

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BUSINESS PLAN
2026-27 MID-YEAR MONITORING REPORT

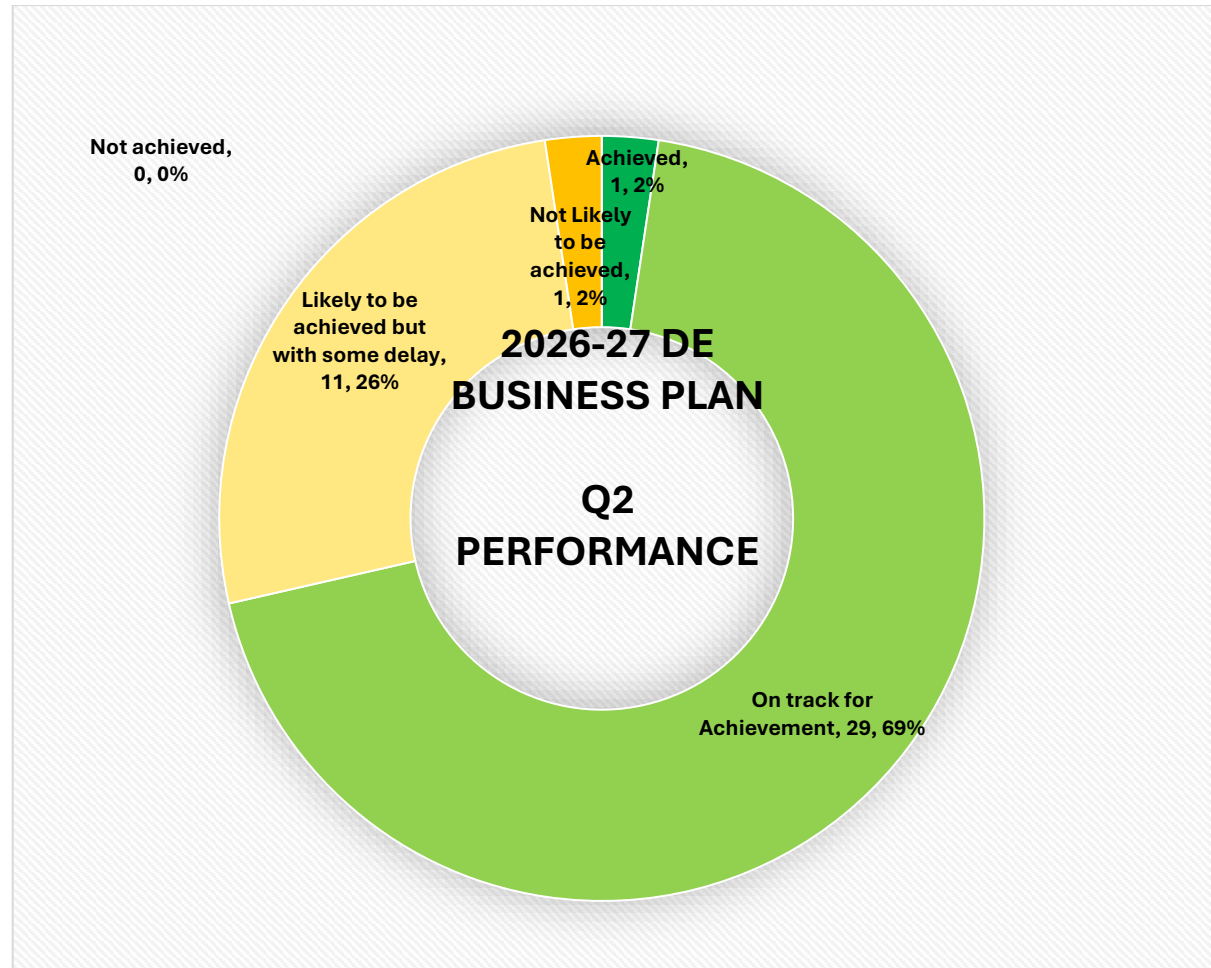


Summary

The table and chart below sets out a summary of mid-year performance against 2026-27 Business Plan actions:

Descriptor	Circumstances for use	Mid-year Outturn Position (Number)	Mid-year Outturn Position (Percentage)*
Achieved (Green)	When the action has completed by the target date.	1	2%
On track for achievement (Green)	When work has been progressing satisfactorily and the action is likely to be achieved in full by the target date.	29	69%
Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	<u>Either</u> : When action is likely to be achieved by the end of the current business year, but after the agreed target date (There is slippage which causes the action to miss its in-year target date but it is still likely to be achieved by the end of the year). <u>Or</u> : When the rate of progress is less than planned, irrespective of the target date, but the action is still likely to be achieved by the end of the current business year.	11	26%
Not likely to be achieved (Orange)	When the rate of progress is less than planned and there is significant doubt around the achievement of the action by the end of the business year.	1	2%
Not achieved (Red)	When the action was not achieved by the target date and cannot be revised or carried forward.	0	0%
Total		42	100%

*Totals may not add up due to rounding.



Business Plan Strategic Priorities and Actions with Mid-Year Ratings and Comments

DE Strategic Priority 1 – Raise learning standards through a modern curriculum, robust assessment, strong qualification pathways and effective school improvement

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
1.1 	Redesign the Northern Ireland Curriculum.	- By May 2026 have a draft statutory framework prepared for consultation. - By October 2026 have an Implementation strategy agreed. - By October 2026 have a Final framework agreed. - By March 2027 have in place a programme of training and resource development to support curriculum implementation.	On track for achievement (Green)	Draft consultation published 3 June 2026 until 30 September. An implementation strategy is being developed and the final subject frameworks will be agreed by October 2026.
1.2	Develop a new school improvement policy and support model.	A new school improvement support framework published in June and implemented from September 2026.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay	The Leaders of Education Programme launched on 1 September with 12 experienced school leaders seconded to the Department to provide peer to

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		• A Leaders of Education Programme developed and experienced, strongly performing school leaders in place by September 2026 to provide targeted school improvement support to schools identified as requiring external support. • A new school improvement policy issued for consultation in autumn 2026. • A new system evaluation framework developed and new school improvement policy published by March 2027.	(Amber)	peer support to schools facing challenges and to help implement the delivery stage of TransformED. The Supporting Success Programme will launch w/c 28 September providing a new support model for schools and replacing the Formal Intervention Process. A School Effectiveness Framework is due to issue for consultation in November. Independent research has been commissioned to examine what quality education looks like and consider what measures should be used to evaluate how well our system is performing. The report is expected to be received in November and this will feed into the development of a new system evaluation framework and the final school effectiveness framework.
1.3 	Bring forward regulations on school days/hours and closures.	• A public consultation on proposals completed by autumn 2026. • New Regulations brought forward to be enacted during the current mandate.	On track for achievement (Green)	Draft consultation report developed and circulated within the Department of Education (DE) to ensure alignment with other policy areas. Screenings are to be progressed and relevant approvals to be sought.

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
				Propose to issue for public consultation early October. Whilst consultation is underway, there will be significant internal engagement to ensure that all elements of current Regulations can be revoked or if areas need replaced outside of the days/hours piece, prior to drafting of new regulations.
1.4 	Produce system-level outcomes and make Computer Adaptive Testing available to schools.	- By June 2026: - publish system level outcomes from 2025-2026 system level checks and use findings to inform next steps. - schools involved in 2026-2027 system level checks informed. - agree the governance and programme plan for the Assessment Reform Programme to implement new Assessment framework. - In 2026-27, IM numeracy assessments made available to younger pupils in Years 4-7,	On track for achievement (Green)	Work is ongoing to deliver system-level outcomes and make Computer Adaptive Testing available to schools. Publication dates were amended from June 2026 to the autumn term to ensure support and information is available for schools. This work is being delivered through partnership working with CCEA and the Irish-medium sector to ensure its needs are addressed.

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
		and Irish-medium literacy assessments made available for the first time for Years 7-10. By March 2027, second system level checks designed and implemented- moving away from Levels of Progression		
1.5 	Develop new literacy and numeracy strategies.	- By September 2026 have a numeracy framework in place. - By November 2026 have numeracy and literacy strategies prepared for consultation. - By March 2027 have new strategies in place for both numeracy and literacy.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	Development of the numeracy framework is underway. Early scoping and planning work has commenced to support the preparation of new literacy and numeracy strategies.
1.6 	Review Key Stage 4 and Post 16 qualifications.	- By June 2026 establish oversight arrangements for Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment's (CCEA) multi-year programme of reform of GCSEs and A levels. - By June 2026 agree the project plan and key milestones for delivery of reformed CCEA GCSEs (by September 2029)	On track for achievement (Green)	Governance structures and project plan are in place for reform of general qualifications. Work progressing on vocational qualifications framework for consultation.

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
		and A levels (by September 2030). • By March 2027 agree CCEA's Regulatory framework for reform of CCEA GCSEs. • By November 2026 publish for consultation a draft policy framework for vocational qualifications in schools.		
1.7	Deliver actions within the joint Careers Action Plan.	• Throughout the year, programmes progressed to support careers education. • Working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Schools & Colleges Careers Association (NISCA), develop and publish a careers education framework and shared standards for careers in schools by autumn 2026. • Throughout the year, use findings from inspection reports and evaluations to improve the standards and provision of careers education in post-primary schools.	On track for achievement (Green)	ETI completed its evaluation of careers provision and the findings being incorporated in the careers education framework. Other actions are being progressed in relation to supporting careers related learning in primary schools and providing additional information to learners and parents about progression pathways, including application processes for UCAS and the Central Applications Office (CAO).

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
1.8 	Implement the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspection programme and provide professional advice.	• Inspection workplans for academic year ending June 2026 completed. • Delivery of the agreed inspection plan across all phases for school year 2026-27. • Dissemination of highly effective practice and identification of areas for action. • Provision of ongoing professional advice. • Provision of inspection evidence and advice in the implementation of the TransformED Action Plan.	On track for achievement (Green)	Inspection workplans for academic year ending June 2026 completed.
1.9	Deliver the analytical work programme.	• The actions set out in the Analytical Work Programme for 2026-27 implemented.	On track for achievement (Green)	The majority of actions within the analytical work programme are being progressed with two paused subject to funding being secured.
1.10	Scope and establish a departmental research function.	• Establishment of a research function by early 2027.	On track for achievement (Green)	A structured three-phase scoping exercise has been undertaken by staff in the Department's Research and Evaluation Team. Phase 1 gathered stakeholder views; Phase 2 assessed delivery options; and Phase 3 to

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				develop the implementation roadmap is ongoing.

DE Strategic Priority 2 – Strengthen inclusion, wellbeing and targeted support so every child can participate and succeed

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
2.1 	Implement the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Reform Delivery Plan.	• Implementation of SEN Reform Delivery Plan actions funded by the Public Sector Transformation Board. • Test and Learn projects provide sufficient evidence to support system reform. • Outcomes Framework reports positive impacts for children, schools, parents and the system. • Measure of parental confidence.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	The majority of the Public Sector Transformation Board funded actions have now commenced with the remaining projects expected to start before the end of October. Evidence from each project will be gathered by way of report cards, surveys and analysis to inform system reform. Impact of projects, parental confidence and outcomes for children will be monitored through the Outcomes Framework.
2.2 	Roll out of the RAISE Programme to reduce disadvantage.	• 3 open calls for Locality Led Projects completed with delivery underway to implement Strategic Area Plans. • 18 RAISE localities have collaborations between schools and community organisations in place to	On track for achievement (Green)	The 3 open calls for Locality Led Projects are now completed and projects are underway across the 18 RAISE localities. A wide range of Cross-Cutting initiatives are also underway. Together the Locality Led Projects and Cross-Cutting initiatives are delivering against over 100 Locality Objectives

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		support the attainment and aspiration of their pupils. 80 locality objectives are being met through Locality Led Projects and Cross-Cutting initiatives to support children and young people and families through the Programme.		agreed in Strategic Area Plans to support children, young people and families.
2.3	Implement School Uniforms Act and publish guidelines.	- School Uniforms Guidelines published for grant-aided and independent primary and post-primary schools' uniform policies to adhere to from the 2026-27 school year onwards. - Monitoring information collected from these schools by summer 2026 and analysed by autumn 2026. - Guidelines reviewed by winter 2026-27 to address any matters arising from monitoring. - If appropriate, issue revised guidelines by January 2027.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	School Uniform Guidelines were published and issued to all schools in February 2026. Monitoring remains ongoing as the Department continues with information gathering. The Department has had to reopen the survey due to non-responses. There are issues with quality of data supplied by schools. Review of guidelines is dependent on analysis of information gathered. Revised Guideline 3A issued in September 2026.

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2.4 	Deliver the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework.	- By December 2026 an updated framework and action plan document published. - Budget secured for delivery of associated projects. 500/45% of schools engaged with one or more Framework projects. - By November 2026 project-level annual outcomes-focused reports completed.	On track for achievement (Green)	Budget has been made available for framework projects. Refresh of framework is underway, anticipate publication of updated Framework and Action Plan in the new year. 2025-26 Year Project reports under way for finalisation by November 2026. Ongoing monitoring of projects for 2026-27 Year.
2.5	Review Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) policy and develop revised policy direction.	- A DE-led group established to examine EOTAS provision, identify areas for improvement, and agree the future strategic direction by end-April 2026. - Revised EOTAS policy framework proposals developed for Ministerial consideration by March 2027.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	EOTAS workshop between DE and EA held in June to review progress, consider current challenges, and begin shaping the future approach to EOTAS across the system. Further workshops planned in autumn. Data requested from the EA to help inform workshops.
2.6	Develop mobile phone-free school environments.	Independent evaluation completed by King's College London following the conclusion of the mobile phone free pilot in 9 schools by June 2026.	On track for achievement (Green)	Independent evaluation completed by King's College London following the conclusion of the mobile phone free pilot in 9 schools by June 2026. Published in August 2026. Revised, strengthened guidance for schools

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		- Proposals / options submitted for Ministerial consideration by August 2026. - Next steps progressed in line with Ministerial decision by March 2027.		published in August 2026. A public consultation was launched in August 2026 to seek views on further measures to support mobile-phone free environments in schools, including the potential for legislative change.
2.7	Ensure effective implementation of the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act.	- By March 2027: - Continued development and refinement of data sources to evidence and monitor the implementation and impact of the Act. - Further refinement of Education Authority (EA) reporting for 2026-27. - ETI engagement with schools on the implementation and impact of addressing bullying policies in schools. - Engagement with EA to progress work on accessing anonymised data through the digitisation of the Bullying Concern Assessment Form.	On track for achievement (Green)	Accessing anonymised data through the digitisation of the Bullying Concern Assessment Form is dependent on wider EDIS timelines. Addressing bullying related questions to be included in the School Omnibus Survey finalised.

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
		○ Review and refinement of addressing bullying related questions in the School Omnibus Survey.		
2.8 	Allocate Targeting Social Need (TSN) and Extended Schools funding.	• TSN funding is allocated as part of core school budgets in recognition of the additional challenges and costs of supporting disadvantaged children. • Schools determine their own targets/outcomes associated with TSN funding using the TSN Planner, which sets out the school's strategic approach to their allocation. Common targets include: increasing the number of pupils reaching their potential, ensuring appropriate support for SEN pupils and raising pupil attainment in literacy. • Overarching Extended Schools programme outcomes include: ○ Reducing underachievement	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	The allocation of Extended Schools funding has been delayed due to the requirement for revised business case cover. Schools have been informed of the continuation of the Extended Schools programme and of their expected 2026-27 allocation. It is expected funding will be provided to the EA for onward transmission to schools in the near future.

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
		○ Fostering health, wellbeing and social inclusion ○ Improving life chances ○ Developing integrated delivery of support and services.		
2.9	Publish a new Attendance Matters Strategy.	• Consultation analysis completed by end of July 2026. • A new strategy published within 2026-27 academic year, expected October / November 2026.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	Due to a high number of consultation responses, the Department has yet to publish a consultation response document, originally expected July 2026. Analysis of consultation responses is ongoing, with a view to publication in the near future. The Department still intends to publish a revised Attendance Matters Strategy in the current academic year.
2.10 	Refresh the safeguarding and child protection framework.	• Updated safeguarding framework published for implementation by September 2026. • Improved consistency in safeguarding governance and practice evidenced through ETI inspection findings and departmental assurance reporting. • Increased confidence across education settings, Boards of	On track for achievement (Green)	Guidance document published August 2026. Other actions that relate to the Safeguarding Guidance eg review of circulars and resource development are in train as part of staff workplans.

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
		Governors and other delivery partners in understanding and meeting statutory safeguarding responsibilities. - Progress of actions noted within the Children and Young People Strategy (CYPS) Child Protection Working Group and the Safeguarding and Child Protections in Education Liaison Group Work Plans. - Education input to the cross departmental Child Protection annual report to the CYPS Board.		
2.11	Sustain departmental support for Nurture provision.	- Uplift funding for 62 Nurture Groups. - Examination of market for Nurture support to ensure that the best and most cost-effective supplier is used by the EA and schools. - Improved year on year impact of key Nurture indicators as measured by EA's Nurture Advisory and Support Service reporting to the Department.	On track for achievement (Green)	Increased funding provided to Nurture Groups (from £62k per Group to £105k per Group). EA to provide an initial proposal in relation to examination of market for Nurture support to ensure that the best and most cost effective supplier is used by the EA and schools.

DE Strategic Priority 3 – Build an expert, skilled and supported education workforce

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
3.1 	Develop a Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) Strategy.	- By May 2026 launch consultation on a draft TPL Strategy. - By October 2026 publish the new TPL Strategy.	Achieved (Green)	Consultation on the TPL Strategy was launched in May 2026 and the new TPL Strategy was published in September 2026.
3.2 	Roll out a comprehensive programme of teacher professional learning.	- A dedicated professional learning offer implemented across the TPL continuum. 2026-27 priorities include: - Expanded leadership pathway – pilot of replacement Professional Qualification for Headship; rollout of middle leader and experienced Principal programmes. - Policy statement on Teacher Induction and expansion of the supporting TPL programme. - Research led collaborative professional learning communities.	On track for achievement (Green)	Research conferences announced in June 2026, comprising 300 schools. New TPL programmes for teacher induction, middle leaders and experienced principals launched in September 2026. Policy statement on induction drafted and proposals for subject professional learning communities shared with curriculum colleagues. Replacement Professional Qualification for Headship under development, pilot scheduled to begin in January 2027.

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
		Subject professional learning communities to support subject-specific professional practice.		
3.3 	Implement an Initial Teacher Education Bursary Scheme.	- Resources prepared to support the compliance monitoring of the Scheme. - Monitoring information collected from Higher Education Institutions. - Number of students supported through the Scheme. - Ongoing analysis of recruitment and retention issues to refine future scope of Scheme.	On track for achievement (Green)	Over the course of 2025-26 applications for the bursary subjects have increased significantly. Students taking up the first year of bursary places in September 2026 and indications from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are that all 132 places will be filled. Guidance prepared for HEIs in administering the scheme and DE will monitor implementation closely. DE recruitment survey reissued to schools before Easter 2026 and confirm the bursary subjects are focused on the correct subjects, these will now be added to the main Departmental Vacancy Survey from this academic year onwards.
3.4 	Implement a Framework for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Northern Ireland.	- By April 2026 undertake consultation on a draft Framework for ITE. - By May 2026 publish a Framework for ITE. - By March 2027 publish a phased implementation plan	On track for achievement (Green)	ITE Framework published in April 2026 which all four Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have now signed up to. The HEIs are to submit their action plans by October 2026 to outline how they will implement the requirements of the framework on a phased basis.

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
		including associated actions related to the accreditation of ITE programmes in Northern Ireland.		
3.5	Improve industrial relations and reduce teacher workload.	- An action plan developed to address recommendations from the Independent Review of Teacher Workload and an agreed series of actions taken forward to address teacher and school leader workload. - Appropriate consultation with Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) regarding new initiatives and policy development. - Ministerial priorities and appropriate funding reflected in pay negotiations with NITC via Management Side (MS). - MS supported and advised in the delivery of a pay offer for 2026-27 and future offers.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	Representatives of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council (NITC) and the Teachers' Negotiating Committee (TNC) Management Side have engaged in intensive discussions, facilitated by the Labour Relations Agency (LRA), to seek a resolution to the issue of teacher workload. On 21 September NITC advised that, notwithstanding the progress made, they were proceeding to notify employers of their intention to proceed to Industrial Action from 28 September. It is against this backdrop that Management Side and the Department finds the unions' decision disappointing. We had asked for a further four weeks to conclude work that was demonstrably close to resolution. That request has been declined by NITC.

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
3.6	Progress legislation to reform the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland.	• Bill completed Committee Stage in the Northern Ireland Assembly by May 2026. • First Consideration stage by September 2026. • Further Consideration Stage by October 2026. • Final stage completed November 2026. • Passage by March 2027.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 milestones all achieved and the supporting Subordinate Regulations are undergoing final checking by the Departmental Solicitor's Office. The Minister has not yet made a final decision on the scheduling of Consideration Stage for this Bill while several other legislative priorities for this Assembly mandate remain in flux.
3.7	Accurately administer monthly payments of salary/pension to around 22,000 teachers and 26,000 pensioners.	• Issue of salary payments to supply teachers by 12th working day each month. • Salary/ pension to permanent teachers/pensioners by last working day of each month.	On track for achievement (Green)	All DE Teacher payrolls and pensioner payrolls were paid each month on time. All associated payroll administration, including statutory and legislative payments were all made to third parties within the required deadlines.

DE Strategic Priority 4 – Modernise the education system through effective service delivery, governance, planning and investment

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
4.1	Prioritise and control the Education budget effectively.	- How much of the Minister's approved capital and resource budget strategies delivered. - Optimal utilisation of budgets, i.e. minimal underspends and no overspends. - Compliance with Better Business Case Northern Ireland requirements maximised, i.e. improved test drill results.	Not likely to be achieved (Orange)	In the absence of an agreed 2026-27 Budget, current planning assumptions indicate a resource funding gap of approximately £0.6bn. Indicative control totals, aligned to the Department's 2025-26 closing budget position, have been established by the Permanent Secretary to support essential services and unavoidable statutory and contractual commitments. However, these totals exclude £105m of estimated pay pressures and require the EA to deliver £150m of savings, leaving a significant risk of overspend in the absence of additional funding.
4.2	Deliver a prioritised capital works programme within budget.	- Maximisation of the capital budget via monitoring rounds and other budget exercises. - Full spend to within 2% of the capital budget.	On track for achievement (Green)	In the absence of an agreed budget, an Information Gathering Exercise to inform Budget 2026-2029/30 was submitted to the Department of Finance in September 2026. Interim capital allocations have been issued to the EA and the Department's capital programmes to support ongoing

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
		- Capital projects delivered in accordance with agreed programmes. - Year-1 actions in the Capital Investment / Estate Strategy delivered.		projects and contractual commitments. The Estate Strategy is undergoing review by stakeholders before seeking Ministerial approval.
4.3	Deliver the Sustainable Schools Policy and area planning reforms.	- By March 2027: - Development of a revised Sustainable Schools Policy. - Area planning structures, processes and associated guidance streamlined. - Significant progress made towards publication of a five-year implementation plan to guide change in a phased, manageable way. - Protocols for capital funding of rationalisation proposals delivered.	On track for achievement (Green)	Work to appoint an Independent Area Planning Commission (IAPC) is at an advanced stage. The IAPC will build on the Sustainable Schools Policy, to develop a clear and contemporary framework for assessing school sustainability, encompassing educational quality, curriculum entitlement and financial resilience and will deliver a five-year implementation plan for change. Work on streamlining structures and delivering protocols for capital funding of rationalisation proposals ongoing.
4.4 	Strengthen statutory inspection arrangements.	A Bill introduced to the Northern Ireland Assembly to enhance cooperation with inspection and to provide for inspection of religious education before summer recess 2026.	On track for achievement (Green)	The Bill moved to Committee Stage on 1 June following considerable debate at Second Stage (46 ayes, 27 noes). The Committee's motion to extend Committee scrutiny until 9 December passed (two days prior to Christmas recess). This places the timely

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		Final Stage completed before end of mandate.		progression of the Bill in this mandate at considerable risk. In addition, as currently drafted, this Bill relies upon the passage of the GTCNI Bill which the Minister has not yet moved to Consideration Stage and the Committee members raised considerable concerns in respect to clause 3 (non-cooperation defined as misconduct) of the Bill during the debate and will undoubtedly seek amendments. Officials are examining options for amendment in advance of providing oral evidence to the Committee on 14 October.
4.5	Progress legislation for a controlled schools' support organisation.	A draft Bill prepared for introduction to the legislative programme in early autumn 2026, subject to Executive agreement.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	The draft Bill has been prepared and awaits Executive agreement to progress to Introduction in the Assembly. There is a finite amount of time in order for the Bill to have time to progress through the stages of Assembly scrutiny.
4.6	Develop an Irish-Medium Education Strategy.	Provide the Minister with an interim update by February 2027 outlining the seven strategic pillars, together with emerging options and actions developed to date, to inform	On track for achievement (Green)	The action is progressing as planned. Three of the seven pillars have been developed to draft stage, with work underway on the remaining four. Delivery remains on schedule and no

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		continued development ahead of mid-2027 publication.		significant issues have been identified at this stage.
4.7	Provide effective governance oversight for DE and its Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs).	- ALB Partnership Agreements completed / reviewed. - All Governance and Accountability Review meetings held as per schedule.	On track for achievement (Green)	2025-26 End-Year DE and ALB Governance Statements completed within prescribed timeframes; mid-year Governance Statements commissioned in late September. Partnership Agreements in place for all ALB's except Middletown Centre for Autism (expected to be in place before the end of the financial year) and GTCNI (subject to progression of GTCNI Bill). Annual review of CCMS Partnership Agreement completed. First round of GARs completed for 2026-27 (MCA GAR scheduled for 23 October 2026).

DE Strategic Priority 5 – Expand participation and opportunity through early education, collaboration and shared learning

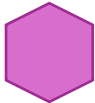
Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
5.1 	Publish an Executive Early Learning and Childcare Strategy.	- By July 2026, publish an analysis of the consultation responses to the draft early Learning and Childcare Strategy. - Publication of a final Early Learning and Childcare Strategy subject to Executive agreement. - Implementation of agreed priority actions within the final strategy subject to the required Executive funding being made available.	On track for achievement (Green)	Analysis of the public consultation on the draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy published in June 2026. Revised strategy is currently being prepared for the Minister's approval and Executive consideration in the autumn.
5.2	Standardise, over time, pre-school provision to 22.5 hours per week for all target age children.	100 pre-school settings transitioning to full-time in September 2026. - c.100 settings approved during 2026-27 for transition to full-time in September 2027 (subject to budget). 50% of pre-school places that are full-time (annual	On track for achievement (Green)	100 pre-school settings transitioned to full-time with effect from September 2026. Approximately 65% of funded pre-school places are full-time with effect from September 2026.

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		measurement at date of census).		
5.3 	Enact legislation for participation in education to age 18.	16-18 legislation progressed through the Northern Ireland Assembly during 2026. - A draft Bill progressed through the Education and Economy Committees and Assembly by March 2027. - Statutory Regulations drafted and guidelines produced to support delivery of the legislation. - Development of a “Building Futures: Post-16 Policy” to support delivery of the legislation.	Likely to be achieved but with some delay (Amber)	An Education and Training (Post compulsory school age) Bill was drafted and circulated in March 2026 and is awaiting Executive approval. After September 2026, timescales to complete the legislative process become increasingly constrained.
5.4	Implement the Mainstreaming Shared Education (MSE) Strategy.	- Progress against identified actions in support of the MSE Strategy Phase Three Delivery Plan. - Improved educational outcomes and promotion of good relations as reported by Shared Education partnerships.	On track for achievement (Green)	Progress continues in line with Phase Three priorities including via mainstreamed and peace supported provision. 134 MSE partnerships/314 schools engaged 2025-26, remaining broadly steady, although a small number of partnerships indicated last year and more recently they can no longer continue due to funding challenges; approx. 43,000 pupils

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				participated through mainstreamed provision at end of 2024-25 (academic year) - slight increase of 1000+ from that reported for the end of the first year of mainstreaming (2022-23). MSE funding of £2m was maintained for 2025-26 and a full-year interim allocation of £2m has also been confirmed for 2026-27. A further approx. 23,000 pupils (17,000 in Northern Ireland) participated through the cross-border PEACEPLUS ASPIRE programme in its first year (2024-25 academic year).
5.5 	Develop a collaborative Education Model for Strule.	• A draft collaborative Education Model agreed by all schools by March 2027. • Draft governance, inclusion and operational procedures in development by March 2027. • Increased participation in shared and inclusive activities by March 2027. • Increased curricular pathways in development with the schools by September 2026.	On track for achievement (Green)	The schools have agreed an aligned school day for the campus and are currently working on additional option blocks for post 16 and consideration for key stage 4. Draft governance, inclusion and operational procedures are under development. The programme has shared activities planned for the academic year for pupils from all schools to attend.

Action number	WHAT WE WILL DO	MEASURES OF SUCCESS (enabling actions completed / outcomes achieved)	Status	Comments (at 30 September 2026)
5.6 	Progress construction of the Strule Shared Education Campus.	• Main Works construction milestones achieved on schedule and within budget. • On target to achieve BREEAM Excellent rating for campus buildings. • On target to meet Social Value targets through employment and training opportunities in the Omagh area.	On track for achievement (Green)	Construction of the Strule Shared Education Campus is progressing at pace, with considerable progress made this year. The main works construction programme is now 38% complete and remains on target to achieve BREEAM Excellent rating for the campus buildings and meet social value targets. Budget requirements are currently under review.
5.7	Deliver Vision 2030, the Department's strategy for Integrated Education (IE).	• Provide the Minister with an update on delivery of Vision 2030 by March 2027 that includes: ○ An assessment of delivery of DE actions within IE Action Plan. ○ An assessment of DE ALBs delivery of their actions as set out in the IE Action Plan.	On track for achievement (Green)	The Department has published the first report on Demand for Integrated Education, launched the IE Support Programme and commenced work on the 2026 IE Demand Report.

The Business Plan contains the following symbols:

	Denotes an action which contributes to the delivery of the TransformED NI Ten-Point Plan for Educational Excellence in Northern Ireland (Annex A)
	Denotes an action which contributes to the delivery of a key priority within the 2024-27 Programme for Government

Department of Education (DE) Corporate Risks

The Department's corporate risk profile was recently reviewed resulting in the identification of eight key Corporate Risks which have the potential to affect the delivery of actions in the Business Plan, as follows:

Risk	Description
1	Financial: DE Budget fails to deliver on Strategic Priorities.
2	TransformED: TransformED fails to realise its intended benefits within planned timescales.
3	Data development: Failure to collect relevant high-quality data compromises evidence informed decision making.
4	Cyber security: Loss of data/services leads to disruption to the education of school-age children.
5	Workforce relationships: Poor industrial relations leads to disruption to education services.
6	Safeguarding: Children and young people not being supported appropriately.
7	Partnership: Ineffective oversight and engagement impacts service delivery and the achievement of Strategic Priorities.
8	Special Educational Needs (SEN): DE fails to deliver reform in SEN Services resulting in sub optimal outcomes for Children and Young People.

These risks are contained within the Department's Corporate Risk Register and are overseen and managed by the Departmental Board, with the assistance of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

ANNEX A - Ten Point Plan for educational excellence in Northern Ireland (TransformED NI)

1	A KNOWLEDGE-RICH CURRICULUM	We will 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.
2	HIGH-QUALITY CURRICULUM ADVICE AND RESOURCES	We will provide greater investment in high-quality curriculum advice and resources to support teachers in the classroom.
3	PRIORITISING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	We will ensure there is sustained investment to provide a coherent approach to Teacher Professional Learning that supports teachers throughout their career.
4	EVIDENCE INFORMED APPROACHES TO LITERACY AND NUMERACY	We will introduce new literacy and numeracy strategies informed by evidence and based on international best practice.
5	HIGH STANDARDS AND SYSTEM LEVEL DATA	We will introduce a new system of attainment measures for end of Key Stage assessment to set high standards for all children and provide reliable system level performance measures.
6	PORTABLE, PROGRESSIVE AND FIT FOR PURPOSE QUALIFICATIONS	We will review the qualifications landscape to ensure availability of high-quality qualifications that are up to date, portable and fit for purpose to support progression to a higher level of learning, training, or into employment.
7	A FOCUS ON CONTINUAL EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT	We will introduce a new school improvement policy to provide a framework to support excellence and an improved model of external support for schools.

8	AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TACKLE EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE	We will deliver an integrated approach to tackling educational disadvantage providing a continuum of evidence-based interventions within schools, families and communities.
9	ALL LEARNERS ENGAGED IN EDUCATION TO 18	We will introduce legislation to ensure all learners remain in education, apprenticeship or training until age 18.
10	EFFECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY DRIVING IMPROVEMENT	We will introduce a coherent accountability framework to demonstrate value for money to government, taxpayers and parents and drive improvement through responsibility and answerability.



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BUSINESS PLAN
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