outline of progress to date and potential next steps for continued development of CRIA will be presented to Top Management Group in 2025/26 to support further development of the use of CRIA.

## Corporate Risks

There are six key Corporate Risks which have the potential to affect the delivery of actions in the Business Plan. The Corporate Risks aligned to the Strategic Priorities under which the Business Plan was structured are as follows:

Risk	Description	Championing	Helping	Inspiring	Learning	Delivering
1	DE Budget fails to deliver on Strategic Priorities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	DE's activities do not give children and young people the best start in life.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Ineffective partnerships with stakeholders impact negatively on services.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	The Safeguarding and Child Protection framework fails to protect children and young people.	✓	✓	✓		
5	Ineffective management of the workforce inhibits positive outcomes.	✓				✓
6	Infrastructure does not support delivery of education or provide a safe environment.	✓			✓	✓



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