



accs

Association of Community
and Comprehensive Schools

*Cumann na Scoileanna Pobail
agus Cuimsitheacha*

**Opening Statement to the Joint Committee on Education and Skills on the topic
of the status of non-teaching staff in schools.**

Respondent Details:

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Introduction

The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, ACCS is the representative body for the Boards of Management of 96 Community and Comprehensive schools providing a multi-denominational, inclusive and comprehensive education to over 60,000 post primary and further education students. Many of these 96 schools provide lifelong educational opportunities to approximately 25,000 adult learners in self-financing adult education programmes in the communities they serve. In many cases school facilities are made available for local community use outside school hours.

Pre-Moratorium Position

Prior to the introduction of the public sector moratorium with effect from 27 March 2009 Non-Teaching Staff positions (Clerical & Maintenance) were approved and allocated by the Department to Community and Comprehensive Schools in accordance with the number of pupils enrolled as outlined in the following table.

Secretarial Posts (W.T.E)	Student enrolment	Caretaker Posts (W.T.E)	Student enrolment
1.0	Up to 375	1.0	Up to 418
1.5	376 to 625	1.5	419 to 506
2.0	626 to 750	2.0	507 to 550
2.5	751 to 1,200	2.5	551 to 750
3.0	1,201 to 1,650	3.0	Over 751
4.0	Over 1,650	N/A	

Moratorium March 2009

Since the imposition of the moratorium on appointments in the public service Community and Comprehensive Schools have been restricted to the appointment of positions to a maximum of 1 clerical officer and 1 caretaker.

This has severely curtailed the ability of schools to provide the quality of service they require in their schools.

Alleviation April 2019

ACCS appreciates the Minister for Education and Skills' acknowledgement of the administrative burden on Community and Comprehensive Schools particularly for larger schools, by his recent relaxation of the moratorium with effect from 1st April 2019 for those with enrolments of 700 or more which will allow them employ an additional Clerical Officer up to a maximum of two per school. This welcome alleviation is seen by ACCS as an important first step in the restoration of essential posts in schools. A timeframe for the complete alleviation of the moratorium is now required.

Cumasú, Action Plan for Education 2019

Action No.74 in the 2019 Action Plan commits to *“Support the operation of a high-quality school system through the annual provision of teaching and financial supports...”* This is consistent with Goal 3 of the previous Action Plan for Education which stressed the need to provide, *“ongoing practical support to the key people in the education sector is vital if we are to realise the ambitious objectives that we have for Irish education”*. ‘Looking at our School 2016, A Quality Framework for Post Primary Schools’, rightly places an emphasis on the leadership of learning and teaching in schools. Goal 4 of Cumasú, the 2019 Action Plan records *“We will intensify the relationships between education and the wider community, society and the economy.”* An open, welcoming, well-maintained environment is fundamental to achieving this aim and our clerical officers and caretakers play an essential role in our schools. It is also of interest that one of the indicators of Pupil Wellbeing is whether *“The physical environment of the school is well kept and bright.”*

It is essential we support school leaders with adequate clerical and maintenance personnel to ensure they can meet their requirements in leading learning and teaching for the benefit of all learners in schools.

Increased regulation and work load

During this moratorium schools continue to grapple with significantly increased regulatory obligations in areas such as data protection and child protection. This has been accompanied with the introduction of the Post Primary Online Database and the introduction of new financial reporting systems with the support of the Financial Support Services Unit, FSSU. Clerical officers are key to the delivery of these initiatives. Without adequate clerical officer support in these areas school management cannot deliver on their obligations. The additional workload is no longer sustainable.

With reductions in maintenance staff, facilities cannot be maintained to the required standards. The immediate is all that can be addressed and essential planned maintenance programmes are difficult if not impossible to implement. This is simply storing up potential problems which will ultimately require significant expenditure to correct. Adequate Caretaking and Cleaning personnel is essential to meet The State Claims Agency obligations under Managing Health & Safety in Schools. Many Community and Comprehensive Schools provide access to facilities to their local communities outside of school time. This tradition will be potentially damaged due to the lack of availability of caretakers to open and maintain facilities.

Clerical and maintenance personnel provide loyal and dedicated service in schools throughout the country and it is time to ensure the required levels of staffing are restored to provide essential services in schools.