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**Opening Statement to the Oireachtas Committee on Education,  
Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science**

**John Boyle, INTO General Secretary**

**Thursday, 19 November 2020**

**Check against delivery**

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- In the month since we provided you with our submission, issues are being dealt with more efficiently and effectively, however, principals along the border, where there is a disconnect between the HSC and the HSE, need extra support – as do all principals at weekends.
- The 2021 minor works grant announced last week will not be sufficient for the installation of air-monitoring systems.
- The €25 per pupil additional capitation grant for enhanced cleaning in primary schools, which is only €3.50 per day extra to clean a classroom, is totally inadequate and will be spent by Christmas. Further funding will be required.
- The €50 m budget for digital learning must be allocated fairly bearing in mind that primary schools have always been short-changed on ICT funding.
- 80% of teachers stated that it was the children with special educational needs whose learning had been impacted most during the school closures. It is imperative that additional resources and supports be invested in Special Education.
- The Government must undertake a further review of the requirement for high-risk teachers to attend schools and must send a strong message to families who travel abroad over Christmas, that children will have to restrict their movements in line with Public Health advice prior to returning to school.
- Government should have provided a free flu vaccine to all teachers. We insist that when the Covid-19 vaccine becomes available that all those who work in our schools be prioritised for this vaccine.
- 1000 schools outside the supply panel scheme are struggling to source substitute teachers. We must expand this service early in the New Year.
- A government announcement that pay inequality in the teaching profession will end in the next public service pay deal, will be key to solving the teacher supply crisis in 2021.
- We call on Minister Foley to meet education unions this month to share the concerns of our members in respect of the safety and sustainability of schools from January onwards.

**Go raibh céad maith agaibh as an cuireadh labhairt libh**