



# *Droichead:* Quality Assurance Report

July 2019

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.

## 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 newly qualified teachers (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).

## 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.

## 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. It may provide a focus for the professional conversations that are central to *Droichead* and thus enable the NQT to identify areas in which he or she may need support or guidance.

## Professional Support Team (PST)

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

## List of acronyms

<b>DEIS</b>	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (Department of Education and Skills policy Instrument to address educational disadvantage)
<b>ESRI</b>	Economic and Social Research Institute
<b>ITE</b>	Initial Teacher Education
<b>NIPT</b>	National Induction Programme for Teachers
<b>PST</b>	Professional Support Team
<b>DQA</b>	<i>Droichead</i> Quality Assurance

# Chairperson's Foreword

The DQA process conducted in 2019 was confined to a smaller group of schools, twelve, than in our previous process which looked at twenty-four schools. There was another significant difference in that all the schools visited this year were chosen at random rather than self-referring as in previous processes. Not all school types in both sectors were part of the sample but as can be seen from the list of schools we covered a great variety of school types in the random sample. All the schools approached were very willing to co-operate with the DQA process in their schools.

I would like to thank all the Principals, the Professional Support Teams and Newly Qualified Teachers in participating schools for their co-operation and for their warm welcome to us in all cases. Schools are very busy places and we are grateful that our work in the schools was approached with a high level of professionalism, flexibility and generosity by all participants. The engagement of schools and members of the school community was most certainly in the spirit of *Droichead*. I would also like to thank the members of our Primary and Post-Primary panels for their professionalism and generosity of spirit in conducting the DQA process and members of the Teaching Council staff for their unstinting support and background work within a very tight timeline.

Schools and school contexts vary greatly, both between and within sectors. The focus of the DQA in this as in previous processes is placed on consistency rather than uniformity in the operation of *Droichead* in schools. The findings from the DQA process as outlined give a good indication of how schools are continuing to develop the *Droichead* process and achieving the balance between uniformity and consistency within the individual school context.

We were once again privileged as members of the DQA panels to conduct our Quality Assurance process for *Droichead* and to report to the Teaching Council on our findings. This is a small-scale study as the number of schools visited represent a tiny fraction of the total number of schools. Our findings, therefore, while valuable cannot be interpreted as conclusive or overarching. They do provide the Teaching Council with a level of assurance that the process as developed is being conducted with a significant level of professionalism in the schools visited.

I am happy to note that the Teaching Council has initiated an externally-run research project which will have greater scope to give more detailed and conclusive findings on the *Droichead* process. Our DQA process provides valuable qualitative insights into *Droichead* and has several practical recommendations from practitioners arising from our work. Our report is also affirming of the professionals engaged in the process and notes the value of their contribution to the induction process within the continuum.

As in previous years the most valuable part of the *Droichead* process for both PST members and NQTs was reported to be the peer-to-peer observations. The process itself, the training and support supplied to PST members were generally very positively received in schools. In this regard a small number of caveats was expressed which are outlined in the report. Recommendations for improvements to the *Droichead* process are also included.

Peer observations in classrooms and the professional approach to these observations in the *Droichead* process are supporting teachers in this and in other forms of collaborative practice in the schools visited. The *Droichead* process is non-evaluative and provides an opportunity to share good practice between professionals. This is a great strength, one PST member summed up the *Droichead* process when he said that it is "Good people doing good things".

**Ciarán Flynn,**  
Chairperson.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background to *Droichead* Quality Assurance (DQA)

The *Droichead* process is an integrated professional induction framework for newly qualified teachers, 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 *Droichead* Quality Assurance process was initiated with a view to examining the quality and consistency of the *Droichead* process in a number of schools involved in the pilot phase from September 2013. For the remainder of this report, the *Droichead* Quality Assurance process will be referred to as DQA.

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 professional support team and the newly qualified teacher. 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>.

The second cycle of DQA was initiated during the 2017/2018 school year. A DQA panel was established and a series of twenty-four school visits took place. A report was compiled outlining the findings of the DQA panel. This report can be found at

<https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Droichead-Quality-Assurance-Report-2018.pdf>.

Currently, *Droichead* Quality Assurance 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:**

1. 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.
2. Consideration of requests from individual NQTs for their *Droichead* process to be reviewed in line with the quality assurance processes set out in *Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework March 2017*, the DQA process was initiated during the 2019 school year. A DQA panel was established and a series of twelve school visits took place in a spirit of collegiality and collaboration. This DQA process reflects the schools' experiences based on the policy arrangements in *Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework, March 2017*.

## 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 of *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 School Selection

All schools that participated in *Droichead* during Year 5 (2017-2018) were collated and a sample of schools was selected for the DQA process. These schools were randomly selected, this selection of schools took place in January 2019. During this timeframe 651 schools (395 primary schools, 256 post-primary schools) supported 1731 NQTs (989 primary, 742 post-primary) through the *Droichead* process.

A total of twelve schools were randomly selected, six from primary and six from post-primary. The criteria for selection was based on having an NQT apply for *Droichead* during the 2017-2018 academic year.

The Teaching Council and the *Droichead* Quality Assurance Panel wish to thank the schools involved, for facilitating the work of the *Droichead* Quality Assurance Panel. The welcome received and the openness of engagement of the staff made the experience of *Droichead* Quality Assurance a very positive one for all involved in ensuring that *Droichead* is being conducted fairly and is consistent with *Droichead* Policy.

### 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:

<b>School A</b>	School A is a large single-sex post-primary school with 57 teachers. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>five NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process at this school.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.
<b>School B</b>	School B is a large mixed community post-primary school with 65 teachers. The school participates in DEIS. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>five NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.
<b>School C</b>	School C is a large mixed post-primary school with 50 teachers. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>two NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.
<b>School D</b>	School D is a mixed post-primary school with 23 teachers. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>three NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.
<b>School E</b>	School E is a large single-sex post-primary school with 47 teachers. The school participates in DEIS. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>six NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.
<b>School F</b>	School F is a special school with 5 teachers and an administrative principal. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>three NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.
<b>School G</b>	School G is a large mixed mainstream primary school with 44 teachers and an administrative principal. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>four NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.
<b>School H</b>	School H is a mixed mainstream primary school with 18 teachers and an administrative principal. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>two NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.



<b>School I</b>	School I is a mixed mainstream primary school up to first class. From second to sixth class the girls continue in the school and the boys attend another school locally. There are 29 teachers and an administrative principal. The school participates in DEIS. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>two NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.
<b>School J</b>	School J is a large mixed mainstream primary Gaelscoil with 29 teachers and an administrative principal. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>two NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.
<b>School K</b>	School K is a large educate together mixed primary school with 29 teachers and an administrative principal. The school participates in DEIS. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>six NQTs completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.
<b>School L</b>	School L is a large mixed mainstream primary school with 23 teachers and an administrative principal. In the school year 2017-2018, <b>one NQT completed the <i>Droichead</i> process.</b> The PST team was formed from within the school and all PST members have completed <i>Droichead</i> professional development with the NIPT.

Across the twelve schools the *Droichead* Quality Assurance Panel met with 36 PST members and a total of 27 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. The review panel visits a sample of schools where the *Droichead* process has taken place and discusses the process with the Principal, the PST and the NQT. Such visits are pre-arranged and take place in a spirit of collegiality and collaboration (see Appendix 2). 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 January 2019, 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

In February and March 2019, the panels met in the Teaching Council offices in Maynooth to engage in professional development before 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.

# 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 19 March 2019 and 7 May 2019.

During each school visit the panels met with the school's Principal, PST members and with 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

## 5.0 Information Tables

In compiling this report, the following scaling mechanism was applied in order to accurately represent the experiences described by schools that engaged in this Quality Assurance process.

Quantitative terms used in this report	Percentages of References in Reports Analysed
Almost all	More than 90%
Most	75% - 90%
Majority	50% - 74%
Fewer than half	15% - 49%
A few	Up to 15%

This table describes elements involved in the *Droichead* process and shows how each of these were consistently adhered to in the schools visited.

	Schools	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Strand A – School Based Induction	NIPT training for all members of the PST	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Minimum period of professional practice in an eligible setting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Engagement in professional conversations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Taisce	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Observations by/ of NQT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strand B – Additional Professional Learning Activities	Cluster Meetings attended during the <i>Droichead</i> process	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Professional Learning Activity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The findings from each school have been compiled and a composite image has emerged that covers the *Droichead* process as it was experienced by NQTs and schools during the 2017/2018 academic year.

## 5.1 Planning for Droichead

- PST members reported that the Principals' support and understanding of *Droichead* was important for its success.
- In almost all cases the Principal or Deputy Principal was a member of the PST. The benefit of having the Principal included was that they had a greater understanding of PST and NQTs needs. It was recognised that an NQT could potentially feel additional pressure when being observed by the Principal.
- In all cases the Principal supported the implementation of the *Droichead* process and the PST team in their school and saw themselves as being in an oversight role.

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

- In all schools visited and in line with policy requirements, PST members were fully trained.
- Most members of the PST volunteered, though some were encouraged to join particularly where they had mentoring experience and/or had mentor training. PST members reported that they were clear on their roles as members of the team. Most NQTs reported that they had a more developed relationship with one PST member in line with the NQTs learning need. However, all NQTs felt they could look for guidance from any member of the PST team.
- The PST team were broadly praised by Principals and NQTs, they were said to be good role models and were described as “good people doing good things” and “gold dust, an example for the whole staff.”
- PST members observed that *Droichead* made staff “More aware of NQTs” in schools and the wealth of resources they bring.

## 5.3 Droichead Expectations

- In all instances, timelines were clarified at the outset of the process as were the various roles of the PST members in relation to the NQTs.
- In almost all schools visited *Droichead* was for the duration of the NQTs' contract, not just the minimum time limit involved. (60 days or 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.
- There was awareness of *Droichead* in the schools visited. NQTs felt that they were supported and guided by their experienced colleagues.

## 5.4 Droichead Criteria/Standards

- *Droichead* Standards were used to guide the process in the form of ‘three anchors’. These anchors were introduced at the start of the year and referred to throughout the process to highlight best practice.
- They supported the PST when helping NQTs to identify their learning needs and in mapping the NQTs progress through the process.
- Using NIPT templates, school exemplars had been applied to the school setting and the individual context of the NQT.
- Using and applying the standards and the collaborative efforts of the PST contributed to consistency of the *Droichead* process across all school settings and NQTs.

## 5.5 *Droichead* Training and Support

- Initial *Droichead* PST training from the NIPT was broadly praised by most schools.
- The majority of PST members found training clarified the process.
- Almost all the schools involved felt that they could access support, some schools had NIPT associated members on the PST and a few availed of the NIPT associate/RDO visiting the school to establish the process and where clarification was needed.
- The NIPT website supports were praised and found to be very useful. All schools made use of the templates.
- PST team members found managing difficult conversations; the role plays/scenarios and the opportunity to speak with other schools and compare practices and experiences very beneficial.
- The time given at the training to work on their school criteria and the *Droichead* planning as a PST was invaluable.
- Fewer than half of schools had difficulty releasing staff members for 4 days of training as sourcing substitute teachers was a challenge.
- Many schools spoke about the need to have regular refresher training available to all PST members particularly in light of changes to the *Droichead* process.
- Travel distance to training venues was an issue for some schools, it was felt that further clarification in relation to SEN contexts and training ‘as Gaeilge’ would need to be considered for future training.

## 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 considered vital.
- Some schools would like additional time to be available for the *Droichead* process.
- Some PST members were using time outside class contact time for *Droichead* activities and meetings which they viewed as critical for the process.
- Staff members were reluctant to leave their own classes particularly at Post-Primary and substitutes were not easily accessible.
- Schools reported that the most valuable use of the release time was for observations including pre and post observation meetings and setting up the *Droichead* process. Where possible release time was also used for PST meetings.

## 5.7 Observations

- In all schools visited, two-way observations between the NQT and the PST members were taking place.
- In almost all schools, observations were tailored to meet the NQTs’ needs, and the NQT had an opportunity to observe an experienced member of staff before they were observed themselves.
- PST members reported that staff members involved, found observations beneficial, experienced teachers also noted that they learned from the NQTs.
- Some of the benefits noted were:
  - ✓ Positive impacts on the NQTs’ teaching following the observations.
  - ✓ Affirmation of practice helped develop confidence.
  - ✓ Structured feedback following observations using the NIPT templates helped to inform the *Droichead* process and action plans going forward. With one PST member informing us that “the post observation conversation became the pre observation conversation” for the next scheduled observation.
  - ✓ In all cases the observations of the NQT were carried out by PST members.
  - ✓ All NQTs also had opportunities to observe teachers who were not PST members.
  - ✓ In several schools, observations had supported a more collaborative culture in the school.

- It was noted that NQTs in the SEN setting may not have had the opportunity to be observed in some of the curricular areas.
- A minimum of two observations by the NQT and of the NQT was adhered to in all schools with NQTs having an opportunity to observe more than twice in many cases.
- Two schools voiced a fear that the minimum number of observations could become the maximum.
- It was noted by two schools that the Teaching Council Shared Learning Bursary was utilised to facilitate clustering of schools and professional learning in terms of team-teaching processes and SEN settings.

## 5.8 Professional Conversations

- A blend of formal and informal professional conversations took place in all schools during the *Droichead* process and PST 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 ongoing support for the NQT.
- PST members had opportunities to meet as a PST and discuss *Droichead*, the minutes of these meetings were kept.

## 5.9 Taisce

- The experience of using Taisce varied, in some instances it was seen to be beneficial and in other cases it was felt to be irrelevant by the NQTs visited.
- In many cases the PST were unsure of their role in relation to Taisce.
- The importance of reflection was felt to be valuable by all but was personal to each NQT's journey.

## 5.10 Records

- Clear record keeping was in evidence in all of the schools visited.
- Records kept included *Droichead* standards and criteria, Timelines, minutes of PST meetings, observation records, pre and post, DR1 emails.
- In most cases NIPT templates were found to be useful and many schools had adapted the NIPT *Droichead* Standards document to include school context examples to suit their own needs. A small number of schools had online systems put in place for *Droichead* record keeping and schools were cognisant of privacy issues and confidentiality surrounding the NQTs' *Droichead*.

## 5.11 Additional Professional Development

- All NQTs attended cluster meetings as part of their additional professional development, in line with policy requirements.
- Fewer than half of NQTs found that cluster meetings were useful and criticisms were voiced. NQTs did not find that these cluster meetings addressed their learning needs.
- The opportunity to engage with peers and to have questions answered was the most beneficial aspect to cluster meetings according to the NQTs.
- Concerns arose regarding the location and accessibility of the clusters 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 Meetings and planning inputs at cluster meetings were felt to be very useful but the timing needed to be adjusted to suit school timelines.
- It was found in some schools that not all NQTs identified their Additional Professional Learning Activity in consultation with their PST.

# 6 Recommendations

In order to ensure the quality and consistency of the *Droichead* process in schools, the panels made the following recommendations:

## 6.1 Role of Principal

- Schools should give strong consideration to having the principal involved in the process regardless of whether they opt to be a PST member or not.

## 6.2 PST selection and roles

- Schools continue to establish a PST to best meet the needs of their schools being mindful of including staff with SEN experience, of gender balance and at post-primary PST members for subject areas or with experience in suites of subjects e.g. languages/practical to match the NQTs' learning needs.

## 6.3 *Droichead* Expectations

- Schools should clarify the roles and expectations of both NQTs and PST members at the start of the process. A clear and shared understanding in relation to roles, responsibilities and expectations among the NQT, PST members and the Principal is vital from the beginning of the process.

## 6.4 *Droichead* Criteria/ Standards

- PST members should continue to use the three standards to initiate and guide the *Droichead* process in their schools.

## 6.5 *Droichead* Training and Supports

- PST members should receive regular refresher training, the delivery model should be reviewed and the use of webinars to cover some of the materials should be considered. The scheduling of training venues should be reviewed in terms of accessibility for all participants' *Droichead* training needs to be cognisant of SEN contexts and should be available as Gaeilge.

## 6.6 Release Time

- The panel strongly recommends that schools use release time that has been allocated for the *Droichead* process.
- Schools must make every effort to ensure that release time is accessed rather than relying on volunteerism.
- 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.

## 6.7 Observations

- The Panel recommends that schools endeavour to provide NQTs as many opportunities as practicable to observe their experienced colleagues to promote collaborative practice and shared learning within their learning communities.

## 6.8 Professional Conversations

- More formal conversations between the PST and NQTs would be advantageous for the *Droichead* process.



## **6.9 Taisce**

- The Panel recommends that the NIPT, schools and NQTs develop an awareness of Taisce and that the use of Taisce be further developed as NQTs move along the continuum to build on reflective practice as developed in ITE.

## **6.10 Records**

- The Panel recommends that records must be maintained in line with school policy.

## **6.11 Additional Professional Development for NQTs**

- The format of cluster meetings should be reviewed in respect of content, timing and accessibility. A webinar could be used to explain the process of *Droichead* to NQTs prior to Cluster Meeting One.
- NQTs should consult with their PST to identify an additional Professional Learning need in line with the Policy. Policy recommends that this activity can include a meeting of a Teacher Professional Networks (subject association), an online/ blended learning activity, and attendance at a conference or FÉILTE.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: DQA Panel Membership

### Chairperson: Ciarán Flynn

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 carried 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. She is currently assigned to Teacher Education and Inclusion Evaluation and Policy Support Unit within the Inspectorate. In the course of her work she provides policy support/advice on teacher education and liaises with Teacher Education Section and the Teaching Council. She is the national coordinator of the probationary process for NQTs. She also provides policy/advice on inclusion and liaises with Special Education Section.

### Frances Moss

Frances Moss is a post-primary inspector in the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in Ireland. She has carried out whole-school, DEIS and Transition Year evaluations and subject inspections of History in the course of her work in the Inspectorate. Frances is currently assigned to the Teacher Education and Inclusion Unit within the Inspectorate.

### 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 in the National Equality Committee.

### Séamus O' Connor

Séamus O'Connor was elected to the Teaching Council in the Munster Primary sector. Originally from Tralee, County Kerry, Séamus currently resides in Cobh, County Cork where he is Principal in Scoil Bhríde, Crosshaven, County Cork. Séamus is a trained mentor and involved in the mentoring of Newly Appointed Principals. He is current secretary of INTO PDC in Cork City and current PRO of Coiste Sciath na Scol Chorcaí. He is a former chairperson of Cork City South East Branch. He is a holder of M. Ed in ICT.

### 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. Elizabeth is a 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.

## Appendix 2: Protocol for School Visits

### The purpose of school visits

The *Droichead* Quality Assurance process (DQA) reassures principals, experienced teachers, NQTs and the Council that the process is fair and consistent for all. The DQA also offers your school an opportunity to shape the further development and growth of the *Droichead* induction process.

The purpose of the Quality Assurance visits is to:

- Reflect on the *Droichead* process in schools to date
- Identify recommendations and findings for future *Droichead* processes
- Ensure the process is fair and consistent with Teaching Council policy

What are the principles underpinning the work of the DQA panel?

Effecting improvement in research, reflective practice and relationships are the three pillars which support the work of the Council across all areas. As an organisation the Council seeks to ensure high standards in the induction process are upheld. In the Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education the Council acknowledges this critical period at the beginning of the newly qualified teacher's career and that the purpose of induction is to offer systematic professional and personal support to the newly qualified teacher.

The work of the Council is thus underpinned by four principles:

- Collegiality and collaboration
- Development and improvement of *Droichead*
- Fairness and consistency
- Reflective practice

These four principles, provide the standards that inform, guide and govern the work of the DQA.

### Protocol for School Visits

Before the visit

- The Rapporteur contacts the school in advance of the meeting to arrange a mutually convenient date and to discuss and outline agenda for the visit.
- The Rapporteur contacts the school approximately one week prior to the visit to discuss the nature of the visit and finalise the schedule for the day.
- A copy of the visit schedule will be forwarded to the school prior to the visit.

During the visit

- During the visit, all conversations will focus on the experience of *Droichead* in the school. The panel will engage in professional conversations with the Principal, PST and NQTs.
- The *Droichead* Quality Assurance Panel will use agreed questions as discussion points to guide their meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to gain an understanding and insight into the school's experience of the *Droichead* process.
- The purpose of the Quality Assurance Panel is to ensure that policy is guiding the *Droichead* process but it is not the role of the *Droichead* Quality Assurance Panel to review or evaluate decisions made by the PST in the school.

- The record keeping for the process is discussed to allow greater understanding of how the records reflect and support the experience of the *Droichead* process in the school.
- The DQA Panel Rapporteur will record the types of events/ processes which were discussed during the *Droichead* Quality Assurance Process.

After the visit

- The panel convene to discuss key findings and recommendations of the *Droichead* Quality Assurance Process.
- All schools and participants in the process will be anonymous and the report will outline the collective experience of schools in relation to its findings and recommendations. A copy of this report will be forwarded to participant schools and will be available on the Teaching Council website.

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