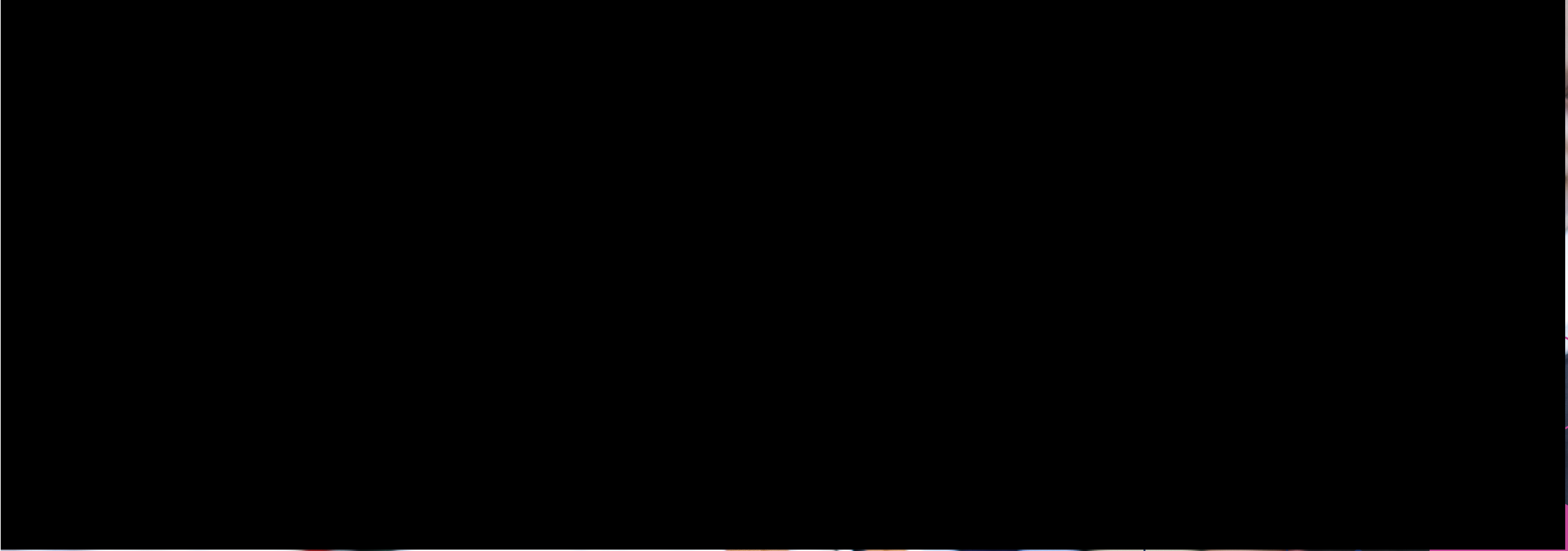


TransformED

First Annual Progress Report and
Updated Delivery Plan May 2026

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Foreword

TransformED represents one of the most ambitious and far-reaching reform programmes in the history of education in Northern Ireland. It is grounded in a simple but uncompromising belief: that every child and young person, regardless of background or circumstance, deserves access to an excellent education that equips them to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

This First Annual Progress Report marks a significant milestone in that journey. It provides a clear account of what has been delivered in the first year of TransformED, the tangible progress made across curriculum, assessment, qualifications, school improvement, tackling educational disadvantage and teacher professional learning, and the foundations now firmly in place for the next phase of reform.

Year 1 has rightly focused on putting the system on a stronger footing. It has involved tough but necessary conversations, extensive engagement with teachers, school leaders, young people and stakeholders, and the development of coherent policy frameworks informed by international evidence and best practice. Across each strand of TransformED, the emphasis has been on clarity, coherence and credibility ensuring reforms are educationally sound, carefully sequenced and capable of being implemented well.

What is particularly striking in this first year is the scale of professional trust placed in the teaching workforce. TransformED recognises that lasting improvement happens not through short-term initiatives or structural change alone, but through sustained investment in teachers' knowledge, skills and confidence. The significant expansion of professional learning, alongside curriculum and assessment reform, reflects a deliberate strategy to strengthen classroom practice as the engine of system improvement.

This report also demonstrates a renewed determination to confront educational disadvantage directly. Through the RAISE Programme and wider legislative and policy action, TransformED is beginning to address the persistent gaps in participation, achievement and opportunity that limit too many young people's life chances. These efforts signal a clear commitment to both excellence and equity not as competing priorities, but as mutually reinforcing goals.

The year ahead will see TransformED shift from design to delivery. That transition brings both challenge and opportunity. Successful implementation will require continued partnership, honest dialogue and a relentless focus on what works best for learners.

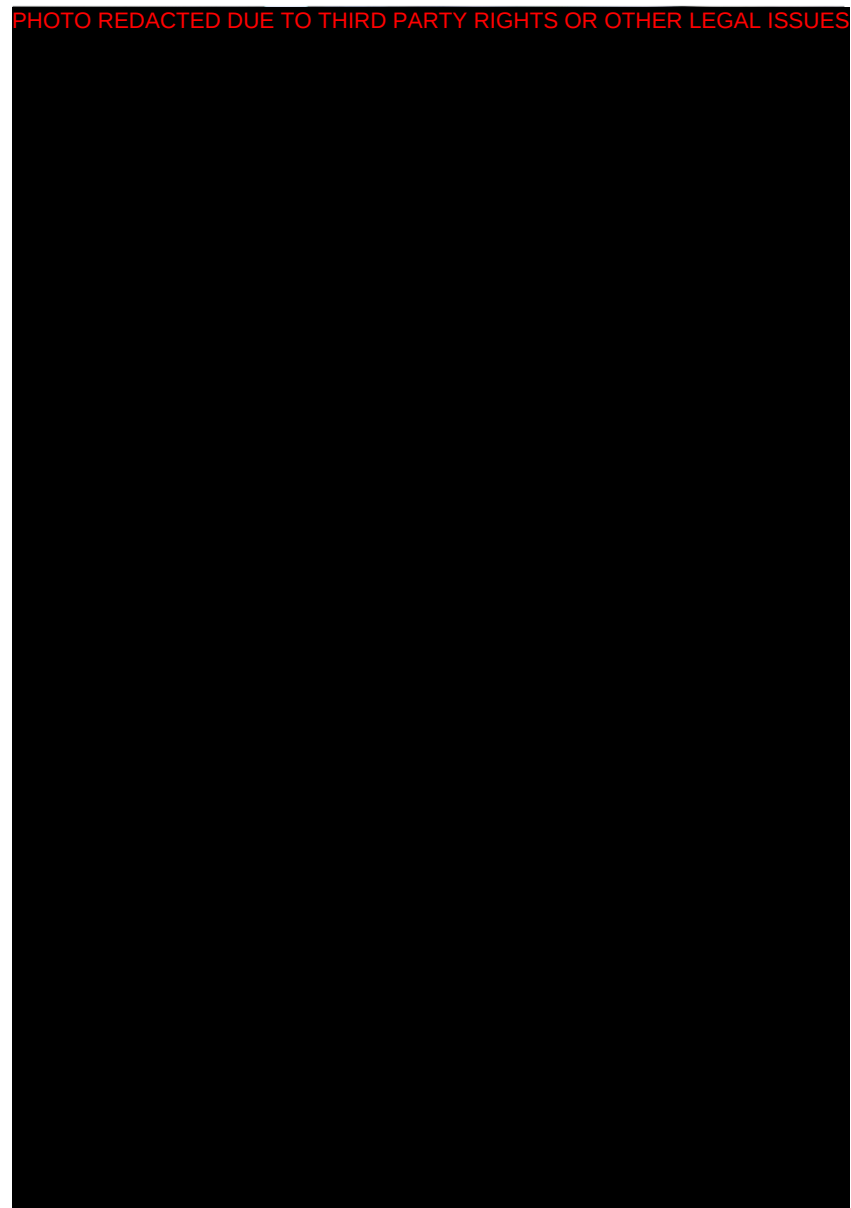
This report therefore serves not only as an account of progress, but as a statement of intent: that reform will be paced, supported and evaluated with care, and that schools and teachers will not be asked to carry change without the necessary time, resources and support.

I would like to thank the many teachers, school leaders, education bodies, partners and advisers, locally and internationally, who have contributed to the progress outlined in this report. Their professionalism, expertise and commitment are central to TransformED's success.

TransformED is a long-term endeavour. The work set out here represents the beginning of a decade of sustained improvement. With a clear vision, strong evidence base and shared commitment across the system, it offers a credible path towards a stronger, fairer and higher-performing education system for Northern Ireland.

Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education

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Introduction

This first annual report provides an update on delivery of TransformED NI, the Department's flagship programme to strengthen teaching and learning across Northern Ireland. The report highlights the key achievements and milestones in Year 1 of the programme, outlines the priorities for the year ahead and provides an updated Delivery Plan.

The TransformED programme represents a shared commitment to ensuring that every learner benefits from a world-class education grounded in evidence-based practice. The programme aims to drive improvement across six interlocking areas that research identifies as the foundations of high-performing education systems:

- **Teacher Professional Learning**
- **Curriculum**
- **Qualifications**
- **Assessment**
- **School Improvement**
- **Tackling Educational Disadvantage**

Global evidence is unequivocal that the quality of teaching and learning is the single most important factor in raising educational outcomes. The *McKinsey, Spark and Sustain* report (February 2024) emphasises that successful education systems “ground changes in the classroom, focusing first and foremost on teachers and the content they deliver”.

Around the world, successful reforms focus on interventions closest to pupils and work outward, starting with the classroom – what is taught (curriculum), how it is taught (pedagogy and professional learning) and how learning is evaluated (assessment and qualifications). These elements are especially vital for pupils facing disadvantage, for whom excellent teaching has the greatest impact.

In Northern Ireland, prior to the launch of the TransformED Strategy, these core components of the education system had received limited attention and investment in recent years. They all, therefore, require renewed focus, systematic evaluation and sustained improvement.

TransformED provides a coherent, evidence-driven set of actions to strengthen key elements of the system. The programme is underpinned by the [10 Point Plan for Educational Excellence](#), which brings together TransformED's actions into ten overarching strategic commitments.

10 Point Plan for Educational Excellence





Overview of Key Year 1 achievements

Year 1 has been a period of major progress for the TransformED Programme, marked by substantial investment in teacher professional learning and the creation of comprehensive new policy frameworks across curriculum, assessment and qualifications.

The Department notes with thanks the significant contribution of stakeholders across the education system and internationally to the successful delivery of the Programme.

The summary below highlights the most significant achievements delivered during the first year of implementation.

Curriculum

- Lucy Crehan's [Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum](#) was published in June 2025.
- [Department of Education's Response to the Strategic Review of Curriculum](#) was published in July 2025.
- A [Curriculum Taskforce](#), chaired by Christine Counsell, was established in August 2025 to develop a new curriculum

framework for Northern Ireland, supported by 13 subject working groups comprising local teachers, subject specialists, academics and curriculum experts.

- The Minister appointed a RE Review panel to draft a new RE syllabus in collaboration with a Teacher Drafting Group.
- [Strong foundations a literacy framework for primary schools](#) and accompanying [Literacy Guidelines](#) were published in December 2025.
- A Northern Ireland [Literacy Symposium](#) was held in December 2025 and a series of [Literacy Webinars](#) to support practitioners delivered throughout spring term 2026.

Assessment

- The first system level sample assessments in literacy and numeracy were held in March 2026 in 358 schools, with 13,717 pupils in Years 4, 7 and 10 sitting approximately 28,500 tests.
- Irish-medium assessments in Gaeilge, English and numeracy were held in all Irish-medium schools for all pupils in Years 4,7 and 10 in March 2026.

- A record 520 schools registered and 486 actively engaged in completing over 111,466 assessments in the CCEA Computer Adaptive Assessment pilot in Autumn 2025.
- [Supporting Progress for Every Child](#), the Independent Review of Assessment Report, was published in March 2026 containing detailed recommendations for a new framework for statutory assessment.
- The [Response by the Department of Education to the Independent Review of Statutory Assessment](#) was published in April 2026. The Department has accepted all ten recommendations from the Review, including the removal of Levels of Progression; the creation of a new statutory assessment pathway; the development of optional adaptive assessments; the introduction of a Writing Repository; and strengthening of assessment training in Initial Teacher Education and ongoing professional development.
- On 15 April 2026, the Department published the new [Policy Framework for Statutory for Statutory Assessment](#) establishing for the first time, a clear assessment pathway from Year 1 to Year 10.

Qualifications

- A [Public Consultation on The Future of CCEA Qualifications](#) ran from 18 September to 13 November 2025. There were over 8000 responses to the consultation and accompanying young person's version.
- During the consultation and throughout the previous academic year, there was engagement with groups of students across

different school settings and significant numbers of school leaders throughout Northern Ireland.

- On 3 March 2026, following consideration of the consultation responses and other relevant research, the Minister announced his decisions for the reform of CCEA GCSE, AS and A level qualifications and a new [Policy Framework for General Qualifications in Northern Ireland](#) was published.

School Improvement

- A [Public Consultation on Strengthening Inspection Legislation](#) was completed, and new legislation developed to protect inspection by mandating cooperation. This legislation will also remove the exemption that restricts the inspection of religious education.
- A [Review of the use of Baker Days and School Development Days](#) was completed and published.
- A Leaders of Education Programme has been developed and recruitment is currently underway to appoint high-performing school leaders to support schools and shape system-wide improvement.
- 23 schools are receiving tailored or sustained support to address areas for action identified by inspection.
- A [Consultation on the establishment of a new organisation to support controlled schools](#) was published in late autumn and the [Consultation Outcome Report](#) published in January 2026.

- A Controlled Schools' Unit has been established in the Education Authority, as an interim measure and Executive agreement has been obtained to draft legislation to establish a dedicated statutory body to manage the controlled schools' sector.
- In autumn 2025, 104 schools and 3,464 pupils in Northern Ireland participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which measures the skills and knowledge in mathematics, science and reading of 15-year-old pupils providing Northern Ireland with robust data to benchmark performance internationally.

Tackling Educational Disadvantage

- Completion of a [Public Consultation](#) on proposals to ensure all learners remain in education, apprenticeship or training until age 18. Legislation has been drafted and is awaiting Executive agreement for introduction to the Assembly.
- Roll-out of the RAISE Programme across 18 localities in Northern Ireland, investing over £20m in tackling educational disadvantage with key achievements including:
 - ✓ Development and publication of 18 bespoke Strategic Area Plans setting out what is needed to raise achievement and aspirations in each locality.
 - ✓ The first Call for [Locality Led Projects](#) with an investment of over £3m in 65 projects.
 - ✓ Launch of a second Call for Locality Led Projects seeking projects against a further 52 Strategic Area Plan objectives.

- ✓ Launch of a call for proposals to deliver Home School Community Connections projects aimed at enhancing links between home, school and the community in the 12 RAISE localities that prioritised these objectives in their Strategic Area Plans.
- ✓ Roll out of a series of [RAISE Cross-Cutting Initiatives](#) that complement Locality Led Projects and provide additional opportunities to tackle key common issues. These span RAISE localities and beyond and those currently in the delivery phase are:
 - The [Reading with AI Research Project](#) which is currently live in 114 schools.
 - A [Holiday Revision Support Programme](#) which enabled over 60 schools to run a revision scheme at Halloween and over 100 schools to run a scheme over the Easter holiday period.
 - The relaunch of Scoil Spreagtha which is currently reaching 104 schools, 931 teachers and more than 20,000 pupils.
 - An Alternative Education Models Pilot with Queen's University, Belfast, appointed to take forward the research element of this Cross Cutting Initiative. This will be complemented by two small-scale pilots to test potential approaches.
 - Launch of the RAISE Active Schools Programme which will connect schools with Physical Education programmes supported by IFA, GAA, Ulster Rugby and Ulster Hockey.

- The National Children's Bureau and Queen's University Belfast have been appointed as the RAISE Programme's Independent Evaluator to examine if the Programme is making a positive impact for children and young people.
- Pilot of the Creative Connections programme which aims to enhance teaching and learning in the arts through partnerships between schools and creative practitioners. 20 schools in Northern Ireland are currently participating in the programme. Building on the success of the pilot phases, the launch of the next phase of Creative Connections was [announced on 22 April 2026](#).
- Extension of Teachers' Research Exchange (T-REX) to Northern Ireland. T-REX is an online platform connecting education professionals and supports the sharing of effective, evidence-based practices.
- Launch and roll-out of a new £31m [Teacher Professional Learning Fund](#) designed to provide schools with dedicated funding to support professional development over three academic years between 2025–26 and 2027–28.
- Launch of the [Making Best Practice, Common Practice Programme](#) to build cumulative knowledge across the teaching profession and strengthen the connections between research and practice. It has funded over 100 schools to host 50 research-informed conferences, provided monthly newsletters on science of learning and leadership, and a quarterly publication on education research.
- Roll-out of the science of learning [Teacher CPD Academy for post-primary Schools](#) offering interactive, on-demand courses, expert insights, and practical resources grounded in cognitive science research. 161 post-primary schools are participating in the programme.

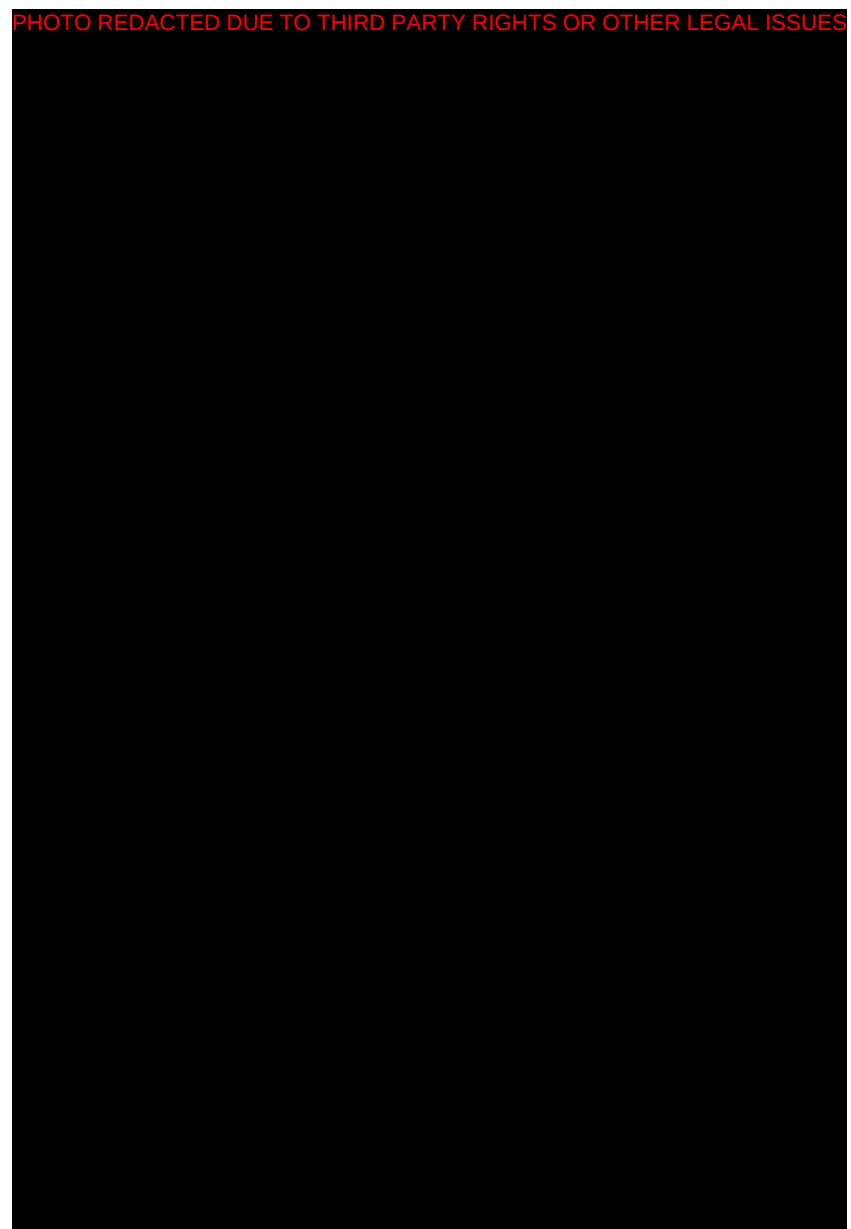
Teacher Professional Learning

- An [Initial Teacher Education Bursary Scheme](#) was launched in September 2026 for subjects experiencing teacher shortages: maths, physics, chemistry, Information Technology, Technology and Design and for Irish-medium education. Operational guidance for the bursary scheme was published in February 2025.
- An Enhanced [Teacher Induction Programme](#) was delivered in 2025–26 designed to support early career teachers in their first year of teaching. This has included a focus on literacy, numeracy, science of learning, Special Educational Needs and empowering improvement sessions with ETI.
- Roll-out of the [Classroom Excellence Programme](#) for primary school teachers in partnership with Evidence Based Education. The programme is providing access to research and practical tools to enhance teaching and learning in classrooms to approximately 300 primary schools.¹
- A new partnership with the [Chartered College of Teaching](#) to give teachers and classroom assistants access to evidence-informed professional learning programmes, with 100 bursaries for teachers and 100 for classroom assistants.
- A new Northern Ireland Curriculum Framework for Initial Teacher Education in Northern Ireland was published in April 2026.

¹ Funded through the RAISE programme.

- Leading Together; a TransformED Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning was published for consultation in early May 2026.
- Contract awarded for the development and delivery of a new Professional Qualification for Headship.
- Roll-out of a Technology and Design Fund for schools to address recruitment challenges by supporting teachers to complete the OCNNI Workshop Competency Course.

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What's next for TransformED?

From design to delivery

Over the next 12 months, the focus of TransformED will shift decisively from design to delivery.

Following consultation on the new statutory curriculum and the introduction of new curriculum legislation, attention will turn to embedding the framework across the education system. This includes the preparation of high-quality curriculum resources, development of a dedicated digital platform for resources and introduction of a sustained professional development programme to support teachers to deliver new content effectively.

Together, these steps are intended to ensure that curriculum reform moves beyond legislation and policy into consistent classroom practice, with clarity about expectations and strong support for those delivering change.

In assessment, a second system-level check in literacy and numeracy will be held in March 2027 for pupils in Years 4, 7 and 10. This will strengthen insight into pupil progress. New assessment training will be rolled out and work will also formally commence on implementing

the new Policy Framework for Statutory Assessment through a phased Assessment Reform Programme.

Developments in qualifications, including consultation on vocational pathways and revised GCSE and A-level subject criteria, will align learning, assessment and progression.

In parallel, new arrangements for school improvement, including strengthened co-operation with inspection and targeted peer support, will provide the conditions for improvement at scale.

Central to all of this is preparing and supporting the workforce for change. Investment in teacher professional learning will continue to expand significantly, with new programmes for middle leaders, principals and aspiring headteachers, enhanced induction and early career development, and renewed subject-focused professional learning communities. Collaborative networks and research-informed practice will also be strengthened. This sustained focus on professional learning reflects a clear strategic intent: reform will succeed only if teachers are equipped, confident and supported.

TransformED's next phase is, therefore, about effective delivery and building capacity, coherence and confidence across the system, so that reform delivers lasting benefits for learners.

Monitoring, evaluation and governance

The Department has established a TransformED Programme Board and reporting structures to ensure that there is a clear focus on efficient delivery.

This is led by the Deputy Secretary for Policy, Delivery and Infrastructure and reports directly to the Minister. Delivery partners including EA, CCEA and CCMS are represented.

The International Ministerial Advisory Panel and Department's TransformED Principals' Panels and Academics' Panel also provide

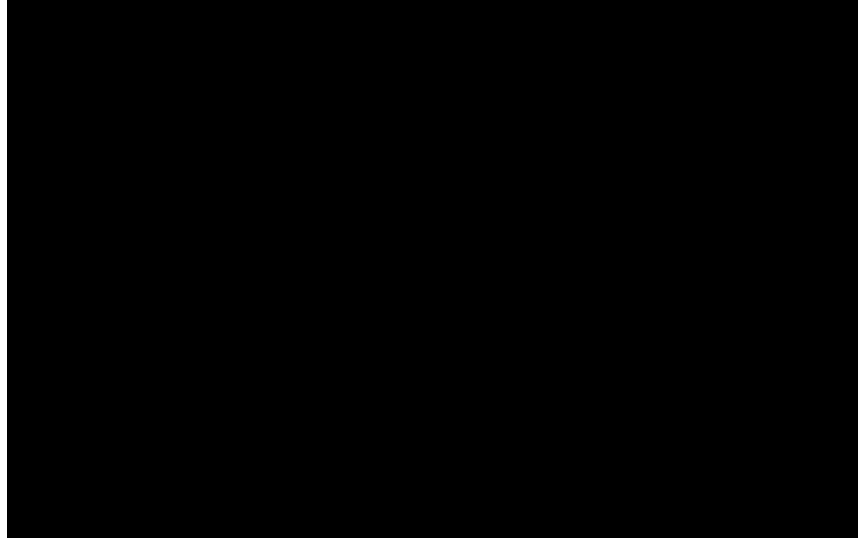
advice, guidance and support on implementation.

Embedding a culture of monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance is woven through all individual projects within TransformED. However, key to success is long-term improvement in pupil attainment over the next decade.

The updated TransformED Delivery Plan commits to publishing a system evaluation framework, building on previous development work. The system evaluation framework will provide a consistent, transparent and evidence-based approach to assessing the effectiveness and quality of the education system.

We will also create a formal definition of the quality of education thereby addressing the findings of the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Report on Assessing the Quality of Education in Northern Ireland.

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Key deliverables May 2026–May 2027

The key deliverables over the next year for TransformED are set out below.

Curriculum	• Consultation on the new statutory curriculum. • Consultation on a new syllabus for religious education. • New legislation to underpin the statutory curriculum. • Publication of pedagogical principles for Northern Ireland aligned with curriculum content. • Development of bespoke curriculum strands for special schools and Irish-medium education, and guidance on curriculum adaptations. • A numeracy framework for Northern Ireland. • New literacy and numeracy strategies. • Development of new curriculum resources, including a professional development programme and new digital platform.
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Assessment	• Second system level check in literacy and numeracy for Years 4,7, and 10. • Launch of new professional learning focused on assessment. • Commencement of work to implement the new Policy Framework for Statutory Assessment through the Assessment Reform Programme. The programme will be structured around 12 workstreams to ensure manageable and phased implementation. • Continuation of the upscaling, roll-out and development of CCEAs Computer Adaptive Assessments. In 2026–27, Irish-medium numeracy assessments will also be available to younger pupils in Years 4–7, and Irish-medium literacy assessments will be available for the first time for Years 7–10.
Qualifications	• Consultation on policy framework for vocational qualifications in schools in Northern Ireland. • Development of qualification and subject criteria for revised CCEA GCSE and A levels.
School Improvement	• Legislation to ensure co-operation with inspection to become law. • Expert peer support delivered through the Leaders of Education Programme. • New system evaluation framework developed and published. • Introduction of new school improvement and support framework.
Tackling Educational Disadvantage	• Legislation to extend compulsory education or training to age 18 to become law. • Continued roll out of the RAISE Programme including award of further Locality Led Projects and launch of further Cross Cutting Initiatives.

**Teacher
Professional
Learning**

- Making Best Practice, Common Practice Year 2 to include further funded research informed conferences.
- TPL Fund Year 2.
- Pilot of new Professional Qualification for Headship.
- Technology and Design Fund Year 2.
- New professional learning programme for middle leaders.
- New professional learning programme for experienced principals.
- Development of part-time Initial Teacher Education provision for Northern Ireland.
- Renewal and creation of subject-focused professional learning communities.
- Investment in collaborative professional learning clusters.²
- Establishment of an endorsement panel for professional learning programmes.
- Further expansion of the teacher induction programme and designation of compulsory content for induction once mandatory.
- Publication of finalised strategy: Leading Together; a TransformED Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning.
- Review of existing professional learning provision for Early Career Teachers.
- Procurement of a digital teacher professional learning platform.

² Funded through the RAISE Programme.



Implementation roadmap for Curriculum, Qualifications and Assessment

Now that the major policy work on curriculum, assessment and qualifications reform has been completed, TransformED is moving into a new phase with a clear focus on implementation. To support this, the Department has provided schools with a detailed timeline and a clear delivery roadmap.

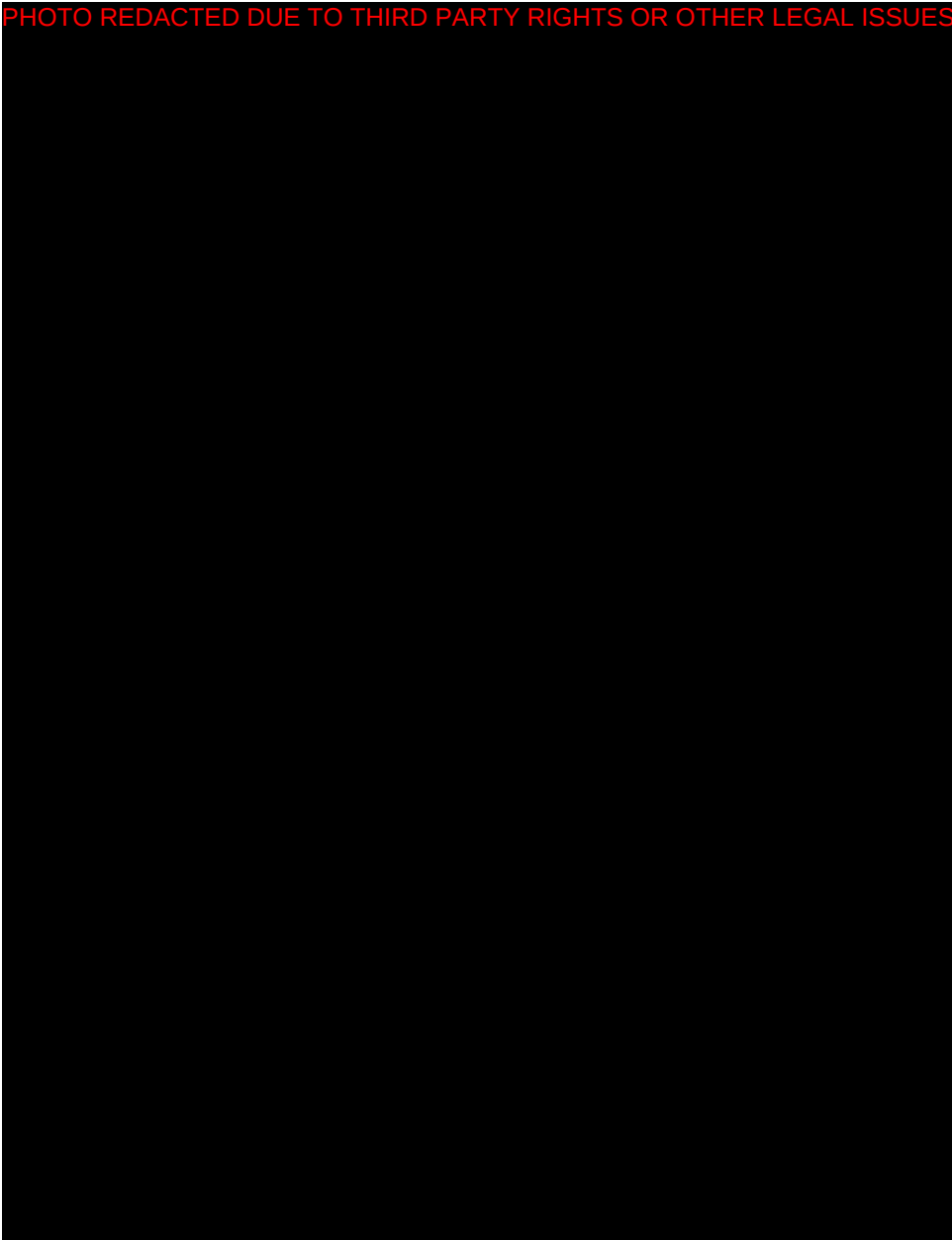
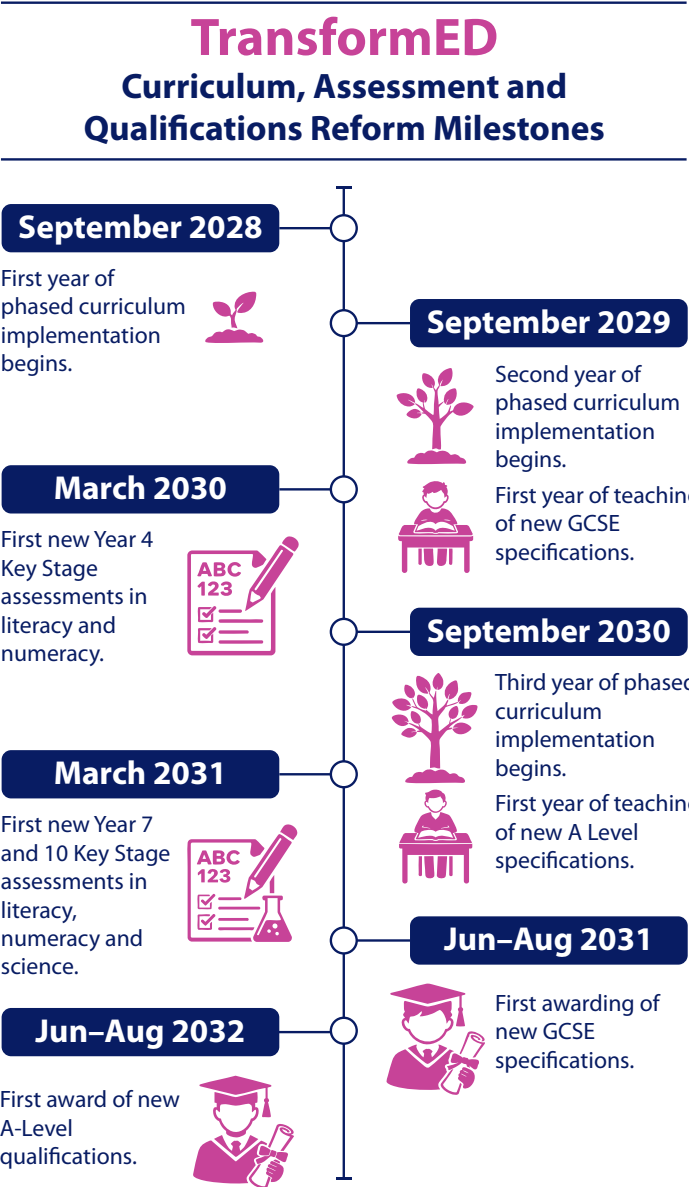
The TransformED Implementation Roadmap sets out a carefully sequenced approach to curriculum, assessment and qualifications reform over the next five years and beyond.

Its purpose is simple: to ensure every school is clear about timelines and has the time, space and support needed to prepare well and implement change effectively.

Reform begins with the introduction of the new statutory curriculum from September 2028, phased in over three school years. This deliberate, extended phasing reflects feedback from teachers and school leaders, who emphasised the importance of having sufficient time to plan, collaborate, train and embed change gradually.

Following this, newly designed GCSEs will be introduced for first teaching from September 2029, with revised A levels rolling out from September 2030. Together, these timelines make TransformED one of the most carefully paced and thoughtfully designed reform programmes internationally, ensuring change is ambitious yet manageable for every school.

Roadmap Diagram





Communications, resources and information

All TransformED updates, resources and guidance are now available on the new [TransformED Hub](#) on the Department's website.

The hub is organised around each of the core areas of TransformED. It also provides direct access to a growing library of resources and videos designed to help schools explore and understand TransformED priorities.

By bringing all information into one accessible location, the hub gives teachers and school leaders a clear, central point for staying informed and connected with the changes shaping education in Northern Ireland.

The hub is supported by a wider programme of communications and engagement, including regular TransformED magazines, termly webinars, the annual TransformED School Leaders Conference and additional events throughout the year.

TransformED Development Days

To support schools in managing change effectively, the Department has provided an additional TransformED Development Day each term. To accompany these days, [The TransformED Resource Pack](#) provides:

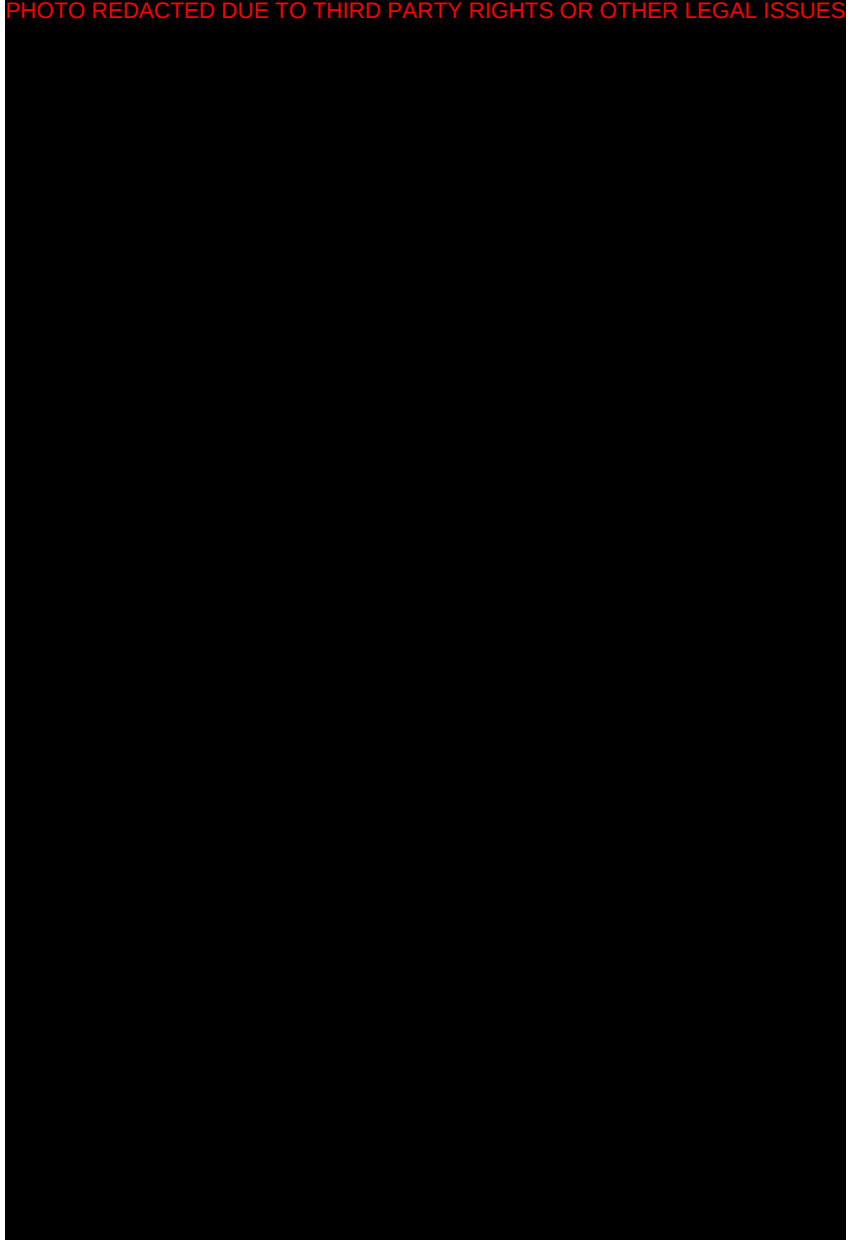
- an introduction and overview of TransformED;
- explaining curriculum reform;
- global learning for transforming curriculum; and
- unpacking the literacy framework for primary schools

Each resource includes:

- a concise overview of the topic;
- a video presentation with an accompanying slide deck;
- supporting materials and tools;
- reflection questions to guide school discussions; and
- optional further reading for those wishing to explore topics in greater depth.

These materials are designed to ensure that every school can use Development Days effectively, promoting consistent understanding and supporting meaningful engagement with the TransformED agenda. Further resources will be provided for the 2026–7 academic year.

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Updated TransformED Delivery Plan – May 2026

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Evidence Function		
Examine how best to establish a research function that will ensure a strong evidence-base for future education policy and practice in Northern Ireland.	The Research and Evaluation Team (RET) was established in November 2025. Its purpose is to bring together a coherent and aligned research approach to better inform policy development and implementation in Northern Ireland. Since its inception, the team has assumed responsibility for a range of workstreams related to local and international surveys conducted in schools and provided advice and support to policy teams on a range of ad hoc research projects, consultations and evaluations. The team is undertaking a scoping exercise to inform the establishment of a dedicated education research function aligned with policy priorities. The aims of the new function are to: • deliver key education programmes of work; • synthesise and summarise the global evidence base across key areas of education to clearly articulate what we already know; • support the dissemination and effective use of research across the Northern Ireland education sector so that evidence is used in ways that make a difference; • generate high-quality, locally relevant research to inform education decision making; and • support the piloting, development and evaluation of new approaches and interventions. A scoping report is being developed setting out the purpose, scope and delivery options for a dedicated research function. A final design and implementation plan is being developed, setting out a clear proposal for how the research function should operate and next steps for implementation.	Stakeholder Engagement Report completed by May 2026. Scoping Report completed by June 2026. Final design and implementation plan completed by July 2026. Establishment of research function by autumn 2026.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Teacher recruitment and retention		
Put in place medium and long-term strategic monitoring of teacher supply to anticipate and remediate issues.	A working group led by the Department, supported by NISRA, GTCNI, EA and CCMS, will be established in summer 2026 to identify key data requirements; establish appropriate data collection mechanisms; and put in place appropriate annual monitoring and analysis of supply and demand trends.	New monitoring arrangements in place during 2026–27 academic year.
Review how best to attract high-quality graduates to subject shortage areas.	An Initial Teacher Education Bursary Scheme was launched in September 2026 for subjects experiencing teacher shortages: maths, physics, chemistry, Information Technology, Technology and Design and for Irish-medium education. Operational guidance for the bursary scheme was published in February 2025. The aim is to boost recruitment to Initial Teacher Education in subject shortage areas from September 2026. A new Initial Teacher Education recruitment strategy will include key actions around: • development of alternative entry pathways for Initial Teacher Education including part-time pathways; • implementation of financial incentives for Initial Teacher Education students in subject shortage areas; • ongoing consideration of annual intake numbers in subject shortage areas; and • a targeted marketing campaign to boost recruitment in subject shortages areas.	Initial Teacher Education Bursary scheme live from September 2026. Northern Ireland Initial Teacher Education Recruitment Strategy to be published in January 2027.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Develop a Core Content Framework for Initial Teacher Education.	The Northern Ireland Curriculum Framework for Initial Teacher Education was published in April 2026. The Framework defines the core entitlement of essential knowledge, skills and practices that all beginning teachers must develop during Initial Teacher Education. Its purpose is to: • ensure coherence and consistency of core entitlement across all Initial Teacher Education courses in Northern Ireland; • strengthen classroom readiness through explicit, evidence-informed practice; • align Initial Teacher Education with wider system reform, including curriculum and assessment developments; and • establish the foundation for a clear development continuum from Initial Teacher Education through induction and early career to career-long learning. This framework sets out what all beginning teachers should know and be able to do from the outset, providing clarity for providers, schools and student teachers. There will be phased implementation of the framework over the next three academic years. Each provider will submit an implementation plan for agreement by the Department.	Northern Ireland Curriculum Framework for Initial Teacher Education published in April 2026. Three-year phased implementation until 2028–9.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Make induction a mandatory component of the professional learning journey of our teachers.	The Department has carried out a short, focused Review of Teacher Induction which makes a number of recommendations in regard to teacher induction. Notably, in line with practice in other jurisdictions, this includes the recommendation that induction should be mandatory in Northern Ireland. A policy statement will be published by June 2026 which confirms that induction will be mandatory for all teachers in Northern Ireland graduating from 1 April 2027 onwards, based on existing legislation. New processes will be developed to support the introduction of this requirement, and the Teacher Education Partnership Handbook will be updated by 31 March 2027.	New processes for completion of induction to be agreed by 31 March 2027 and implemented from September 2027.
Agree compulsory content and expand the directed learning element of the induction programme to ensure our early career teachers receive comprehensive and structured support.	As recommended in the Review of Teacher Induction, ETI is evaluating the arrangements for teacher induction during the 2025–26 academic year. This will inform key areas for development at both EA and school level and will inform compulsory induction content. The Department, working with EA, informed by practitioners and other key stakeholders, will continue to develop and implement the initial expansion of the direct learning element of induction over the next three academic years and will identify and agree compulsory content within the programme. This will include compulsory online induction training modules.	Ongoing expansion of the programme from September 2026, including designation of compulsory content by 31 March 2027.
Teacher Professional Learning		
Refresh the 2016 Learning Leaders Strategy to reflect current challenges and priorities.	The Department's consultation on Leading Together: a TransformED Strategy for Teacher Professional Learning is currently live and will close in July 2026, following which responses will be considered and a final strategy published during the summer 2026.	Consultation between May and July 2026. New strategy published during summer 2026.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Provide additional funding for schools to purchase high-quality professional learning to meet their needs.	The Department will continue to implement the three-year pilot of a Teacher Professional Learning Fund, providing earmarked funding to schools based on the number of teachers employed. The Teacher Professional Learning Fund directly supports school leaders, and teachers in their pursuit of excellence. By providing funding for high-quality professional learning, the fund will help raise teaching standards, strengthen leadership, and enhance classroom practice, which are key elements of school improvement.	Ongoing implementation of the Teacher Professional Learning fund with schools to submit returns on implementation in 2025–26 during summer term. The TPL Statement for 2026–27 funding will then open for completion.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Improve access to education research for teachers.	The Education Minister announced a new Making Best Practice, Common Practice Programme on 24 March 2025. The programme aims to bridge the gap between cutting-edge educational research and everyday classroom practice, empowering teachers with the tools and knowledge they need to enhance pupil outcomes. It has three key elements set out below. • Research Informed Conferences – funding supports schools or school clusters to host a research-informed conference that provides a range of benefits. These include opportunities for teachers to stay updated on research-informed pedagogy, refine and improve their instructional methods, connect with other educators and researchers, and learn about new ideas. Schools are invited to apply for funding annually. • Monthly Newsletter on Science of Learning – provision of a monthly newsletter to all teachers in Northern Ireland, with each edition focusing on a specific aspect of research and its practical application, with a link to a short video. • Quarterly publication on education research – summarising key research useful for the teaching profession. Each issue consists of a review of one or more relevant recent study. The Department has also taken forward delivery of online professional learning programmes for primary and post-primary teachers on the Science of Learning. This has provided educators with research-informed strategies to enhance teaching and learning, ensuring evidence-based classroom practices that improve student outcomes. Access to this resource for interested schools will be extended for 2026–27. Independent evaluation by ETI to ascertain the extent to which this programme has impacted on instructional practice and teacher confidence will be completed.	Implementation of a second year of the programme will continue during 2026–7. Call for applications for research informed conferences will issue to schools during summer term 2026. Professional learning opportunities on Science of Learning will be extended across the 2026–27 academic year.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Pilot investment in supporting groups of schools to create or further embed collaborative professional learning communities working with the research community.	During 2025–26, the Department will work with EA to develop a pilot programme for Collaborative Professional Learning Clusters in partnership with Higher Education Institutions. The initiative aims to support clusters of educators in designing and delivering a structured professional learning programme that enhances teaching practice, promotes innovation, and improves learner outcomes. This collaborative programme will create sustainable, research-informed professional learning communities, ensuring continuous growth in teaching practice.	Programme to be rolled out during 2026–27 academic year.
Pilot investment in the renewal and creation of subject professional learning communities to support subject-specific professional practice.	Subject-focused Professional Learning Communities are collaborative networks of educators who share expertise, resources, and practices to enhance subject-specific teaching and learning. The Department in consultation with EA will develop a programme to support subject-specific professional learning opportunities. There will be an initial review to look at best practice internationally and engage with key stakeholders to consider how best to design and deliver subject-specific training and the purpose and scope of the communities.	Programme to be rolled out during 2026–27 academic year.
Review Baker Days and School Development Days to ensure they are used effectively to support improvement and professional learning.	The Department has completed a review of Baker Days and School Development Days and published an Executive Summary. This commits to making provision in legislation for non-contact days protected for whole-school improvement and development activity moving forwards whilst aligning the dates in the school calendar to create greater opportunities for collaboration across schools and to reduce the burden of variations in school closures for working parents. The review of current legislation also provides an opportunity to consider the school calendar and length of the school day more generally. Draft proposals will issue for consultation in autumn 2026.	New legislation to be enacted during the current Assembly mandate.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Leadership		
Develop a replacement qualification for headship to support our newly appointed and aspiring principals.	Following a formal procurement, the Department has awarded the contract to develop and deliver a replacement qualification for headship. Development of the new programme is scheduled between May and December 2026 following which the programme will be piloted between January and December 2027 and formally launched in January 2028.	Programme to be developed during 2026, piloted during 2027 and launched in January 2028.
Strengthen the provision of school-to-school support through a leaders of education programme.	The Northern Ireland Leaders of Education Programme has been developed. The programme was launched in April 2026, and recruitment is underway to appoint high-performing and experienced school leaders.	The programme will commence delivery from September 2026.
Develop a professional learning programme for existing, experienced principals.	The Department will work with EA to scope and develop a leadership programme for experienced principals that will be rolled out during the 2026–27 academic year. There will be ongoing provision of a monthly newsletter to all school leaders in Northern Ireland for the 2026–27 academic year, with each edition focusing on a specific aspect of leadership, with a link to a short video.	Programme to be available for delivery in 2026–27 academic year. Ongoing
Review, strengthen and invest in professional learning for middle leaders.	The Department will work with EA to scope and develop a leadership programme for middle leaders that will be rolled out during the 2026–27 academic year.	Programme to be available for delivery in 2026–27 academic year.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Curriculum		
Review and redesign the Northern Ireland curriculum to ensure every child enjoys an ambitious and knowledge rich curriculum that develops their learning in a well sequenced and explicit manner.	A Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum by Lucy Crehan established a compelling case for curriculum reform and set out new principles for a reformed statutory framework. Since September 2025, work has been ongoing, under the direction of the Taskforce Advisory Committee, to draft a new coherent, connected and carefully sequenced curriculum framework. The proposed curriculum framework will be subject to public consultation in advance of finalisation and preparation of legislation. The preparation of the new statutory framework is just the first step in the curriculum reform programme. Further work on the curriculum is being taken forward including a new RE syllabus, bespoke strands for Special Schools and Irish-medium education and a core enrichment curriculum for post-16 education. A set of pedagogical principles will be developed to articulate the shared beliefs about how pupils learn best and translate curriculum intent into consistent classroom practice. The pedagogical principles will provide a common professional language, support high-quality decision-making, and help teachers adapt methods while remaining aligned with agreed priorities, such as inclusion, challenge, knowledge building, and purposeful practice. Guidance on curriculum adaptations will be provided to ensure all pupils access the same ambitious curriculum entitlement wherever possible, while supporting schools to adapt only when necessary. The guidance will establish shared principles so adaptations are purposeful, evidence-informed, time-limited and inclusive.	Curriculum consultation launched by end of May 2026. Preparation of legislation by December 2026. RE Syllabus prepared for consultation by September 2026. Bespoke strands for Irish-medium education and special schools prepared by December 2026. Pedagogical principles published by September 2026. Guidance on curriculum adaptations published by December 2026.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Invest more in high-quality curriculum advice and resources to support teachers in the classroom.	To support the implementation of the new curriculum framework, significant investment is required to develop a suite of high-quality resource materials and provide a range of professional development that support delivery in the classroom. A coherent suite of high-quality resources will be developed to translate the statutory framework into school-level planning and classroom practice. These will include meso-level materials (such as curriculum maps, learning progressions and model overviews) to support curriculum design and coherence, alongside micro-level exemplars (such as lesson tasks and worked examples) to support classroom implementation. A sustained, multi-year professional learning programme will run alongside resource development, beginning before statutory rollout and continuing through implementation and embedding. Professional development will be tightly aligned with the curriculum framework, pedagogical principles and resources, ensuring shared understanding and consistent practice. It will combine universal entitlement for all teachers with leadership development. Training packages will be provided on curriculum design and theory, pedagogy and content. Resources will be accessible through a dedicated digital platform.	It is envisaged that the roll out of training and resources to support the revised statutory framework will commence in 2026–27 academic year. Implementation and Evaluation Plan published by October 2026.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Ensure all children have secure mastery of foundations in both literacy and numeracy at primary school which will enhance later learning and support both equity and attainment. Develop new strategies for literacy and numeracy based on international best practice.	The Department has published the <i>Strong Foundations: Literacy Framework for Primary Schools</i>, offering clear, evidence-based guidance to strengthen oracy, reading and writing across all primary schools in Northern Ireland. Rooted in international research and tailored to local needs, the framework provides practical strategies for teachers, leaders and parents. Together with accompanying guidelines to support a coherent approach to literacy development, it aims to ensure every child leaves primary school with the skills, confidence and enjoyment needed to thrive as an effective reader, writer and communicator. A numeracy framework, akin to the literacy framework, will be developed to provide clear, evidence-informed, teacher-facing guidance that strengthens coherence, progression and consistency in numeracy from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 2, with a secure transition into Key Stage 3. It will help address persistent weaknesses in foundational mathematical understanding by articulating the essential knowledge, concepts, language and developmental progressions that underpin successful learning in mathematics. The Department will lead development of new literacy and numeracy strategies supported by working groups of key stakeholders.	Draft Literacy Strategy published by September 2026 Literacy Framework for Irish-medium education published by December 2026. Numeracy Framework published by September 2026. Draft Numeracy Strategy published by December 2026.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Assessment		
From the 2025–26 academic year, introduce a system-level sample check for literacy and numeracy and disseminate the assessment results to highlight strengths and challenges for the education system.	In March 2026, the first representative sample of pupils took part in system-level sample assessments in literacy and numeracy via written assessments designed, administered and marked by CCEA. The system level outcomes for 2025–26 will be published in June 2026. These outcomes will not be used for individual school performance measurement nor published at school level. The assessments will provide data on: - percentage of children performing at the expected level in literacy and numeracy at end of Key Stages 1–3; - percentage of children performing above the expected level in literacy and numeracy at end of Key Stages 1–3; and - outcomes for specific groups of pupils such as gender, those entitled to Free School Meals and Newcomer (DE Statistics will work with CCEA to agree a data collection system to permit such analysis). CCEA will use the outcomes to report to the Department on strengths and weaknesses at system level and to inform development of additional resources and professional learning.	The current interim arrangements for system-level sample assessments will continue until the 2028–2029 academic year, providing system-level insights during the transition to the new statutory assessment framework. There will be a move to scaled scores and an expected standard rather than Levels of Progression from 2026–2027.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Invest in upscaling and roll-out of CCEA's Computer Adaptive Assessment for literacy and numeracy as a free alternative to commercial assessments to inform effective formative and diagnostic assessment in schools.	A phased approach by Key Stage is being used to upscale the CCEA Computer Adaptive Assessment. The adaptive standardised test in literacy and numeracy will provide a standardised score, a numerical report and a skills report which identifies a list of competencies for the area of learning that have/have not been achieved. This will identify pupils' areas of strength and improvement. The adaptive assessments in literacy and numeracy will be fully operational in schools by 2027–28 for Years 7–10 and by 2028–29 for Years 4–6. CCEA will fully develop the tests item banks to increase its accessibility to all pupils ranging from gifted and talented to those with moderate learning difficulties, as it adapts depending on the child's answers and levels of proficiency.	Fully operational in schools by 2027–28 for Years 7–10 and by 2028–29 for Years 4–6. Irish-medium adaptive assessments will be fully operational for Years 7–10 by 2028–29, followed by Key Stage 2 in autumn 2029. The Irish-medium literacy assessment will commence its initial testing phase in 2026–27, with enhanced implementation in 2028–29.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Fundamentally review current arrangements for statutory assessment to develop a new system of attainment measures which set high standards and clearly defined learning outcomes for all pupils throughout both primary school and Key Stage 3.	The Independent Review of Assessment panel presented their findings and recommendations in March 2026 with the publication of <i>Supporting Progress for Every Child Transforming Statutory Assessment: An Independent Review for Northern Ireland</i>. In April 2026 the Department published two key documents that set a new direction for how we assess, understand and support pupil learning: the <i>Response to the Independent Review of Statutory Assessment</i> and the new <i>Statutory Assessment Policy Framework</i>. Together, these publications establish a new system of statutory assessment which will replace all previous arrangements for Key Stage Assessment. The new Framework establishes a clear assessment pathway from Year 1 to Year 10, which aims to provide consistent information for schools and parents. It introduces a suite of short curriculum-aligned assessments as follows: • Baseline Check in Year 1; • Phonics Check in Year 2; • Annual reading fluency checks in Years 3–5; • Literacy and numeracy assessments in Year 4; • Multiplication Check in Year 5; • Literacy, numeracy and science assessments in Years 7 and 10. These assessments will be low-stakes, do not require preparation or revision and outcomes will not be published at school-level or for school accountability purposes. They will be designed to inform teaching and learning and to provide insights into how the education system is performing at system-level. To oversee implementation, the Department will establish a formal Assessment Reform Programme, led by an Assessment Board, chaired by the Department. The Board will include representation from CCEA, ETI and EA alongside international expertise in assessment design and standards. A dedicated Practitioner Working Group will also support this programme.	The first new Year 4 literacy and numeracy assessments to take place in March 2030. The first new statutory Year 7 and Year 10 assessments in literacy, numeracy and science to take place in March 2031. Timescales for the introduction of the baseline check, the phonics check, fluency checks, multiplication check and Writing Repository to be confirmed to ensure phased and manageable implementation. The 2026–2027 academic year will include the roll out of professional learning to strengthen assessment capacity.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Qualifications		
Take account of national and international research to consider the structure, volume and type of assessment at Key Stage 4 and post 16 and initiate a review of CCEA qualification specifications.	Consultation, engagement and research to inform the policy framework for general qualifications was undertaken between September 2025 and January 2026. A new Policy Framework for General Qualifications in Northern Ireland was announced and published by the Minister on 3 March 2026. A regulatory framework will be developed in line with the policy. Work will begin in May 2026 and the new regulatory framework will be available to CCEA Awarding Organisation by early 2027 to enable the revision of specifications to begin.	From May 2026, CCEA will begin work on the regulatory framework for revisions of CCEA GCSEs and A levels.
Initiate a review of all qualifications approved for teaching in Northern Ireland schools and review the process for qualifications approval.	The regulatory framework for GCSEs will be developed first, with A levels following to facilitate appropriate sequencing, and have specifications and associated materials (including sample assessment materials) available to schools 12 months before first teaching. The Department will oversee and provide support to CCEA for the revision of GCSE and A level qualifications.	By early 2027, CCEA Awarding Organisation will begin revision of specifications in line with the regulatory framework.
Develop a managed exploration of assessment innovation particularly in regard to digital assessment.	Extensive consultation and engagement was undertaken as part of review of CCEA qualifications. Further consultation and engagement are planned as part of the review of all other qualifications that are delivered in Northern Ireland schools.	
Initiate a wide-ranging civic conversation on more fundamental reform of qualifications to include consideration of the purpose, design and relevance of qualifications in a modern economy.	The Department will develop for consultation a policy framework for vocational qualifications delivered in Northern Ireland schools. This will take account of the purpose of vocational education in school settings, the requirements of the curriculum including the Entitlement Framework, clarity around progression pathways and meeting the needs of a broad spectrum of learners. The Department will take account of reform of vocational qualifications in England and Wales in considering vocational qualifications suitable for schools in Northern Ireland. As part of revising specifications, CCEA will be asked to consider opportunities for innovation in assessments, including digital assessments.	Consultation on policy framework for vocational qualifications delivered in schools will commence in autumn 2026.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Support and Accountability		
Commission an independent review of accountability arrangements in Northern Ireland. Develop a coherent accountability framework to demonstrate value to government, taxpayers and parents and drive improvement through responsibility and answerability.	The approach will now be for the Department to publish a system evaluation framework, building on previous development work, which will be available online. We will also create a formal definition of the quality of education and outline the mechanisms through which we will evaluate the quality of the education system thereby addressing the findings of the NIAO report on Assessing the Quality of Education in Northern Ireland. The system evaluation framework will provide a consistent, transparent and evidence-based approach to assessing the effectiveness and quality of the education system. The framework will respond directly to the findings of the NIAO report, particularly those relating to accountability, data quality, system performance and the use of data to support improvement.	The system evaluation framework will be published during the 2026–7 academic year.
Bring forward legislation to ensure that the statutory arrangements for inspection are robust and operate effectively in all circumstances.	A public consultation was undertaken on the proposals to safeguard the inspection process by making it an offence to obstruct inspection and thereby aligning the legislative provisions for inspection in Northern Ireland with the education inspection frameworks in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. The consultation outcome was published in August 2025. Following feedback, the Department has developed alternative proposals that achieve the same objective whilst avoiding sanctions through the courts by specifying that non-cooperation with inspection is to be defined as unacceptable professional conduct. The new proposals will also remove the exemption in current legislation that limits inspection of religious education. The Executive agreed the revised policy proposals in March 2026 and a draft Bill is ready for introduction, subject to Executive agreement.	New legislation to be enacted during the current Assembly mandate.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Develop a new school improvement policy to provide a framework to support schools in driving excellence and an improved model of external support when needed.	The Department will develop a new school improvement framework alongside a robust, evidence-based approach for schools requiring sustained external support. Delivery will be underpinned by a detailed operational support model for schools. This model will be shaped by findings from the Leaders of Education Programme, particularly in relation to the needs of schools facing significant challenges.	Consultation on draft policy to be completed during 2026–27.
Tackling Disadvantage		
Introduce legislation to ensure all learners remain in education, apprenticeship or training until age 18.	A public consultation on the proposals (16–18 Legislation Department of Education) was completed on 4 July 2025. Legislation has been drafted for introduction, which requires all young people to participate in education or training until they are 18. The Department will continue to engage with key stakeholders and delivery partners to inform the detail of regulations and guidance to support implementation of the legislation.	Subject to Executive approval, the Education and Training (Post Compulsory School Age) Bill will be introduced before summer recess 2026, with the new legislation to be enacted during the current Assembly mandate.

TransformED Action	Position and Delivery Approach	Timelines
Roll out the RAISE Programme in localities across Northern Ireland to invest in, monitor and evaluate whole community and place-based approaches to raise achievement and reduce educational disadvantage.	The RAISE Programme will continue across 18 localities across Northern Ireland, investing over £20m in tackling educational disadvantage with: • the implementation of the first 65 Locality Led Projects; • the assessment and award of a second tranche of Locality Led Projects against a further 52 Strategic Area Plan objectives; • the roll out of Home School Community Connections projects aimed at enhancing links between home, school and the community in the 12 RAISE localities that prioritised these objectives in their Strategic Area Plans; • the continued roll out of a series of Cross-Cutting Initiatives that complement Locality Led Projects and provide additional opportunities to tackle key common issues; and • initial evaluation to understand the impact of the RAISE Programme and the individual projects. The Department working collaboratively with the Department of Education, Ireland, will also take forward the continued delivery of the Creative Connections Programme and North-South Shared Island Teachers' Research Exchange (T-Rex) Platform projects. The Creative Connections programme gives children and young people the unique opportunity to work with professional artists, bringing creativity and the arts directly into their learning. Since its launch in February 2025, Creative Connections has partnered 20 schools from Northern Ireland and 20 from Ireland along with 40 creative practitioners to enhance arts education in schools across art, music, drama and literature. Building on the success of the pilot phase, the launch of the next phase of Creative Connections was announced on 22 April 2026. This will extend the programme for the 2026–27 academic year to support a further 12 schools.	Ongoing. Funding secured for 2025–26 and 2026–27, with possible 2-year extension.



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First Annual Progress Report and
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