iScoil Strategic Statement

2016-2019

Foreword

On iScoil we are very proud of our students who show commitment and tenacity often in the most difficult of circumstances. While we see the current model work we are motivated to develop and improve, to stay current with the fast-changing pace of online learning and the opportunities of access that technology in education is allowing. Our motivation is to grow and resource iScoil so that it can reach even more young people currently isolated or disengaged from educational opportunity and to allow them the access to enhance their life opportunities.

On behalf of the young people whose lives have been changed by the opportunity to continue their education on iScoil, we would like to thank the generosity and vision of the Presentation Sisters who have funded the project to date. Their commitment and belief in the power of education, as both a right and a route that opens the door to a bright future for our young people, has continued in their support for iScoil.

Our strategy document outlines the plan for the growth and development of iScoil for the next three years. As we go forward we hope that we can not only provide a quality service to early school leavers, but be a voice for young people who we know want to continue to learn.

Michael Doyle
Chairperson

Introduction

This is the second strategy statement from iScoil. It provides a focus for our staff and stakeholders on our mission, vision and values, and direction on our how we intend to achieve our stated goals. The statement covers the three-year period from the start of 2016 to the end of 2018 and will inform our strategic and operational planning, actions and outputs during this time.

Education and inclusion are at the heart of our work. We see equal access to learning opportunities as a key that allows individuals to fulfill their potential, live healthy and active lives and contribute to their communities. Although retention rates in Irish schools are improving, there will always be a significant number of young people who, for whatever reason do not complete a traditional second level education. There are limited alternatives for young early leavers and this is the space where iScoil provides an accessible opportunity using a range of online and blended learning approaches. As a registered Charity set up in 2009 by the Presentation Sisters, our aim is an inclusive education system where young people can continue to learn.

Our staff and Board developed this strategy statement and we were informed by recent reviews of our programme and feedback from students and families. We have identified complementary themes that are intended to work together to ensure a quality learning experience and a sustainable future. Our commitment to growth and improvement will continue over the next three years with regular reviews of our progress and a willingness to bring passion and flexibility to all aspects of our work.

Marianne Checkley
Chief Executive

Our Mission is to provide an inclusive solution to address educational disadvantage and ensure that young people have access to the opportunity to learn, achieve and progress in their lives.

Our Vision is a quality and innovative model of education that expands access to learning, respects the dignity of each young person and supports early school leavers to fulfil their potential.

iScoil Students:

- Are often out of school for at least six months and have struggled to stay in a traditional system that does not meet their needs.
- Are aged between 13 and 16 years and are still legally required to attend school or to be engaged in formal learning.
- Are referred to us by Education Welfare Officers of TUSLA[1], the Child and Family Agency.

We Aim To

- Engage young people in learning
- Nurture individual talents and personal development
- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Provide accreditation opportunities
- Support progression to further education and employment

Our work is important because:

- Higher rates of education decrease the risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.
- Reducing the average European early school leaving rate by just 1% would provide the European economy each year with nearly half a million additional qualified potential young employees[2].
- We have developed a successful programme: Each year 85% of our students achieve accreditation or progress to further education, training or employment.

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[1] State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children http://www.tusla.ie

[2] Report on the work of the Thematic Working Group on Early School Leaving from 2011 to 2014 by the European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/education/school- education/leaving_en.htm

Our Approach

iScoil has successfully created a welcoming and safe learning environment. We have a dedicated team of qualified professionals who work with our students to engage them in personalised, adaptable learning plans. We use a range of technologies and approaches to support each student to reach their individual learning goals.

Our Learning Service provides:

- Online and blended learning programmes.
- Individual Educational Plans.
- QQI Accreditation.
- One to One student mentoring and instruction.
- Multi-disciplinary and agency collaboration.
- Community based or at-home provision.

Key Principles to our Approach:

- Student-centred Learning Design
- Innovative use of emerging technology
- Collaborative support and open communication
- Flexible and adaptable learning plans and choices
- Formative feedback and portfolio assessment
- Interest-led and accessible content

We Value

- Each student as an individual.
- Student feedback and active involvement in their educational plan.
- Communication with parents, support workers and relevant agencies and services.

Our Goals 2016 – 2019

Key Theme 1: Enhancing the Educational Experience

Goal 1.1 Develop our holistic approach to each learner's individual need and circumstance	Expand the scope of our individual educational and progress plans
	Increase support for at-home learners
	Develop the iScoil Blended Learning model and partnership approach

Goal 1.2 Develop our learning model in response to identified needs to enhance the teaching and learning experience	Develop an iScoil Project Based Learning (PBL) approach
	Introduce synchronous learning
	Increase multiple modes of assessment
	Expand our content, curriculum and learning resources
	Expand our range of accreditation opportunities
	Expand our use of digital technology within the programme
	Provide regular professional development opportunities for our staff

| **Goal 1.3**
Be a voice for early school leavers in Ireland and advocate for young people at-risk of social and educational exclusion | Participate actively in research activities around Early School Leaving and online learning |
| | Provide opportunities for structured feedback from our students |

Key Theme 2: Investment and Sustainability

Goal 2.1 Ensure financial security for future development and growth	Continued Presentation Sisters support
	Secure multi-annual funding from the Department of Education and Skills
	Engage with government departments, state agencies and education providers to access relevant funding streams
	Inform all political parties of the work of iScoil and the need for multi-annual funding to support the project

Goal 2.2 Expand the reach of iScoil and raise the profile of the programme.	Develop a Communication Strategy
	Approach philanthropic and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) organisations with proposals for development strands.
	Embed iScoil into the existing educational and training landscape
	Provide strategic advice and guidance on online learning

Achieving our Goals will have the following Outcomes:

- iScoil has a secure future as an accessible opportunity for any young person at-risk of educational disadvantage.
- iScoil is a model of quality, innovation and good practice in online and blended learning.
- Multi-disciplinary partnership and collaboration is increased in creating solutions for marginalised young people.
- Young people have the opportunity to contribute to the development of an inclusive educational system.