



**An Roinn Oideachais**  
Department of Education



# Inspecting (for) equity and excellence

## *Keynote address*

**Yvonne Keating, Chief Inspector**

**17 November 2022**

# Welcome



*Tá fáilte  
romhaibh go  
léir!*

Understandings of Equity and Excellence in Education;  
Connectedness with 'Inclusion' as a Concept

The COVID Context

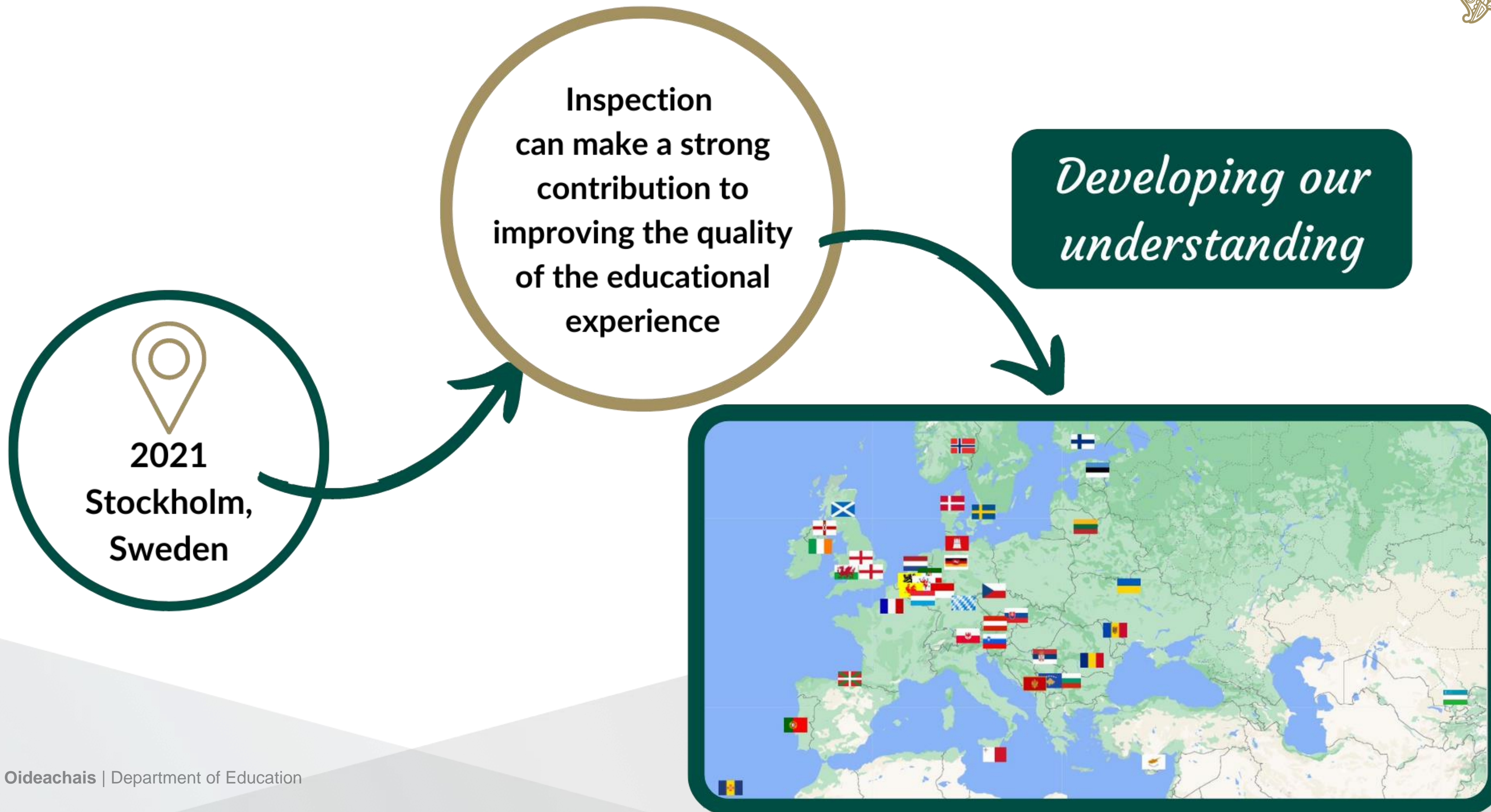
The International Context

Ireland - The Education Context:  
The Role of the Inspectorate

Looking forward: Student Participation in Evaluation



# The SICI theme: Inspecting (for) Equity and Excellence



# Towards an understanding of equity and excellence



## Equity in education:

- Fair distribution of input, process and output
- Receiving what it takes to be successful

Vanhoof

## Without equity:

- Only some progress through school having acquired basic knowledge and skills
- Only some fulfil their potential
- Only some fully participate in society

Schleicher

- Equity is a central feature and ambition of democratic education policies

*However*

- It is not necessarily evident in all education systems

OECD, World Bank

## Educational policies:

- Combine equity in education with striving for excellence
- Provide high quality education for students of different backgrounds and abilities while stimulating outstanding performance

Van el Branden et al.

How does educational excellence take account of and promote an equitable education system?

How is the education system informed and improved by doing so?

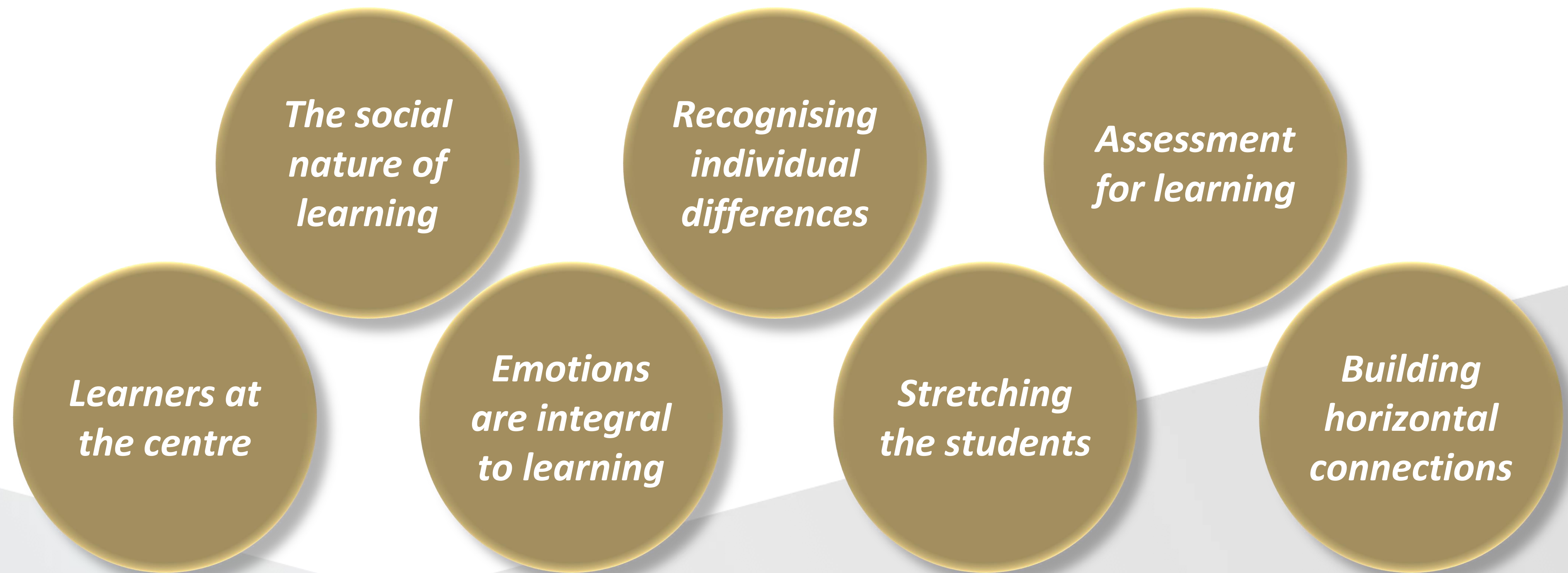


# Inclusion, equity and excellence



**Inclusive education as ‘an on-going process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and the communities.’**

*UNESCO, 2008*



# The impact of the pandemic on equity and excellence



The impact of the pandemic will be felt most keenly by children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs

*Conclusion from an ESRI report*

**The learning environment changed dramatically: a new mode, a new place, a new education 'hub'**

**Inspectorate survey, Ireland:**

- **Successes where teachers adapted rapidly**
- **Issues with equity of access to online learning**

**Demonstration of how much children and young people can benefit from good publicly provided education**

**High quality education experiences can make a difference:**

- **Structure, motivation, social connectedness, friendship**
- **Development of skills to secure economic wellbeing; fuller lives, active citizens**

# The SICl theme reflecting international aims



2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child

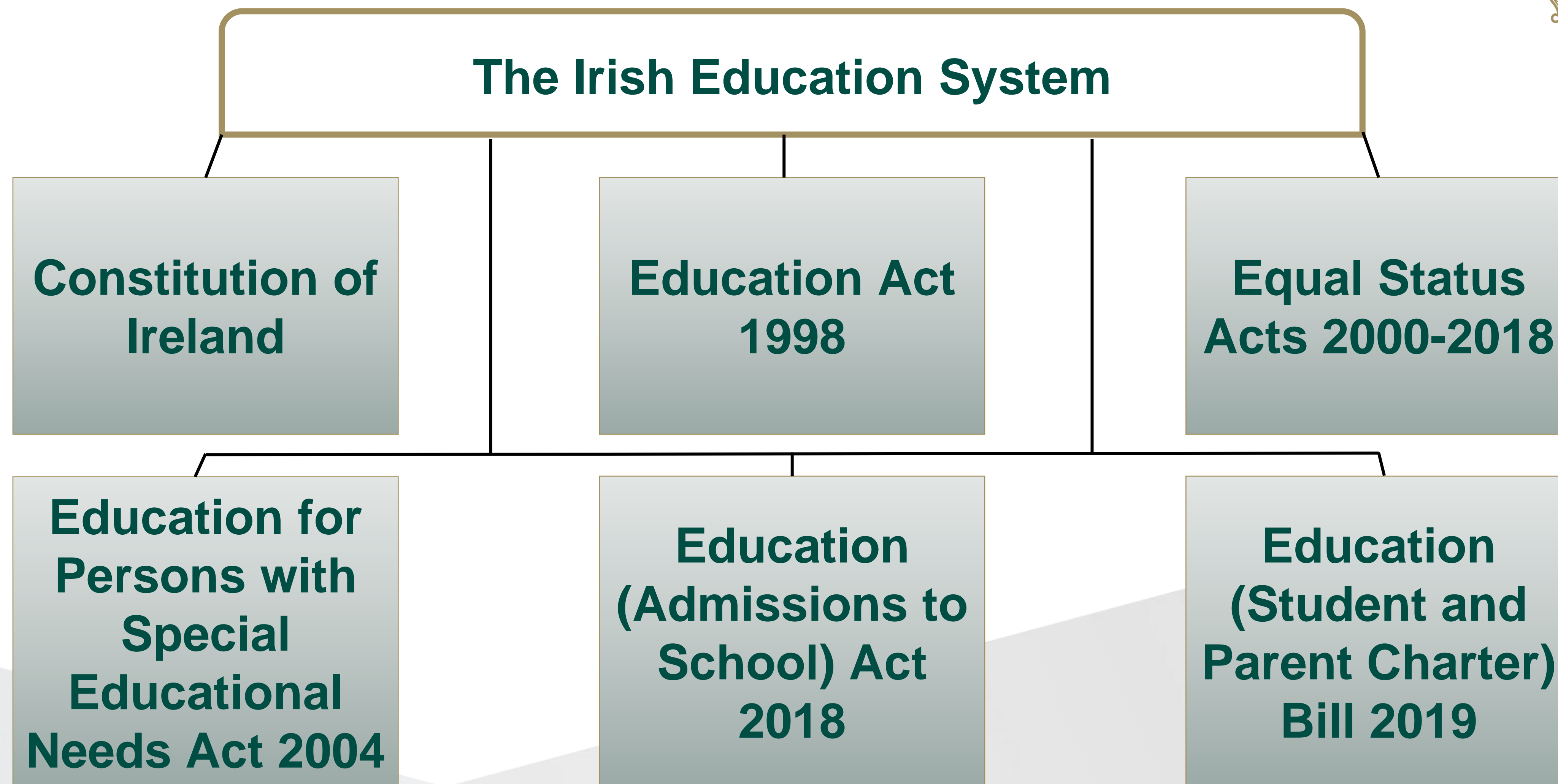
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Atlantic Rim Collaboratory

OECD Ministerial Council and Declaration on Education for Equity and Inclusion (December 2022)



# Legal underpinnings





# The policy perspective – Statement of Strategy



Vision:  
Every child and young person feels valued and is actively supported and nurtured to reach their full potential

*Three strategic goals*

- To support the provision of high-quality education and improve the learning experience to meet the needs of all students, in schools and early years settings
- Ensure equity of opportunity in education so that all students are supported to fulfil their potential
- Provide strategic leadership and support for the delivery of the right systems and infrastructure for the education sector

# The policy perspective – Statement of Strategy



*Practical  
developments*

Junior Cycle Reform

Redevelopment of Senior Cycle experience

Initiatives: Free pre-school care and education;  
Creative Ireland Initiative; STEM Education  
Policy; Digital Learning Strategy

# The policy perspective – Special Education



## How are the needs of children and young people with additional learning needs met?

- Overall policy objective: promote inclusive education for children and young people with special educational needs in mainstream settings
- Where this is not possible: specialised settings through special-class or special-school placements
- Within mainstream schools: *Continuum of Support* framework - the highest level of support to the children with the greatest level of need



# The policy perspective – Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

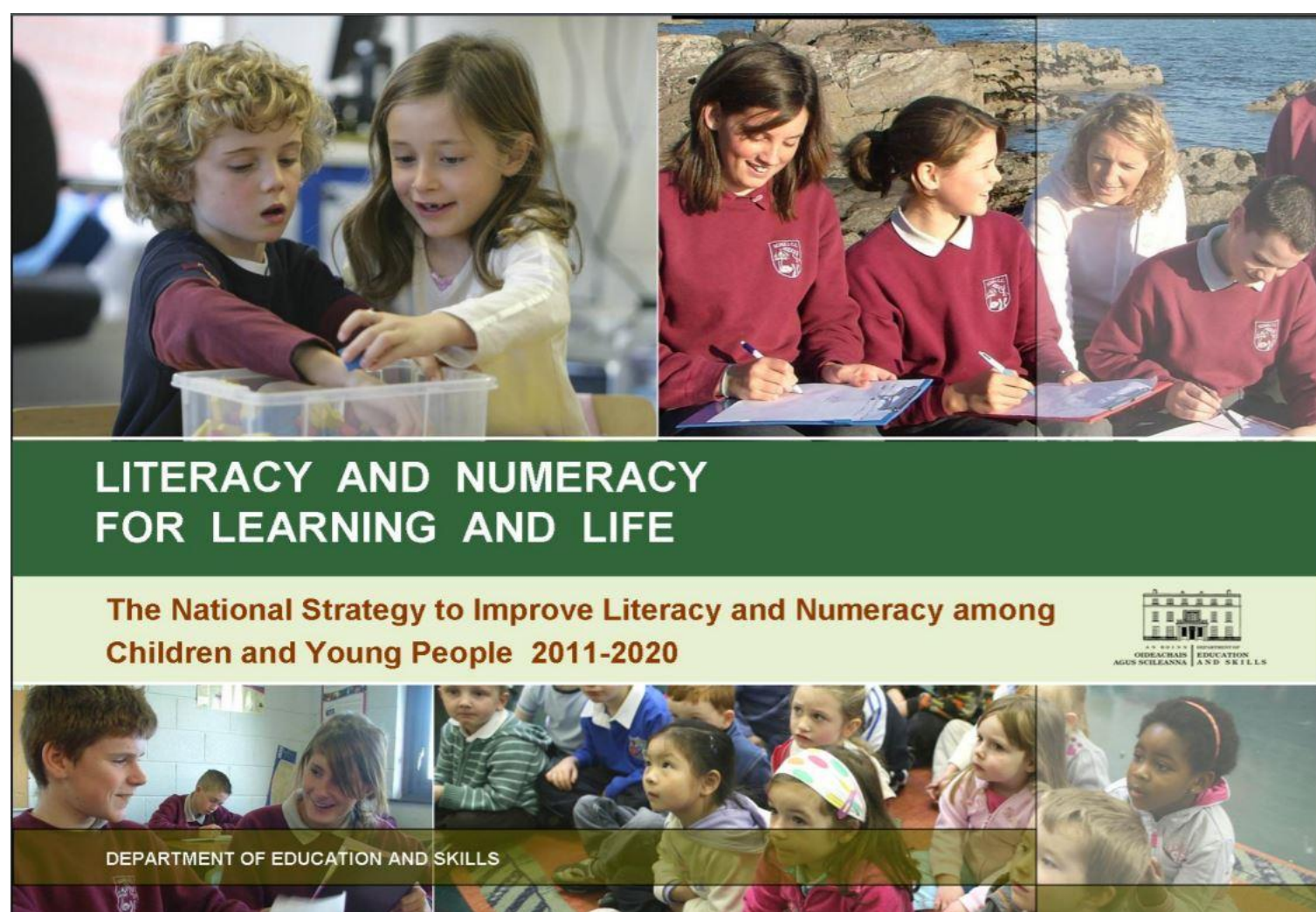


National programme addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities through additional resources with an increased focus on literacy and numeracy.



Findings from research: a positive impact on achievement in DEIS primary and post-primary schools; increased retention rates of students in DEIS schools to the end of upper secondary education.

# The policy perspective – National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy



**A vision for raising standards in schools and early learning and care settings**

## ***Interim Review***

**Significant achievements in literacy**

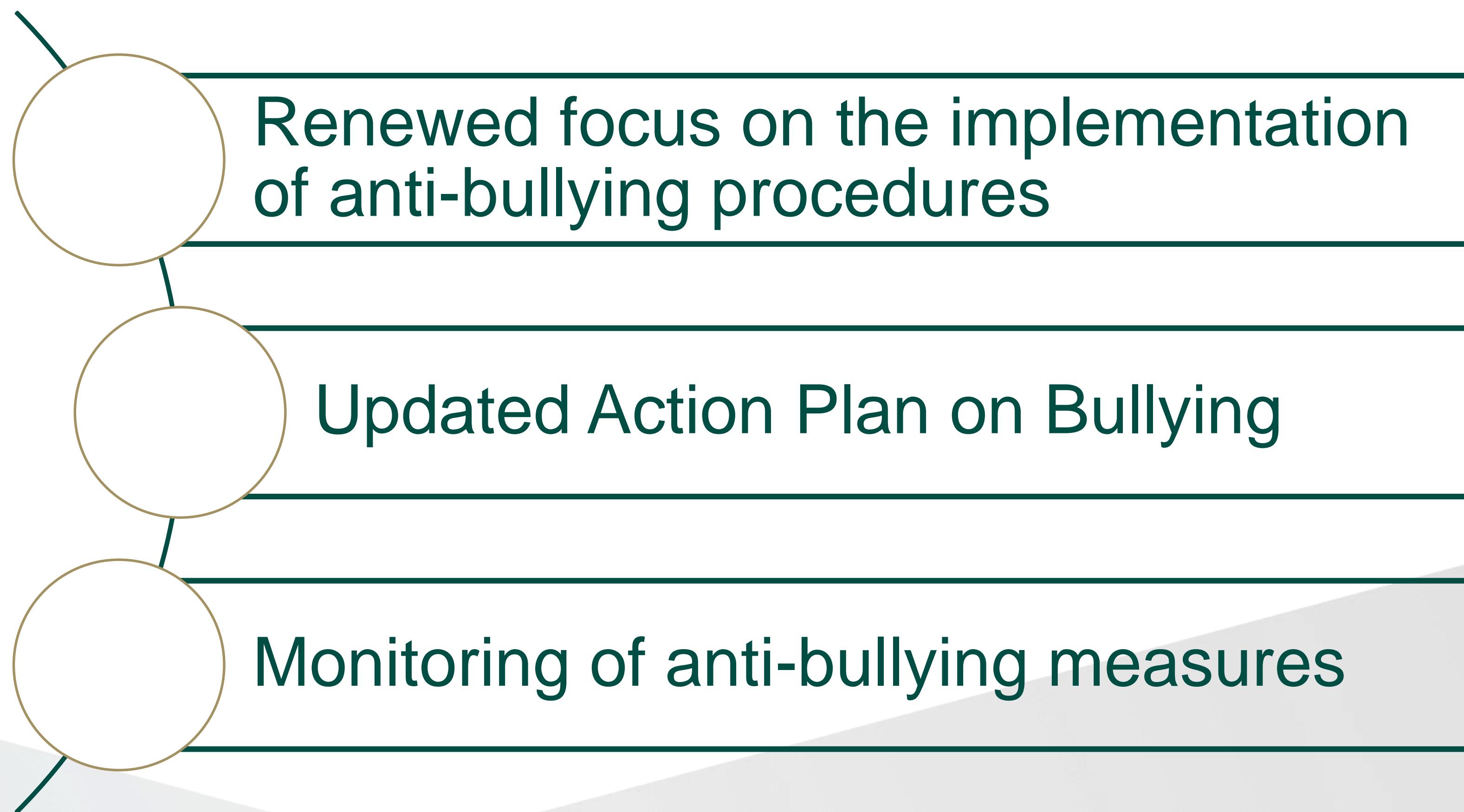
**A need to improve achievement in numeracy**

**A need to address the gap in achievement between those learners in schools with the highest concentration of disadvantage and other schools**

- Change to teacher education programmes**
- An increased emphasis on literacy and numeracy - a critical part of programme accreditation and day-to-day teaching.**

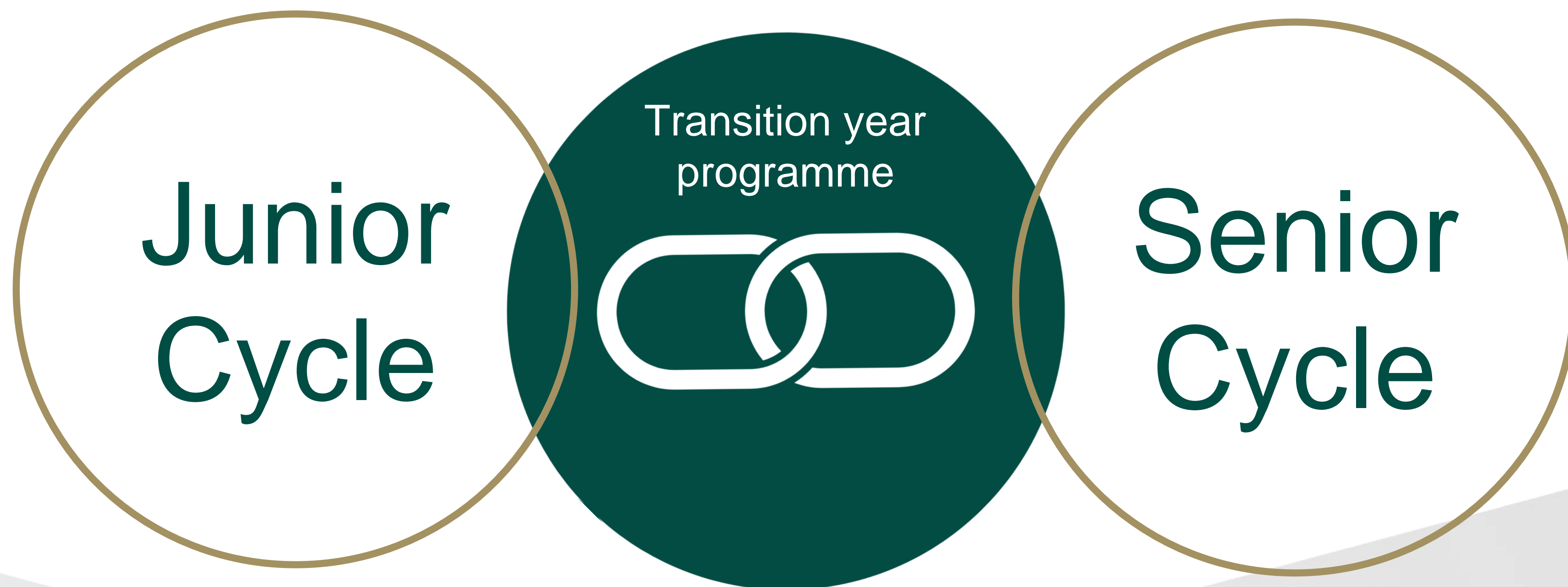


# The policy perspective – Anti-bullying





# The policy perspective – Transition Year Programme



- One year programme
- Different approach to learning

# Our vision – Excellence in learning for all



## Promoting equity and excellence in learning through:

- Quality frameworks
- Focus on students at risk / students with special educational needs
- Inspection feedback
- Co-professional, respectful way
- Publication of inspection findings
- Contributions of expert advice
- Student participation in inspection



# The sharing of inspection/quality frameworks with schools/settings



*Inspectorates that set clear expectations and standards on good education have a distinct impact on the improvement of capacity-building in the school*

Nelson and Ehren (2014)





# The sharing of inspection/quality frameworks with schools/settings



## Our quality frameworks:

- reflect recent educational thinking - inclusion, student participation, delivering equality of opportunity
- see excellence in teaching as a powerful influence on the quality of student achievement
- set out exemplars of effective and highly effective practice



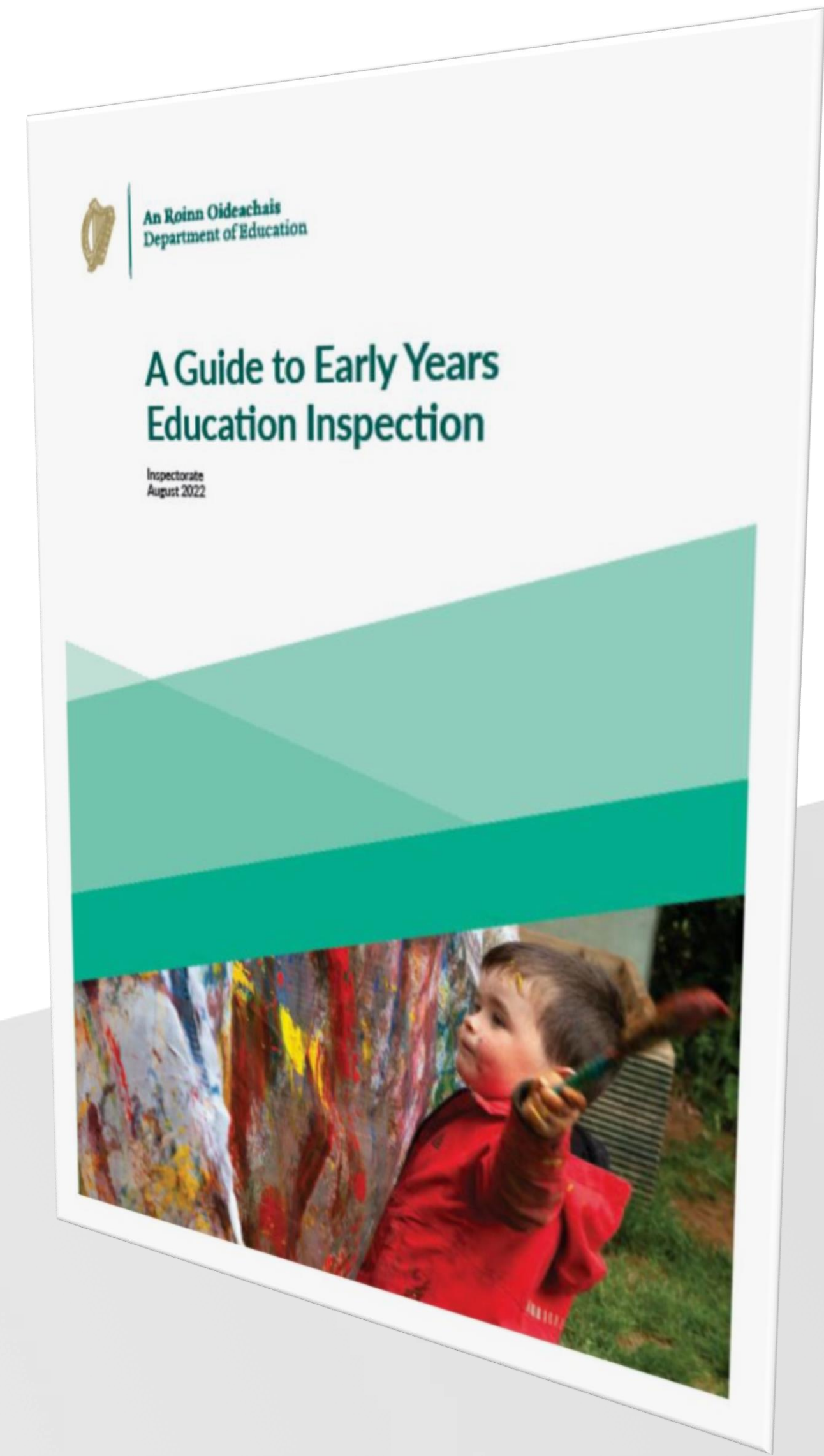


# The sharing of inspection/quality frameworks with schools/settings



## Early Years Education Inspection Quality Framework:

*“Provision for children’s learning and development is closely aligned to their interests and developing capabilities”*



# Development of evaluations that focus on equity and quality in particular contexts



Education provision and action planning processes in DEIS schools

The quality of special educational needs provision in schools

Education provision in schools attached to Special Care Units and Child Detention Centres

Supporting improvement in individual settings

The quality of teaching and learning in schools attached to Emergency Reception and Orientation Centres

Education provision in prison settings

Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections

Feeding into policy development and implementation

Implementation of anti-bullying procedures in schools

Promoting transparency and accountability through publication



# Facilitating the meaningful participation of children and young people in inspection and education



## Article 12:

“Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”  
*UNCRC, 1989*

“Children do not leave their human rights behind when they enter the school gate”  
*Committee on the rights of the child (2005)*

“We will seek and give due weight to the views and opinions of learners, according to their age and maturity.”  
*Code of practice for the Inspectorate (2022)*

- deliberate strategies to assist children in the formation of their views
- work with advisory groups of children in developing the materials and approaches we use

# Facilitating the meaningful participation of children and young people in inspection and education



## A rights-respecting approach:

- Children have a fundamental right to be part of every decision that affects them
- Our approach takes their views seriously
- It recognises the unique and invaluable contribution that children can make



## Our research and views

- Children and young people offer unique and honest opinions on school and classroom practice
- We facilitate them to express their views freely – views given due weight
- We have an important role in advocating for students' rights



# Facilitating the meaningful participation of children and young people in inspection and education



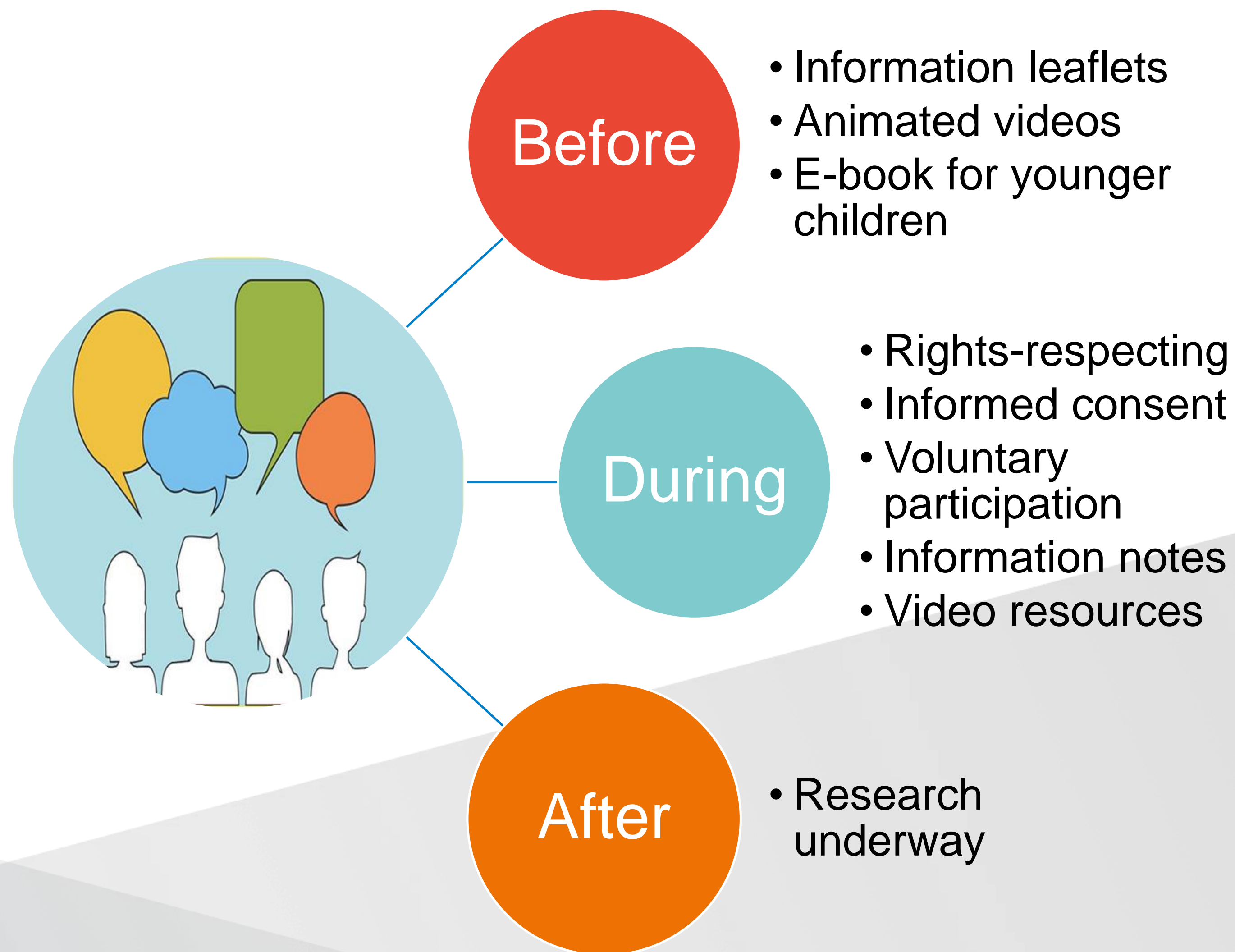
*The Lundy Model (2007)*



# Facilitating the meaningful participation of children and young people in inspection and education



## Our three-phase approach



# Looking to the future

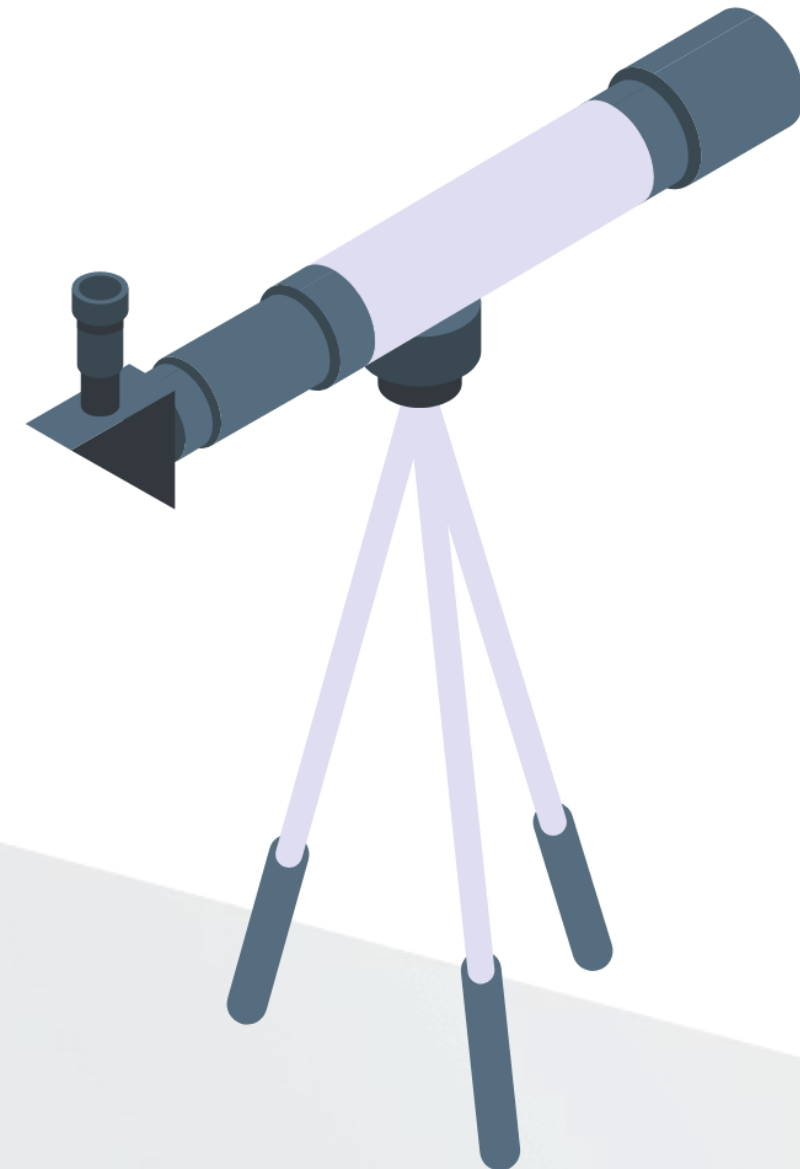


**Uncertainty**

**Technology and communication**

**A new mindset**

**Compassion**



# Looking to the future ... we need to:



Spend time and resources imagining a new educational paradigm

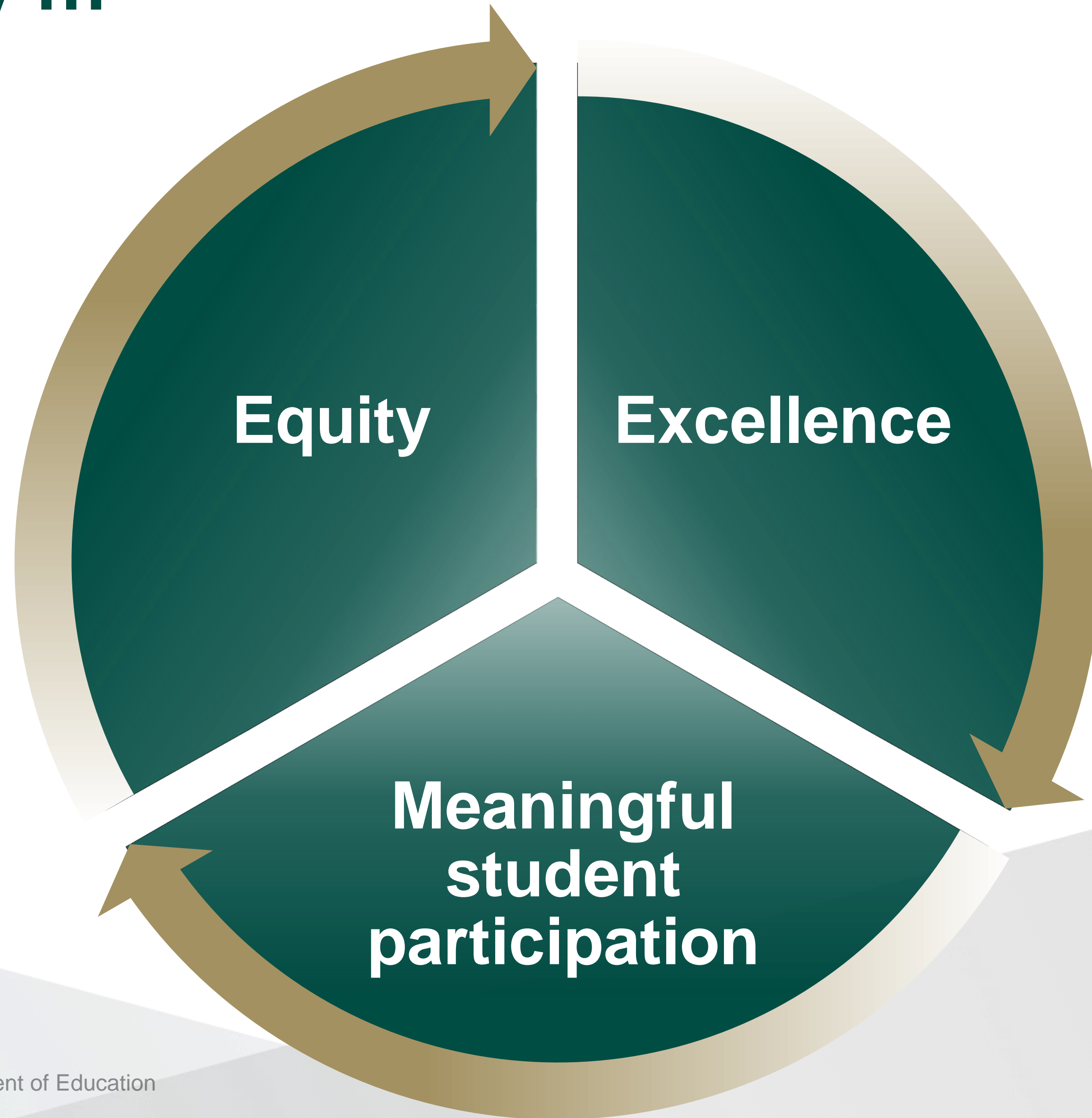
Build highly competent education systems - forging synergies for better learning

Develop capacity for excellent responsiveness to changing needs

**Educational excellence cannot be considered separately from equity and inclusion**



And finally ...



*Thank You*  
*Míle buíochas!*