

## Editorial

The publication of *REACH: Journal of Inclusive Education in Ireland* 36. 1 comes at a time of ongoing and indeed expanding review of national policy in relation to many aspects of inclusive education. At the time of writing in advance of the new school/academic year 2023/24, the Minister for Education announced first a public consultation process to inform the development of the new *Traveller and Roma Education Strategy* and a week later an OECD review of Ireland's *Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools* (DEIS) resource allocation policy. At the same time, the report on the consultative process reviewing the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) is still awaited.

Review of policy is of course to be welcomed and is hoped will lead to the kind of legislative and policy developments that over time ultimately followed the publication of the Report of the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) (Department of Education and Science, 1993). Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that these concurrent multiple strands of review and consultation and the differing timelines will not lead to further fragmentation and ad hoc development of education policy. Figures recently released by the Department of Education (2023) reveal that by the end of the last (2022/ 23) school year over 15,500 Ukrainian pupils were attending Irish schools. Schools in Ireland are now more diverse than ever before and there is a pressing need to reflect on and evaluate how we understand and respond to the diversity and variability of *all* learners moving beyond a focus on placement to ensure meaningful inclusion for all regardless of setting.

The articles published in REACH volume 36.1 focus on key dimensions of inclusive education policy and practice. At a time of debate about the deployment of special needs assistants (SNA) in Irish schools the first article (Carolan) offers a very timely critical analysis of some key issues while considering and offering insights from experiences of how SNAs are uniquely recruited, deployed, and supported in one special school setting. The findings emerging from a systematic review of the effectiveness of the use of children's literature to improve peer awareness of additional needs (Drohan & Kelleher) will be of interest to many readers interested in fostering an inclusive school ethos. Drawing on Irish data from a large-scale European study of inclusion in physical education, Marron reports encouraging findings while highlighting the need for teachers to continue to reflect on and question practices such as the withdrawal of children from the PE lesson and instead consider how learning activities and the environment may be best adapted to support inclusion. Four years into the trialling of the School

Inclusion Model, Gardiner presents a very timely analysis of the development of the policy in moving towards full inclusion for all students in Irish schools. She argues that autonomy, access, accountability and the needs of all students must be considered and the voices of all stakeholders must be heard in an evaluation of the policy. Thanks to the stellar work of our Reviews Editor Mai Byrne, this issue of REACH also features reviews by Cregan of *Establishing Pathways to Inclusion: Investigating the Experiences and Outcomes for Students with Special Educational Needs* (Rose and Shevlin) and *Language, Power, and Resistance: Mainstreaming Deaf Education* (Mathews).

Following the successful move to online open access publication, I am delighted to announce a revamped look for the journal over the next year which we hope will also enhance accessibility for all our readers. Finally, the Editorial Board is pleased to announce a forthcoming special issue of REACH focusing on *Deaf Education: A 50-year Retrospective*. Details can be found in the [Call for Papers](http://bit.ly/3qyfYHT) [bit.ly/3qyfYHT](http://bit.ly/3qyfYHT)

**ANNA LOGAN**

Editor