



Droichead: Quality Assurance Report

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An Chomhairle
Mhúinteoireachta



The Teaching Council

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Glossary

Associate

An associate is a practising and fully-registered teacher who is also an experienced mentor and/or induction workshop facilitator, nominated by the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) to support the *Droichead* process in *Droichead* schools.

Continuum of Teacher Education

This describes the formal and informal educational and developmental activities in which teachers engage, as lifelong learners, during their teaching careers. It encompasses initial teacher education, induction, early and continuing professional development and later career support.

Newly qualified teacher (NQT)

This refers to a teacher who meets the Council's requirements in terms of qualifications, but has not completed the required period of professional practice. In this document, newly qualified teacher (NQT) refers to all newly registered teachers who are beginning their teaching career, or may be returning to teaching after a period of absence, regardless of their date of qualification.

Droichead

The *Droichead* process is an integrated professional induction framework for newly qualified teachers. It recognises the effectiveness of the reconceptualised programmes of initial teacher education and particularly the extended school placement, in the professional preparation of student teachers. It builds on that phase, taking as its starting point the areas for further learning that have been identified by the NQT in collaboration with the HEI as part of the school placement experience. At the same time, it recognises that induction is a distinct phase of the continuum of teacher education, a socialisation process into the teaching profession. This integrated framework includes both school-based and additional professional learning activities to address the needs of teachers as they begin their careers. The main objective of the *Droichead* process is to support the professional learning of the NQTs during the induction phase, thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and learning for the next phase of their career. Following the *Droichead* process, a declaration is made by the NQT that he or she is ready to move to the next phase on the continuum of teacher education. A joint declaration is made by the teacher and experienced colleagues, following collective reflection, that through their engagement in *Droichead*, they have participated in a quality teaching and learning process. The Teaching Council then removes the *Droichead* condition from the teacher's registration.

National Induction Programme for Teachers

The National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) is a State-funded service that supports the induction of NQTs, both primary and post-primary, into the teaching profession in Ireland. The main objective of induction is towards promoting the professional development of NQTs by way of systematic support in their first year of teaching, thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and development. The NIPT co-ordinates the provision of a multi-faceted induction programme for teachers. Full-time team members, Regional Development Officers (RDOs), are supported in their work by a team of associates (see above).

Taisce

A professional learning portfolio is developed over time by each NQT, to support the process of reflection on his or her practice. The term Taisce, (Irish for treasure trove) is used to refer to this process of portfolio based learning. Engaging in the process of portfolio-based learning enables the teacher to reflect on their professional learning, and identify and plan for areas in which they may need further support or guidance. *Droichead* allows flexibility in the creation of Taisce, with the format and contents decided and owned by the newly qualified teacher. It should include key learning moments and insights from the *Droichead* process. Emphasis is placed on the quality, rather than quantity, of these learning opportunities with the teacher choosing which moments and insights to reflect on, and on how they wish to capture that reflection.

Professional Support Team (PST)

The Professional Support Team is a team of experienced and fully-registered teachers, which works collaboratively to support the NQT during the *Droichead* process.

List of acronyms

DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DQA	Droichead Quality Assurance
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher PST Professional Support Team SEN Special Educational Needs SET Special Education Teacher

Chairperson's Foreword

We were privileged as members of the *Droichead* Quality Assurance panels to visit schools and speak with Principals, members of the Professional Support Team and Newly Qualified Teachers in our Quality Assurance process for *Droichead*. The focus of the DQA is placed on consistency rather than uniformity in the *Droichead* process in schools. We were happy to see that the *Droichead* process is operating on a highly professional level in schools across the country.

There was a high level of consistency in the responses received. The process itself, the training and support supplied to PST members were generally very positively received in schools. A number of schools made recommendations for improvements to the *Droichead* process. The most valuable part of the *Droichead* process for both PST members and NQTs was reported to be the peer-to-peer observations.

While challenges exist, *Droichead* is helping to create a culture of open doors in teaching, provide opportunities for professional conversations and has systemic benefits beyond the support experienced by NQTs. The *Droichead* process is non-judgemental and provides an opportunity to share good practice. As one Principal said, "It is our profession maturing; standing up and saying, "Like other professions we can support ourselves and we can nourish ourselves"".

Schools spoke about how *Droichead* was a positive experience for them, an opportunity for professional development for the whole staff. It gave practiced teachers the opportunity to reflect and helped to progress a school culture of support, openness and collaboration.

Indeed some schools have extended the supportive process beyond *Droichead* to all new teachers, PMEs, student teachers, or have examined open door policies, collegial collaborative policies, school teachmeets and teaching festivals following on from their *Droichead* involvement.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to *Droichead* Quality Assurance (DQA)

The *Droichead* process is an integrated professional induction framework for NQTs, which includes the period of professional practice that an NQT in a *Droichead* school is required to undertake following his or her initial registration.

The DQA process was initiated with a view to assessing the quality and consistency of the *Droichead* process in a number of schools involved in the pilot phase from September 2013. The conceptualisation of the DQA process has changed significantly since the early stages of *Droichead* policy development. In the first iteration of the *Droichead* Guide for Schools 2013/2014 (for year 1 of the pilot), it was envisaged that the Inspectorate would have an important quality assurance role by evaluating the work of a sample of NQTs who had completed the *Droichead* process in schools, through observation of their classroom practice.

In light of significant concern voiced by pilot schools in relation to the proposed approach, an alternative DQA process was developed and approved by Council in July 2014. This DQA process takes cognisance of the core values of the Teaching Council; shared professional responsibility; professionally-led regulation, and collective professional confidence. This is reflected in the composition of the DQA (see Section 3) panels, which looks to the profession to assume responsibility not only for the induction of NQTs into the profession, but also the quality assurance of that process.

In line with the quality assurance processes set out in *Droichead: A Guide for Schools 2015/2016*, the DQA process was initiated during the 2015/2016 school year. A DQA panel was established and a series of eight school visits took place in a spirit of collegiality and collaboration. During these visits, the panel discussed the process with the principal, the PST and the NQT(s). A report was compiled outlining the findings of the DQA panels. This report was approved by the Teaching Council on 6 March 2017 and can be found at <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/publications/teacher-education/documents/Droichead-quality-assurance-dqa-report-2017.pdf>.

Currently, DQA is one of a number of mechanisms in place to assure the quality and consistency of the *Droichead* process nationally as outlined in 'Droichead: The Professional Induction Framework March 2017' at 1.1.9.

The DQA Panel does this in two main ways:

- Completion of annual reviews at national level in order to promote and develop a shared understanding across schools about what works well in *Droichead*, within different school contexts.
- Consideration of requests from individual NQTs for their *Droichead* process to be reviewed.

As there have been a number of significant changes made to *Droichead* policy in March 2017, it is important to note that the schools' experiences outlined in this report are based on the policy arrangements that were in place in *Droichead: A Guide for Schools 2015/2016*.

1.2 Purpose of DQA

The purpose of the DQA process is to examine both the quality and consistency of *Droichead* across schools, and also how NQTs experiences reflect this quality and consistency.

In achieving this, it is intended that the DQA process will seek to:

- promote and develop a shared understanding across schools about what works well in *Droichead*, within various school contexts
- examine if the *Droichead* process, as implemented, is fair, and consistent with Teaching Council Policy.
- make recommendations to the Teaching Council in relation to the procedures for quality assurance for the *Droichead* process.

As schools exist in a variety of contexts, the focus of the DQA is placed on consistency rather than uniformity across participating schools.

The following key principles guide the DQA process:

- shared professional responsibility and professionally-led regulation;

- sharing good practice;
- the NQT is central to the process;
- fairness and consistency.

This is not a research report. The purpose of this document is to outline the findings of the DQA panels as a result of visits to a number *Droichead* schools. It is intended that this process will inform future policy development in relation to quality assurance. The findings of the research on the pilot phase of *Droichead*, conducted by the ESRI, can be found in the report *Review of the Droichead Teacher Induction Pilot Programme (2016)*.

2 SchoolSelection

All schools that participated in *Droichead* during Year 3 (2015-2016) and Year 4 (2016-2017) were invited to self-nominate for the DQA process. During this timeframe 332 schools (124 primary, 264 post-primary) supported 871 NQTs (271 primary, 600 post primary) through the *Droichead* process. Of these 35 *Droichead* schools (primary and post-primary) expressed an interest in participating in the DQA process. A total of 24 schools were selected, 12 from primary and 12 from post-primary.

The selection endeavoured to include a broad cross-section of schools which included the following:

- a range of school types (e.g., DEIS / Non-DEIS / ETB / Community School / Voluntary / Gaelscoil) and locations (geographical spread and urban / rural locations);
- small schools with teaching principals in primary sector;
- specialschoools.

2.1 Anonymisation

Schools participating in the DQA process are anonymised in this report. The schools' profiles are generalised and the schools are referred to using the anonymisation codes as outlined in the table below:

School A	School A is a mixed post-primary school with 34 teachers in an urban area. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2014-2015. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Five NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School B	School B is a large mainstream primary school with 45 teachers and an administrative principal in an urban area. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2014-2015. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Eleven NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School C	School C is a mixed community post-primary school with 36 teachers. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2015-2016. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Four NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School D	School D is a mainstream primary school with 18 teachers and an administrative principal in an urban area. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2015-2016. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Three NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School E	School E is a mixed community school with 63 teachers. It has a Sruth, an Irish-medium stream for 1st years. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2014-2015. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Five NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School F	School F is a mainstream primary school with 23 teachers and an administrative principal in an urban area. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2014-2015. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Seven NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School G	School G is a community post-primary school with 24 teachers. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2015-2016. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. One NQT has completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.

School H	School H is a mainstream primary school with 24 teachers and an administrative principal in an urban area. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2015-2016. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. One NQT has completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school
School I	School I is a single-sex post-primary school with 43 teachers. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2015-2016. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Three NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School J	School J is a mixed, post-primary, Deis, Gaelscoil with 25 teachers in an urban area and a teaching principal. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> school in 2015-2016. The PST has an external member and all members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Three NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School K	School K is a large mainstream primary school with 39 teachers and an administrative principal in an urban area. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2014-2015. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Two NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School L	School L is a large mainstream primary school with 30 teachers and an administrative principal in an urban area. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2015-2016. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Two NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School M	School M is a large mainstream primary school with 36 teachers and an administrative principal in an urban area. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2015-2016. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. One NQT has completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School N	School N is a single-sex post-primary school with 61 teachers. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2013-2014. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Six NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School O	School O is a post-primary, DEIS, community college with 55 teachers. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2013-2014. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Five NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School P	School P is a large mainstream primary school with 37 teachers and an administrative principal in an urban area. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2015-2016. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Seven NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School Q	School Q is a rural primary school with 4 teachers and a teaching principal. It is a DEIS school. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> school in 2014- 2015. The PST was formed within the school and all members have completed <i>Droichead</i> Professional Development with the NIPT. One NQT has completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School R	School R is a rural primary school with 4 teachers and a teaching principal. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> school in 2015-2016. The PST was formed within the school and all members have completed <i>Droichead</i> Professional Development with the NIPT. One NQT has completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.
School S	School S is a single-sex post-primary school with 58 teachers. It registered as a <i>Droichead</i> School in 2013-2014. The PST was formed from within the school. Some PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT. Four NQTs have completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.

School T	School T is a large post-primary community school with 100 teachers. It registered as a Droichead School in 2013-2014. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed Droichead professional development with the NIPT. Five NQTs have completed the Droichead process at this school.
School U	School U is a special school with seven teachers and an administrative principal. It registered as a Droichead school in 2015-2016. The PST was formed within the school and all members have completed Droichead Professional Development with the NIPT. Three NQTs have completed the Droichead process in the school.
School V	School V is a large mainstream primary school with 30 teachers and an administrative principal in an urban area. It registered as a Droichead School in 2014-2015. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed Droichead professional development with the NIPT. One NQT has completed the Droichead process at this school.
School W	School W is a single-sex post-primary school with 53 teachers. It registered as a Droichead School in 2014-2015. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed Droichead professional development with the NIPT. One NQT has completed the Droichead process at this school.
School X	School X is a community school with 90 teachers. It registered as a Droichead School in 2014-2015. The PST was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed Droichead professional development with the NIPT. Five NQTs have completed the Droichead process at this school.

Across the 24 schools the DQA Panel met with 97 PST members and a total of 36 NQTs who had experienced and completed the *Droichead* process

3 *Droichead* Quality Assurance Panels

3.1 Composition of the Panels

The composition and work of the DQA panels may be summarised as follows:

Review panels are established by the Teaching Council to quality assure the *Droichead* process. Each panel includes an independent Chairperson, a registered teacher from the relevant sector and a person with expertise in the support and/or evaluation of teaching and learning at school level.

Teaching Council members who are registered teachers from the primary or post primary sector were invited to self-nominate for the panel. Appointment was made by the Director of the Council.

The review panel visits a sample of schools where the *Droichead* process has taken place and discusses the process separately with the Principal, the PST and the NQT. Such visits are pre- arranged and take place in a spirit of collegiality and collaboration. Following its review, the panel submits a report to the Teaching Council setting out its findings and recommendations in relation to the process. The report is considered by the Council and, following ratification, is published on the Council's website and circulated to the NIPT and the Inspectorate.

In October 2017, two DQA panels, one primary and one post-primary, were established by the Teaching Council. In order to ensure consistency, one Chairperson was appointed to oversee the work of both panels. A Teaching Council Associate, acting in the role of rapporteur, supported the work of each panel. DQA panel membership can be found in Appendix 1.

Each panel visited the selected schools relevant to its sector. The Chairperson visited all schools, both primary and post-primary. This report outlines the findings of these visits.

3.2 Preparation for the DQA Process

On 8 November 2017, the panels met in the Teaching Council offices in Maynooth to engage in professional development before the school visits. On that day the panels were briefed on the *Droichead* process, including the procedures and criteria involved in the process, the rationale for DQA and the roles and responsibilities of the panel members. A visit schedule and provisional dates for drafting and finalising the report were agreed by the panels and rapporteur on that day.

Further training was facilitated for additional panel members on 14 December 2017. These members were available to support the work of the DQA panel where needed.

4 Process for *Droichead* Quality Assurance

4.1 School Visits

All school visits for the DQA process were carried out in a spirit of collegiality and co-operation. Visits took place between 23 November 2017 and 9 February 2018.

During each school visit the panels met with the school's Principal, PST members and also with the NQTs who had completed the *Droichead* process. The meetings were conducted in an open and collaborative manner and notes were recorded by the Rapporteur.

At the end of each visit, the panel met briefly to define the emerging themes of the visit and to consider same with a view to determining levels of consistency with other schools participating in the DQA process.

5 *Droichead* Quality Assurance Findings

The findings from each school have been compiled and a composite image has emerged that covers the *Droichead* process for NQTs and schools during 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 school years. It is important to highlight that these findings represent the experiences of just 24 self-nominating *Droichead* schools.

5.1 Role of the Principal

- The Principal was seen as a very important person in introducing and leading the process in schools
- In some schools visited the principal wasn't a member of the PST, this role had been taken on by a member of the school management team
- In general it was seen as advantageous to have a member of the school's senior management team on the PST.
 - This gave *Droichead* and the work of the PST status in the school
 - It helped to keep *Droichead* on the whole-school agenda.
 - Where the Principal undertook PST training they had a greater understanding of PST and NQT needs
- In schools where the Principal wasn't a PST member he/she took an active interest, was informed about the process in the school and received updates/minutes of the PST meetings.

5.2 Selection and Composition of the PST members and the roles involved

- The PSTs were invariably comprised of experienced staff members.
- Members generally volunteered though some were encouraged to join, particularly where they had mentoring experience and/or had mentor training.
- Some post-primary schools sought PST members for subject areas or experience in suites of subjects e.g. languages/practical to match the subject needs of the incoming NQTs. At primary level the class level /role of the NQT was considered when assigning a mentor to the NQT where possible.
- Some schools had NIPT associates on the PST and many availed of the NIPT associate/RDO visiting the school to establish the process and provide clarifications where needed.
- PST members were clear on their own roles as members of the team. This was decided collaboratively by the team at local level mindful of the needs of the NQTs'.
- At post-primary it was seen as preferable by the NQTs for the mentor to share their subject specification.
- Some schools felt that a system of recognition for PST work should be considered.

5.3 *Droichead* Expectations

- Timelines were clarified at the outset of the process with all involved as were the various roles of the PST members in relation to the NQTs. Flexibility was allowed to suit the school circumstances.
- In most schools whole school support was evident and was promoted through staff presentations on *Droichead* and encouraging all staff members to facilitate observations. In some schools NQTs spoke about their experiences of *Droichead* to the whole staff. It was kept on the staff meeting agenda in many of the schools visited.
- Whole-school support was most powerful where schools had experience of team-teaching or of collaborative teaching projects such as instructional leadership.
- In all schools visited *Droichead* was for the duration of the NQT's contract, not just the minimum time limit involved. (60 days/200 hours.) The minimum time limit only became an issue where the contract was for part of the school year. The PST and NQTs both felt that the extended time offered greater support and time for reflection and improvement.

- While *Droichead* is possible within the minimum agreed timeframes, schools agreed that this would not provide the NQT with the same supportive experience as others received, the process could be rushed and not as beneficial.
- When outlining the *Droichead* timeline for the NQTs some PST teams allowed for the possibility of additional time being needed for the NQT to progress. (For example Sept- Easter initial timeframe with additional time after Easter if needed.)
- When outlining the *Droichead* timeline for the NQTs some PST teams allowed for the possibility of additional time being needed for the NQT to progress. (For example Sept-Easter initial time frame with additional time after Easter if needed.)

5.4 Droichead Criteria/Standards

- In many cases the *Droichead* Standards and criteria had been adapted to suit the school setting and the individual context of the NQT with school exemplars.
- The *Droichead* standards were exemplars of best practice, they supported the PST in helping NQTs to identify their learning needs and in mapping the NQT's progress through the *Droichead* process.
- Using and applying the standards and the collaborative efforts of the PST contributed to consistency of the *Droichead* process across a range of school settings and NQTs.
- The Standards and Criteria worked best when used as developmental targets on areas of need identified by the NQT with the PST's support.
- Regular reviews of the *Droichead* standards as they applied to the school setting helped to inform best practice for *Droichead*.

5.5 Droichead Training and Support

- Initial *Droichead* PST training from the NIPT was broadly praised by schools.
- The NIPT Associate support given to schools was highly commended, especially initial visits from an associate when a school becomes a *Droichead* school to establish the process and where queries or concerns arose during *Droichead*.
- PST members found that the most beneficial aspects of the training were the sections dealing with managing challenging conversations, observations, the role plays/scenarios and the opportunity to speak with other schools and compare practices and experiences.
- Many schools asked for additional time to be spent on areas such as the standards and criteria, challenging conversations, *Droichead* documentation/regulations and many schools sought access to training for additional PST members.
- The time given at the training to work on their school criteria and the *Droichead* planning as a PST was seen as invaluable in establishing the *Droichead* process.
- Some schools found it difficult to release staff members for four days of training particularly in the light of the difficulties in arranging substitute cover.
- Travel distances to training venues were an issue for some schools.
- Many schools spoke of the need to have regular refresher training available to all PST members particularly in the light of the key changes to the *Droichead* process.
- The NIPT support materials were praised and found to be very useful.

5.6 Induction Release Time for Droichead

- The flexibility given to schools to use the release time in the manner that suited their school best was seen as vital. A small minority of primary schools mentioned that the possibility of being in a position to share a substitute with another school for a half day would be beneficial.
- Schools would like additional time to be available for the *Droichead* process. Teachers, PST members and NQTs, were giving their own personal time outside class contact time for *Droichead* activities and meetings which

were seen as critical. Staff members were reluctant to leave their own classes and substitutes were not readily available.

- Schools reported that the most valuable use of the release time was for the observations including pre and post observation meetings. Where possible release time was also used for PST meetings.
- In a small number of primary schools the panel heard that SET time was being used to facilitate *Droichead* activities.

5.7 Observations

- In all schools observations were seen as an essential and most valuable part of the process.
- In all schools visited there were more than the minimum recommended two of each kind of observations taking place.
- In general they were tailored to meet the NQT's needs.
- Different configurations for observations were used in schools.
- All staff members involved found them beneficial, experienced teachers also noted that they learned from the NQTs.
- There were noticeable positive impacts on the NQTs' teaching following the observations.
- Structured feedback following observations using the NIPT templates helped to inform the *Droichead* process and action plans going forward.
- The NQTs were generally given the opportunity to observe a PST member before being observed themselves.
- In all cases the observations of the NQT were by PST members only but NQTs had opportunities to observe outside of the PST.
- Primary schools where NQTs were participating in *Droichead* in SEN settings endeavoured to allow them to experience the teaching of Gaeilge and a mainstream class as part of their *Droichead* process.
- Observations led to increased professional conversations amongst staff.
- In several schools observations had led to a culture of open doors or collaborative learning models.

5.8 Professional Conversations

- A blend of formal and informal *Droichead* professional conversations took place in all schools and staff members felt both were very important.
- Formal meetings took place at the start of the process, around observations and at regular intervals.
- Informal conversations allowed for timely and ongoing support for the NQT.
- In a minority of cases where challenging conversations took place having the support of the PST members, external support from an NIPT associate and the NIPT training were found to be very helpful.

5.9 Taisce

- The experience of using Taisce varied across the NQTs visited.
- In most cases the PST were unsure of their role in relation to Taisce.
- The creative flexibility built in to Taisce was a source of uncertainty for many NQTs.
- Taisce was seen as a place to record key moments of learning during the *Droichead* process rather than somewhere that the NQT could identify their own learning needs and learning journey.
- The link between the NQTs identified areas for further development from Initial Teacher Education and *Droichead* was not always evident in the NQTs reflective journey.
- The importance of reflection was felt to be valuable, but was personal to each NQT's journey.
- Some NQTs felt Taisce was more beneficial in hindsight or saw the value of Taisce for interview preparation.

5.10 Records

- Clear record keeping was in evidence in all of the schools visited.
- PST members had opportunities to meet as a PST and discuss *Droichead*; where the NQT participated in these meetings the minutes were generally shared with the NQTs
- Records kept included *Droichead* standards and criteria, timelines, minutes of PST meetings, pre-observation and post-observation records and *Droichead* registration emails.
- In all cases NIPT templates were found to be useful and many schools had adapted them to suit their own needs.
- Schools were cognisant of privacy issues and confidentiality surrounding the NQT's *Droichead* and a small number of schools had online systems put in place for *Droichead* record keeping.

5.11 Additional Professional Development for NQTs

- During the iterations that this DQA process examined, models of additional professional development included attendance at workshops and cluster meetings for the NQTs.
- While most NQTs found that the cluster meetings were useful, criticisms were also voiced.
- Concerns arose regarding the location and accessibility of the clusters, an inflexible approach to punctuality and the content of the cluster meetings. In particular many felt that the content was a repeat of their recent Initial Teacher Education.
- Parent Teacher Meeting and Planning input was felt to be very useful but the scheduling needed to be adjusted to suit school timelines.
- PSTs would like information about the content/agenda of cluster meetings to be available to them before the meetings.
- The opportunities to engage with peers and to have questions answered were the most beneficial aspects to cluster meetings according to the NQTs.

6 Recommendations

The Panel acknowledges the key recommendations from the 2016 DQA Report and makes the following recommendations:

6.1 Principal's involvement on PST-

- The principal's support and understanding of *Droichead* is key to its success in schools. The continued involvement of a member of the school's senior management team on the PST is critical to the process. Principals should continue to have a leadership role in *Droichead* regardless of whether they opt to be PST members or not.

6.2 PST selection and roles

- Schools continue to establish PSTs to best meet the needs of their schools in line with the support material available and Teaching Council *Droichead* policy.
- A method for recognition for those involved on the PST including by the Teaching Council is desirable given the considerable additional time and effort involved.

6.3 Droichead Expectations

- Schools continue to clarify *Droichead* expectations (timelines, roles) at the start of each *Droichead* process at the school and that the PST engage with all available supports.
- Whole-School Support for *Droichead* should be encouraged and cultivated.
- Where possible a time-frame for extension of the *Droichead* process should be built in to facilitate additional time for the NQT where needed.

6.4 Droichead Criteria/Standards

- PSTs revisit school *Droichead* Standards regularly to guide the process and adapt them to the school context.
- The NQT should be enabled with the use of the *Droichead* Standards and Criteria to identify their own learning needs with the support and guidance of the PST.

6.5 Droichead Training and Supports

- Additional PST training is matched to the school's need.
- In the review of PST training, further input on the following areas be considered; managing challenging conversations, the *Droichead* standards and criteria, use of *Droichead* release time, the *Droichead* documentation/ requirements and Taisce.
- All *Droichead* training should be held as locally as possible for attendees.
- Regular refresher training for PST members.
- *Droichead* training and support materials be available as Gaeilge.

6.6 ReleaseTime

- The flexibility of release time allocation at post-primary level should be maintained so that schools can decide how to use it best in their specific context. At primary level flexible release time models should be explored.
- Schools should make every effort to ensure that release time is accessed rather than relying on volunteerism.

6.7 Observations

- Schools should endeavour to allow NQTs participating in *Droichead* in Primary SEN settings to experience the

teaching of Gaeilge and a mainstream class as part of the *Droichead* process.

6.8 Taisce

- In the review of training, that the provision of greater clarity in respect of Taisce be considered.
- The Teaching Council in its review of ITE takes due cognisance of the importance of links between Initial Teacher Education and Induction.

6.9 Additional Professional Development for NQTs

- The format of cluster meetings be reviewed in respect of content, timing and accessibility.

Appendices

Appendix 1: DQA Panel Membership

Ciarán Flynn Chairperson

A former teacher and Secondary School Principal, Ciarán Flynn served on the Teaching Council, as a nominee of second level management. He was General Secretary of the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS), advising and supporting Boards of Management and Principals for eight years. Ciarán chaired the Teacher Supply in Ireland: Technical Working Group which reported to the Teaching Council and to the Minister for Education and Skills in November 2015.

With a Master's in Education Management Ciarán has lectured in DCU on the M.Sc. in Educational Training and Management. He has worked with the National Leadership Development for Schools Team supporting newly appointed Principals and Deputy Principals countrywide.

As an Educational Consultant he has worked for and with individual schools, regional and national educational bodies in carrying out investigations, supporting and promoting professional development. He also carries out work for the Department of Education and Skills. He is the Chairperson of the Boards of Management of three schools in the Leinster area and is currently the Chairperson of the Le Chéile Schools Trust Board.

Margaret Dunning

Margaret Dunning is a Primary Divisional Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills. In the course of her work, she carries out whole school evaluations and evaluations on the work of NQTs as part of the probationary process. She is currently assigned to Teacher Education and Irish Unit within the Inspectorate where she is the national co-ordinator of the probationary process. She liaises closely with the Teaching Council in the operation of this work.

Elaine Collins

Elaine Collins is a post-primary inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in Ireland. She has carried out both whole-school evaluations and subject inspections of Music in the course of her work in the Inspectorate. Formerly assigned to the Teacher Education Section of the Department, Elaine is currently assigned to the Teacher Education and Irish Unit within the Inspectorate.

Seamus Knox

Seamus Knox is a post-primary inspector with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in Ireland. His primary responsibility lies in the area of policy development relating to Mathematics and teacher education. Seamus is particularly interested in problem solving in mediating the delivery of the mathematics curriculum and in the role of ICT in supporting this work.

Seamus has been active in the development and implementation of Project Maths, which represents sea change in the manner in which mathematics is taught at post-primary level in Ireland. He has served as School Principal and National Coordinator of the Schools Integration Project as part of Schools IT 2000-a national programme to promote the use of ICT in innovation in education.

Tracie Tobin

Tracie Tobin was elected to the Teaching Council in the Munster primary sector in 2016. Living in Parteen, Co. Clare, Tracie is the principal of St Michael's Infant School in Limerick City. She is a graduate of Mary Immaculate College, having been awarded a B. Ed (Hons), Grad. Dip. SEN and an

M. Ed (SEN) (Hons). Tracie is an active member of the INTO and represents the teachers of Limerick and Kerry on the National Equality Committee.

Elizabeth Cooney

Elizabeth Cooney was elected to the Teaching Council in the Connacht/Munster/Ulster, Post-Primary voluntary sector. Residing in County Laois, Elizabeth is a teacher of French and History in St Mary's Academy CBS, Carlow. Graduate of NUI Maynooth and PhD candidate in the University of Limerick, researching teachers' experience of in-career learning. She is a member of the ASTI and was a member of its Equal Opportunities Committee.

Niall Duddy

Niall Duddy was elected to the Teaching Council in the Connacht/Munster/Ulster, Voluntary (post- primary) constituency. He is a teacher of mathematics at Presentation College, Athenry, Co. Galway. Niall previously taught/lectured in mathematics at NUIG and at Shannon College of Hotel Management and is a holder of a B. Sc. (Mathematics) and H. Dip. Ed. from NUIG and M. Sc. (Cryptography) from UCC. An active member of the ASTI, Niall is the current Galway branch secretary.

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