

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

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## AN ROGHCHOISTE UM OIDEACHAS AGUS SCILEANNA

### SELECT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND SKILLS

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*Dé Máirt, 2 Bealtaine 2017*

*Tuesday, 2 May 2017*

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The Select Committee met at 4 p.m.

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#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Deputy Richard Bruton (Minister for Education and Skills),	Deputy John Halligan (Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills),
Deputy Thomas Byrne,	Deputy Catherine Martin,
Deputy Ciarán Cannon,	Deputy Carol Nolan.
Deputy Jim Daly,	

DEPUTY FIONA O'LOUGHLIN IN THE CHAIR.

**Estimates for Public Services 2017**

**Vote 26 - Education and Skills (Revised)**

**Chairman:** I remind members, officials and those in the Gallery to ensure their mobile phones are switched off for the duration of the meeting as they will interfere with the broadcasting equipment. The meeting has been convened to consider the Revised Estimate for Vote 26 - Education and Skills, which was referred by the Dáil to the committee with an instruction to report back.

I formally welcome the Minister, Deputy Richard Bruton, the Minister of State, Deputy John Halligan, and their officials. I thank them for their open and constructive dialogue with the committee secretariat's financial scrutiny team in developing the briefing document for this meeting. I inform the Ministers that the committee has agreed to proceed programme by programme and will initially focus on specific subheads before broaching any questions relating to the remainder of the programme. We will refer to the briefing document prepared by the financial scrutiny team of the committee secretariat to guide our consideration of the Revised Estimates. In programme A we will start with subhead A3, primary teachers' salaries, on page 10 of the committee secretariat's briefing. Members should indicate their interest in contributing on that topic.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** I was not fully apprised of how the Chairman was handling this, but we will be-----

**Chairman:** I must check something. We did not get it beforehand, but we have now been given the Minister's opening statement. Would he like to make it before we move on to questions on the subheads?

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** We will question the Minister on his opening remarks.

**Chairman:** Absolutely, after he makes them.

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Whatever the committee prefers, I will be happy.

**Chairman:** If the Minister would like to give his opening remarks now, that is what we are used to.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** I thank the Chairman for the invitation and her introduction. I agree wholeheartedly about the need to have a meaningful Estimates process. We have tried to do that in how we have presented them and have provided information on inputs, outputs and, where possible, outcomes. Through the Action Plan for Education process, we are trying to create a more meaningful environment in which outsiders can see what we are setting as priorities, how we are pursuing them and what we are measuring ourselves against in terms of what represents success. I am keen on this process. Having spent most of my time on that side of the counter, it is important that the Estimates process become more meaningful.

I will go through the basics. If all of the members have to hand my statement, I do not need to repeat it. We have a 5% increase in our budget - €465 million - this year. It comes after

a difficult period. We lost a number of years during which investments that everyone would have liked to have been able to make in various ways were not possible. The demands for extra money are legion. It is a question of deciding which areas deserve priority and allocating the money as best we can.

Between last and next September, we will have 4,600 additional teachers. Most members will agree that these teachers are filling important gaps that emerged in our education services, for example, guidance counselling, a matter in which Deputy Byrne is interested. Some gaps arose in the field of special educational needs, in which respect we are this year providing for the introduction of a new resource allocation model. It was drawn up by the National Council for Special Education, NCSE, and piloted in a number of schools and is a better and fairer way of allocating resources in an area of significant priority.

We also found additional money for the DEIS programme. For the first time, we have introduced a model based on statistical analysis. Under this, schools do not have to lodge applications. Instead, the number of pupils enrolling and the profiles of the areas from which they are drawn allow the Department to identify schools with the greatest concentrations of disadvantage. This has identified 79 new schools for which we are providing additional resources in order to include them in the programme and 30 schools have been upgraded from band 2 to band 1.

This is the start of a process. As is the experience of most Deputies, I know of plenty of schools that have not been included in the programme because the cut-off point for the 79 new schools was the highest level of concentration under the old model. It is our ambition to improve, refine and examine our instruments. For example, we are prioritising access to educational psychological services for DEIS schools.

In terms of special education, I should have mentioned that we are also trying to create an integrated support service, ISS, within the NCSE. We must build schools' capacity to manage children with special needs. The integrated service will be a significant addition. Deputies can see from the text the considerable investment in recent years in resource teachers and special needs assistants, SNAs. This has been a priority for me and the Department.

The difficult years also impacted on the middle management of schools. This year and last, we have started restoring middle management at deputy principal level and other posts. Undoubtedly, we must evolve a middle management structure that is fit for the 21st century. That work will take considerable time. A centre for school leadership has been established to support and provide leadership capacity building in schools. This is a priority area.

We are investing additional resources in the roll-out of the junior cycle. We have made provision for time off each year. It is the equivalent of 550 posts. This will allow teachers to have 22 hours off in the year to prepare for the introduction of the new junior cycle curricula, which require a different approach to teaching and learning. It is important that teachers get time to prepare - upskilling and professional development - and execute the new model. This issue is controversial for some but the direction the junior cycle is seeking to take the education system is the right one. It values a wider range of intelligences among participating pupils and does not rely exclusively on a memory test at the end of three years of study.

As we all know, higher education got no resources from the State for nine years. That has had a considerable impact. This year, we have been able to invest €36.5 million in third level and secured a commitment to the provision of an increase in the budget every year to reflect

the significant growth in student numbers. The projection is for a 25% to 30% growth in the coming years.

Recently, we published a consultation document on the proposal to provide an additional €200 million through an Exchequer-employer mechanism to support the expansion of third level. The third element of the Cassells report, that of income-contingent payments for students, is being examined by this committee but we are not waiting for the outcome of that examination to proceed. We are making provision.

My final point will be on capital. Every year, we must create more than 20,000 additional places in primary and secondary levels. As the bulge moves from primary to secondary, the provision of those places becomes more expensive per unit, given that building costs are greater at secondary level than they are at primary. This is putting pressure on our budgets but we have a good record of proceeding with projects and building to high standards. I have had the privilege of seeing that. In terms of higher education, Grangegorman is the flagship project.

I will leave it at that and not take up the committee's time.

**Chairman:** I thank the Minister. His statement was appreciated. In future, it might be useful for us to have his opening statement prior to the meeting in order that members would have an opportunity to scrutinise it.

I suggest that we deal with subhead A3, primary teacher salaries, on page 10 of the committee secretariat's briefing document. Deputy Byrne had indicated that he wished to speak about this. He may do so first and I will then take questions from other members as they indicate.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** This covers a huge range of areas and forms a huge bulk of the budget, so many issues come under it rather than simply the salary amounts of primary school teachers. I ask the Minister to comment on the issue of pay equality. Is he willing to advocate at the Cabinet table for pay equality for newly qualified primary school teachers? In fact, they are nearly newly qualified at this stage because many of them are developing into well-thought-of and long-established members of their schools. I call them young teachers but really they are newly qualified, or nearly newly qualified. That is why they have become such a voice and such a vocal campaign on this issue. There are so many of them now, and I think they feel that the Minister needs to advocate for them, that they should not have to just rely on themselves or their unions and that either the Minister or the Minister of State, Deputy Halligan, should take up the cudgels on their behalf at Cabinet to seek pay equality because it is a basic principle of equality. It is the kind of policy nobody could really be against, in truth, so why has the Minister been reticent to commit to it?

My next questions also come under this subhead. The Minister has said the additional teachers are filling important gaps, but can he tell us the number of teachers that are actually filling gaps and are not simply addressing demographic issues? How many extra teachers are in the system above the demographic requirement?

**Chairman:** I thank the Deputy.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** I have other-----

**Chairman:** I apologise. The Deputy may go ahead.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** I can talk about the junior cycle later. May I talk about the circu-

lar on school costs, which is an issue I would like to raise with the Minister, later? It does not really come under salaries.

**Chairman:** I do not think it would come under school salaries.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** May I speak about salaries later?

**Chairman:** Yes. They would come under-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Miscellaneous grants, I suppose - subhead A14.

**Chairman:** Yes.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** May I raise it when we come to discuss that subhead? Is that how the Chairman wishes to work the meeting?

**Chairman:** Yes.

**Deputy Catherine Martin:** I wholeheartedly agree with Deputy Byrne and echo his call on the Minister. It would be very helpful at this stage if the Minister would commit to the principle of equal pay for equal work. It is no longer a matter of newly qualified teachers, NQTs, but lesser-paid teachers, LPTs. If we are truly to value education and the job primary school teachers do, in particular in shaping our young children, we should hear the Minister commit - just that word - to the principle of equal pay for equal work.

**Deputy Carol Nolan:** I thank the Minister for his briefing on the Estimates and I concur with the points made about teachers' salaries. It is still a huge issue that is causing division and low morale in many staff rooms across the country. We need a commitment to equal pay for equal work, which is only a very basic and a reasonable commitment, and I ask the Minister to make that commitment.

I have a few points about the Revised Estimates report. Regarding subhead A9, school transport-----

**Chairman:** We will deal with the Estimates section by section-----

**Deputy Carol Nolan:** Fine.

**Chairman:** This subhead just concerns primary teachers' salaries.

**Deputy Carol Nolan:** That is fine.

**Chairman:** As Chairman of the committee, I completely endorse the points made by Deputies Byrne and Martin about equality of pay for our new entrants into the system. I have visited a number of schools, as I know many of us have, particularly over the past year, and have been incredibly impressed by the commitment, dedication and enthusiasm of the new teachers whom we are very lucky to have in the system. They are being treated very poorly in respect of their pay and conditions. I also ask that the Minister and his Department commit absolutely to restore pay equity to them. Regarding primary teachers' salaries, and considering the metrics, I also make the point that sometimes we can consider purely the instruction time within a classroom from the teacher's perspective but not really consider the teacher's working day. The teacher's working day can very often be much longer than the actual instruction time a teacher gives to his or her pupils. I now return to the Minister for his comments regarding this subhead.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** I thank the Deputies for their contributions. I am very glad to have been able to sit down with the three teachers' unions and hammer out a deal with them which effectively restored three quarters of the gap for newly qualified teachers. The two scales are now identical at the later points, so we have made very substantial progress on that in these negotiations. Furthermore, we have secured for teachers earlier access to permanency, new promotion opportunities, flexibility in the use of Croke Park hours and flexibility as to whether teachers do substitution and supervision duties. Across a range of concerns for the trade unions, we negotiated a deal under the arrangements available under the Lansdowne Road agreement which, as members will be aware, two of the three unions have accepted. It was narrowly defeated by one union.

Regarding the continuing demands of the unions for progress in the pay and conditions of their members, a Public Service Pay Commission has now been established and is due to report very shortly. I know that both the INTO and the TUI have made very robust submissions to that process. When the commission reports, negotiations will commence between Government and trade unions on these issues. The issues involve not just the teaching sector, but many other sectors that have been affected by FEMPI. Members will have seen that the Minister, Deputy Paschal Donohoe, has pointed out that if FEMPI were to be unwound entirely, which is clearly an ambition of Government, it would cost €1.5 billion. That would absorb all the flexibility for not just one budget, but several budgets. In the pursuit of equality and fairness, I must also balance the needs of many others who have legitimate demands on the €450-odd million available to me. That balance must be struck. Every year, we have 15,000 additional pupils to cater for, we must provide for the places and the teachers for them and we must invest in areas such as disadvantage, special need, guidance counselling and so on, which I think most members would regard as having an equally high demand. My job is to try to balance these different demands. Of course, trade unions representing the teachers will continue to pursue these. We now have a framework within which the unions that have accepted what was possible under the Lansdowne Road agreement are continuing to pursue those, and the Government has said it has the ambition to unwind FEMPI over the period.

Regarding the other issue raised, at primary level, demographics last year accounted for about 440 additional teachers, which is roughly the figure per year. We have been providing teachers, between primary and secondary, at a rate of 2,260 this year, and 2,400 are to be provided this coming year. Yes, demographics account for a significant part of this provision, but not the majority, not even 50% of what we are providing. For example, at primary level, we are providing 580 special educational teachers this year. September coming, the figure will be 580; last September it was 445. We also reduced the pupil-teacher ratio, PTR, last September for primary schools. There were 300 additional teachers. This year, we will provide 100 additional teachers in DEIS schools. A significant number of teaching posts come from demographics, but they must be found. We are finding money for much more than that for the additional needs where we are trying to provide additional services. This provision is balanced and shows that we are getting additional-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** May I clarify that? The Minister mentioned the PTR last September and the DEIS posts next September. What will come this September?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** There will be 580 special education and-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Extra?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Extra, and 100 extra teachers in DEIS schools. That is 680 com-

pared to the demographic provision, which will be 440 at primary level.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Are those 440 part of the 680?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** No. The 440 come from the demographics-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** That is the teachers.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** -----plus 680, so it is 1,120.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Are the 440 just mainstream classroom teachers?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Yes.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Will some of the special education provision be based on demographics as well?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** No.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** If there are more kids coming in, there will be a greater need demographically for special education teachers.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** The demographic need is met by the 440. That is just the number of pupils, but we are also providing additional-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** There will be an increased number of children who have special needs within that increased number of pupils unless the percentages decrease.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** That analysis can be done, but-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** That is the analysis I am seeking.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Does the Deputy want to know what percentage of special education-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** What percentage of that demographic has special educational needs?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** We do not have a figure. It cannot be known until children present. Under the new model, provision of special education is based on a profile. We are providing not just for the existing profile but also for 900 additional schools over and above what the existing profile of special education would suggest. We are providing an additional resource and are moving away from the concept of having to have an assessment.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Is the Minister not able to tell me what proportion of that figure is based only on what is actually required by the number of kids?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** The 900 - 580 at primary level and 320 at post-primary - is an additional resource to meet special educational needs.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** I understand that, but it looked like the Minister's officials thought it was a good question because they were discussing it. How much of that additional resource is just to cover the increasing number of children with special needs? It might be only a handful. The absolute numbers are increasing.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** We do not have a figure for that.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Okay, but some of it must be demographic related. If there are more kids coming in there would be more-----

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** The 440 represents whatever percentage of 30,000 teachers 440 is, so-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** They are classroom teachers.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Yes. That is, therefore, a relatively small percentage. A small percentage might be added. We will work out a figure and get it to the Deputy.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** If the Minister can. I can understand that DEIS is extra, but I am just wondering-----

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** It would be a relatively small percentage. Pupil numbers are not growing at a rate of 10% per annum or anything like that. It is a relatively small number, so we are increasing the resource teaching base by that small number.

**Chairman:** We will request those figures. While the extra investment in DEIS is certainly very heartening and welcome, it sometimes seems that students are nearly more disadvantaged if they are not in a DEIS school. There is a roll-out of a number of programmes for DEIS schools, which is very welcome and will certainly help and support the children there, but equally there are children with disadvantage in a number of other schools that do not have DEIS status.

We will move quickly on to subhead A4, which relates to secondary comprehensive and community schools. That is on page 12 of the briefing. Do any members wish to indicate on this matter?

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** The same issues that we have talked about already apply to junior cycle reform and teacher training, although perhaps that does not come under this heading. The Minister is putting a lot of resources into professional training for the junior cycle, and yet one of two the unions involved is officially not taking part in it. How many hours are being paid for ASTI teachers who are not attending the courses? Is that a factor in how the Minister adds up his figures or does the Department only pay to cover the TUI members who are attending these particular courses?

**Deputy Catherine Martin:** On the money that is available to the Minister for the provision of salary increases for TUI and INTO members, what moneys are available to him should the ASTI come on board? I am sure the Minister is watching the call for the special convention within the ASTI. Who knows what could happen there. Something could happen sooner than we think. Is the money there if the ASTI comes on board?

On middle management, if that is the word for it, can I discuss that here within secondary schools?

**Chairman:** Yes. I think so.

**Deputy Catherine Martin:** I am glad the Minister is carrying out a review but it is really at crisis level. The Minister knows how vulnerable many children in these schools are. I am aware of one DEIS school where the principal has had to take on the role of student council

liaison teacher, traditionally a B post. The same principal now holds, due to retirement, the A post of first year head. He is dealing with first years transitioning from primary to second level. It is a crucial role. The usual route for disciplinary procedures in a school is from class teacher to year head to vice principal to principal, but for students in first year in this school their year head is their principal. From a discipline point of view it is chaos. It is a recipe for disaster. That needs to be addressed as soon as possible as there are vulnerable children suffering.

I welcome the two thirds restoration in the guidance allocation. What is the timeframe for the full restoration of guidance teachers? I am sure it was just a turn of phrase but, with all due respect, I do not think teachers would appreciate the phrase “time off” in respect of training for junior cycle. It is not time off. Teachers are preparing to do their jobs. It is work. I assume that was just a turn of phrase and there was no negative intent.

**Deputy Carol Nolan:** On guidance counselling, we have called time and again for guidance counselling to be ex quota, outside the normal staffing schedule. It is a huge issue for many schools and it is unfair to give principals the responsibility of allocating guidance counsellors within the staffing schedule. If we are to think of our disadvantaged students and the impact the cuts over recent years have had, the least we should be doing is putting guidance counsellors in place ex quota.

**Chairman:** I certainly agree with that. It would be useful, when we have the opportunity to examine the Estimates, to have metrics such as the ratio of guidance teachers to pupils in schools. That would certainly be very helpful. It is regrettable that the ASTI is still outside the agreements, because we are not really going to progress an awful lot while it is. There are relatively positive indications that there could be some type of resolution and that certainly has to be taken into account.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** I have an issue I omitted to raise. Not to cause problems for anybody, but is it possible to set out clearly the position of union members who leave a union? If an ASTI member leaves, and I am not encouraging anyone to do so, and stays outside the union, does he or she get the benefits of the Lansdowne Road agreement? Does such a person have to join the TUI to get the benefits of the agreement? Is that happening on any scale?

Guidance was mentioned, and of course second level is the right place to bring it up. Again the Minister in his contribution used the quota. This is deliberate confusion because when most people hear ex quota in respect of guidance, they think it means the situation that pertained up to 2012 before Ruairí Quinn cut that ex quota guidance counsellor provision. They think it means guidance as a separate allocation outside the quota. The quota means in practice that if the maths teacher or the French teacher can give the guidance, once he or she has given guidance the Minister is happy with that. In our confidence and supply agreement we specified the reintroduction of guidance counselling. That can only have meant the restoration of ex quota guidance counselling. This budget will have to tell a tale in that regard. Strong words have been expressed to the Minister on this issue and it needs to be delivered upon. There has been some improvement. We acknowledge that and we are happy with it, but we want to go the whole hog with this. This deliberate confusion and setting out to confuse people is very clever of the person who wrote it, but it is not impressing people when they dig deep and really begin to understand it.

**Deputy Catherine Martin:** I have a comment on what I said earlier and on what Deputies Byrne and Nolan have brought up. I would welcome the restoration of ex quota guidance counsellors. I would be appalled if there is a play on words happening because those involved

are playing with students and children who need this support as it was before the 2012 cuts.

**Deputy Jim Daly:** I call on the Minister to elaborate on the question posed by Deputy Thomas Byrne regarding the status of teachers who are not aligned to a union. This has been the subject of several parliamentary questions that I have put down. I have been in correspondence with the Secretary General on the matter in recent times. I am rather confused about this issue. Deputy Thomas Byrne posed a question as to whether there are situations involving teachers who have left the ASTI and who have been refused entry to the TUI. They are told in no uncertain terms that the other union will not take them and, *vice versa*, if a member leaves the TUI, there is a corresponding agreement between the two unions.

One of the teachers I have been posing questions about wanted to continue the job as year head. This went against the union directive, so he had to resign his union membership to take up the job of year head. Whether that was right or wrong – I think it was right, for what it matters - he chose to put the children's welfare and his job as a year head before his union membership. He has been blacklisted from the other union and cannot join it. As I understand it, the Department does not recognise him. He does not accrue the benefits under the Lansdowne Road agreement because he is not a member of a union. That is my understanding and his understanding, although I stand to be corrected on the matter. I am keen to know the Minister's thoughts on the matter. I think it is a bizarre situation to have teachers who, because they are not members of a union, are not enjoying the full benefits that accrue to others who are members. Effectively, that amounts to the Department insisting that a teacher must be a member of a union. Perhaps the Minister will outline his thoughts on the matter and on the question, as posed by Deputy Thomas Byrne.

**Chairman:** I thank the Deputy. I will hand over to the Minister.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** I will address the issue of guidance first. I am absolutely committed to the full restoration of guidance. There is in no question of trying to play weasel words. I am not only committed to that but I am committed to expanding the National Educational Psychological Service by 25% as well to support the student needs to which Deputy Catherine Martin has referred. This is in addition to rolling out a well-being programme in the junior cycle that will represent significant additional hours. I have had a number of meetings throughout the country with people at the coalface seeking to shape these programmes in order to maximise their impact.

The approach being taken by the Department is to ring-fence the additional resource for guidance, but the idea is that it would be required to be delivered within the guidance plan. As Deputy Thomas Byrne said, this allows that at some level there can be others providing guidance. However, the predominant delivery of guidance will be-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Can a mathematics teacher provide guidance and still come within the circular?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Only to a small degree but-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** To what degree? Where is that specified?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Obviously, the guidance counsellor has to be the person involved in drawing up the guidance plan. We are going to conduct a survey that will identify: the extent to which guidance counselling is being delivered; the extent to which one-to-one services are being delivered; the extent to which other elements are in the guidance plan; and the extent to

which the delivery is as we intend it. Bearing in mind the concern, we are conducting a survey to see what exactly is done in schools so that we can be in a position to ensure that what we have amounts to best practice. There is nothing wrong with a science teacher providing some element of career guidance in respect of science choices. There is nothing wrong with the guidance plan having some flexibility around what is delivered. That is why we have had a guidance plan at the heart of the process since 2004. I hear what Deputies are saying. We are conducting the survey to establish exactly where we stand.

The issue of where teachers are allocated at second level was raised. Demographics at second level will represent 450 of the additional teacher places this year, which will come to 1,620. At post-primary level, the vast majority - almost 1,200 - of additional teachers are going to be in areas between middle management, curricular development, the DEIS programme, special educational needs, guidance and so on.

The issue of the 550 posts was raised. We have made provision not only for TUI teachers but ASTI as well. The ASTI proportion of the 550 teachers would probably be the equivalent of 300 or 320 in order to allow those hours to be considered professional time to be worked by teachers preparing for the junior cycle, as Deputy Catherine Martin said. The same is true of salary increases. We have made provision for €140 million to meet the cost of the agreement we have negotiated with the three unions. It makes provisions for ASTI members as well as the others.

I am conscious of the question regarding principals who find themselves stretched. We are trying to rebuild. Between this September and next September we will have restored 420 deputy principals. There will also be 1,000 additional middle management posts, with the relevant premiums attached to represent middle management responsibilities being taken. That work has to continue. In particular, the Deputy raised concerns about principals being stretched. One thing we are doing with the DEIS programme is looking specifically at the transitions to which the Deputy referred. We will be trying to take initiatives to support the transitions that can be problematic in DEIS schools.

Another issue raised relates to whether a teacher could join a union. The general provision is that a person does not leave one union that is in dispute in order to join another. That is an accepted principle within collective bargaining, industrial negotiation, balloting, disputes and so on. The other established principle, as I understand it, is that if a teacher is in an ASTI school, the collective agreement has been negotiated by that union. Therefore, teachers do not get the benefits if the ASTI has not entered into an agreement. Those who are in a school governed by an ASTI agreement do not get the benefit of changes for which they do not have a collective negotiation. It is different for dual-union schools. Those are the constraints relating to membership of unions and people switching and joining other unions. Obviously, a person can apply to join a union at any stage but the convention within the union movement is that if someone is a member of one union that is in dispute, then that person will not be accepted as a member of another union at the time. Obviously, that is a matter for the unions. It is not a matter for the Department, as I understand it.

**Chairman:** I know that two supplementary questions are coming. Deputy Thomas Byrne is first.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** My question is on guidance. The Minister stated that a mathematics teacher would only be able to provide guidance to a small degree. Is there any restriction in the circular on the time a mathematics teacher can spend giving guidance?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** The guidance plan would be the-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Does the Minister's circular restrict it?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** No, the circular states that the school must apply the additional post being made available for guidance. We do not insist that it is by a guidance counsellor. The guidance plan is a plan drawn up predominately with the leadership of the guidance counsellor. We are supporting the guidance plan. Deputy Thomas Byrne raised this point. I do not detect that principals are trying to undermine counselling in any way. In fact, the opposite is the case. When I meet principals throughout the country, it seems that they recognise the importance of well-being support and that they are supportive of the investment in guidance and well-being supports generally. I do not see, as some would project it, principals trying to undermine some objective in the restoration of guidance. This is why, in light of concerns expressed, we are doing a survey to establish what are the facts on the ground. It is not my understanding that there is a substantial amount of maths teachers or others who are providing guidance. It is a small element of a plan that we do not debar the use of those teachers and the guidance plan does not. The models on which our guidance model is based perceive guidance as a whole school responsibility and not just the responsibility of one individual teacher within the school. It is within that model that the circular was drawn up.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** I am not accusing principals of trying to undermine this plan but am I correct in saying that under the Minister's circular and allocation, he would have no crib with a school if all the hours are provided by non-guidance counsellors? If, for example, maths teachers were to provide all the hours of guidance the Minister would not be unhappy?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** No. I would be unhappy about that. There is a provision that the school must be providing guidance by somebody-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** But it could be the maths teacher.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** No, because they have to show that they have-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** They have to be guidance counsellors.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** They have to have people who are professionally equipped.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** The circular does not look for people to be qualified guidance counsellors and the Minister knows that.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Our survey-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** It is a bone of major dispute between the Minister and the Institute of Guidance Counsellors that the circular does not require that.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Our survey will be establishing-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** The Minister has just said that schools will need people who are equipped.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Yes, exactly.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** That is exactly why the Institute of Guidance Counsellors have been criticising the Minister.

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**Deputy Richard Bruton:** This dates way back to beyond my time. The guidance plan dates back to 2004 and it has always envisaged that it is more than guidance counsellors and that it is a whole school responsibility. The plan always provided that there was scope for other than the guidance counsellors but it envisages the guidance counsellor as a core element. The guidance plan is built around the professional delivery of the guidance counselling service. It is not an exclusive thing but to satisfy Deputies' concerns, I am conducting a survey in order that we can establish what is the practice and approach.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Why would the Minister not want the guidance counsellor to deliver any of those hours? Under the Minister's circular, the guidance counsellor would not have to deliver any of the hours.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** I do want guidance counsellors but I have not provided exclusivity. I have not said that every part of the guidance plan must be conducted by guidance counsellors-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** The Minister has not said that any of it is to be provided by guidance counsellors-----

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** -----because the approach-----

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** -----under the extra hours.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** That is because the approach-----

**Chairman:** Can I interrupt here because I think we are getting more into policy.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** This is a really important issue.

**Chairman:** It is a hugely important issue, I do not deny that for a second, but it is something we need to discuss at another time.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** It is the nub of the confusion that has been put out there by the Department.

**Deputy Catherine Martin:** I wish to comment on the same issue. The Minister has said that he would expect them to be professionally equipped but earlier he spoke about best practice and said in the same breath that there is nothing wrong with a science teacher giving guidance to a student. One could, however, have an excellent science teacher who has no idea what courses are available out there because the truth is that the guidance counsellors in the schools are in regional groups that meet regularly and unlike a science teacher, they constantly update and share their skills and information with one other. We would not expect the guidance teacher to teach some science on the side so why would we expect the science teacher to teach some guidance on the side? This all goes back to the original decision in 2012, before the Minister's time but he was in government. I believe the role of the guidance counsellor is completely undervalued by the Government and its predecessor. It is an absolutely crucial role and yet we wonder why one in six students in college is dropping out in first year. They are not getting the proper guidance counselling because since 2012, they have not been receiving it.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** I will go back to what I said. I have made a large commitment in this area to both restore guidance counselling, which will involve 600 posts, and expand the National Educational Psychological Service by 25%, which will mean 65 additional educational psychologists, as well as to roll out a well-being programme that will have 400 hours.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** They have nothing to do with guidance counselling. Nothing.

**Chairman:** Can Deputy Byrne hold on please?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Deputy Martin suggested that the guidance plan should never use people of appropriate skills to provide appropriate support. The idea of the guidance plan is that it is a whole of school responsibility. The plan provides that if a school had within its staff number a science teacher who was very well equipped, who had access to information and who was well placed, the guidance plan would have the flexibility to deploy that teacher with those specific skills to provide guidance on choice of career or education path to pupils. The concept of a guidance plan is not to find some way of outfoxing guidance counsellors to try to provide this resource from some other element of the school. The purpose of having that flexibility is to offer the student the best possible support available within the school so that if there is such a gifted individual, the guidance plan would make provision. That is all it is doing but to meet the concerns expressed by Deputies, I am conducting a survey to establish the practice within schools. If there is a concern in this regard, we will be able to address it. I envisage the guidance plan as being predominantly delivered by guidance counsellors but I recognise that if it is a whole school responsibility, there would be some element of the plan that may be delivered by other staff members who have a particular aptitude for doing it.

**Chairman:** I thank the Minister for his response. The point was well made by my colleagues on the absolute importance of the appropriate career guidance counselling in schools. We look forward to the results of the survey and in having some input possibly at that point.

I am conscious that we have only reached two subheads and there is a number we need to get to. We shall move on to subhead A5.

**Deputy Jim Daly:** I had indicated that I would like to comment.

**Chairman:** I apologise; I did not see the Deputy indicate.

**Deputy Jim Daly:** I want to revert back to the issue of membership of the union. I have correspondence from the Secretary General on this issue and replies to a number of parliamentary questions but as I understand it, the Department at present is not in a position to afford the same benefits unless one is a member of a union. My question is not about interchanging unions, I have a lot of correspondence and detail on that; my issue is how the Department views a member of the teaching staff. My layperson's reading of this is it is compulsory to be a member of the union to accrue the full benefits. Our colleagues were speaking earlier of equal pay for equal work. I am interested to hear the Minister's views because I am concerned that the Department is not in a position to recognise people who, for whatever reason, are not members of a union. People do not have to be in a union and I do not believe we should be forcing anybody to be a member of a union if they choose not to. Not being a member of a union is an irrelevance but they should be entitled to the same benefits as those who are members of a union.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** The position is that collective agreements are negotiated with trade unions, which are recognised as representing staff in the public service. It is normal industrial relations practice in the public service that the decision of the trade union - recognised as holding representative rights for a particular grade or sector - will determine the position for all relevant staff in that grade or sector. That is the practice. Where the ASTI holds the representative rights for a particular school, it is the ASTI's agreement or non-agreement to a collective agreement that determines whether the provisions of that collective agreement apply

to the individuals within the school. That is the position. Where a school has mixed or dual union representative rights that are recognised then the policy is different. There is also the other element, as I understand it, which is the fairly established convention where in the course of a dispute people do not switch unions. The ASTI currently holds the representative rights for a particular grade or sector within the teaching area and that approach is the approach right across the public service. It is not just an education approach. It applies to members of affiliate unions and so on with collective agreements. I can send on the note to the Deputy to elaborate. It goes through some additional information.

**Deputy Jim Daly:** The point I am trying to make is it is unfair that were I to start a teaching career in a school in the morning, I could not avail of some pay increase that has been agreed because I am not a member of a union. If it is going on in other Departments I would say that two wrongs will not make a right. I do not think this is a justification for it. Personally, I believe a wrong is being done because we are, *de facto*, saying-----

**Chairman:** Can I suggest that the Minister and the Department take a look at this?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** The policy is not that of the Department of Education and Skills, to be fair, it is a general policy. Lansdowne Road is a collective agreement between Government and the public service committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. It is voted for collectively, and applies to members of affiliate unions. Allowing acceptance or rejection of collective agreements by staff on an individual basis would undermine the collective approach taken to public service pay agreements to date and the system of free collective bargaining generally. It is an issue of fairly strong principle to defend the possibility of collective agreements being conducted.

**Deputy John Halligan:** My reading of it may well be wrong but what are known as procedural agreements are reached between unions and management, or management and workers, in a particular area and most of the procedural agreements made with teachers are made through teacher unions. When I worked, procedural agreements were made between workers and management through a particular union and nothing was done outside of that. I am not saying that is right or wrong. People have the right not to be part of a union if they do not wish to be - it is preferable that they are - but sometimes it comes down to a procedural agreement. The Minister may be right in the sense that the objective would be to have an agreement with a union rather than individuals doing so with management. That leads to all sorts of chaos. This is why there are procedural agreements.

**Chairman:** I thank the Minister of State for his response. However, we have a situation where teachers who felt that the union of which they were members had not dealt appropriately with the situation and, on principle, they felt they should leave it. They want to join another union and are precluded from so doing. That is absolutely wrong. We are not going to resolve it now, but I suggest that we return to it at another point.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** We will keep it under review.

**Deputy John Halligan:** We should not deflect from the arrangements that are made, including inter-union arrangements, which may well have nothing to do with the relevant Department.

**Chairman:** That is a point. It is something we need to keep an eye on. We move to subhead A5, ETB teachers' salaries. Since members do not have any questions or comments we will move onto the next section.

Subhead A6, salaries of special needs assistants in primary and post-primary schools. Do members have any queries on this?

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** There is obviously a new model for the allocation of special education resources but I will leave my question for now, it fits into another category.

**Chairman:** It would be useful to see metrics for the number of school applications and the number of SNAs allocated. It would also be useful to know the number of appeals and the population of students to which the SNAs relate, and would demonstrate the level of support. I wonder where within this the autism spectrum disorder, ASD, units come into play? Some areas have a very low number of ASD units. For example, County Kildare only has 11 units. This morning, I spent an hour and a half with the mother of a young boy who is in fifth class in primary school and who has no prospect of getting a place in a secondary school when he completes primary less than 18 months from now. That is a matter of great concern and I see that mirrored across my constituency. I am sure it is the case in every other constituency. I know this matter is somewhat separate from the salaries of special needs assistants but it is related to that. So many schools need to have special units and they need to have those six students. In my experience, schools are saying that they can access the six students but are having their applications for special units turned down.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** We can provide some data. It is a little out of date but I am sure they are available more generally. In the 2014-2015 year, there were 5,287 applications for SNAs at primary level and 59% were granted. There is data going back further - a time series is available. It seems that an average of approximately 60% of the applications are granted. They are done by the NCSE against a matrix for allocation that was, I believe, worked out in the 1990s. That allocation matrix and process is under review as part of the general review of the SNAs being conducted by the NCSE. I do not have information on the number of appeals with me but I am sure I can get it for the Chairman.

The approach of using ASD units has expanded very rapidly in recent years. In 2011, there were just over 500 ASD units, whereas today there are nearly 1,200, so it has grown very rapidly. I recall, from a reply to parliamentary question, that there are a number of ASD units planned for in County Kildare, either in new builds or-----

**Chairman:** They are all in north Kildare.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** I am not sure of the exact geography. The special education needs organiser, or SENO, along with the parents and children will try to decide on the best allocation. I have the SNA numbers here. They do not reflect pupil numbers but they provide an idea. Of the 32,000 students accessing SNAs, 18,500 are in mainstream classes, 6,300 are in special units and 7,800 are in special schools. There is a distribution across different environments for delivery of special needs assistants depending on the most appropriate accommodation of the child. On the allocation of the SNA, it is always done on the same basis, that they look at the needs of the child from a caring perspective. The allocation is 32,000 and I suspect that sort of pattern would be reflected across most counties. The number of students accessing SNAs in special units has more than doubled in the past five years. There is definitely a change in pattern there.

**Deputy Carol Nolan:** SNAs play an invaluable role in our schools but there seem to be gaps in provision. When children with special educational needs transfer to secondary school, they get little or no SNA support. I have had parents come to me who have children with

heightened anxiety, where the SNA was just walking the child to his or her classroom. We need to change that and ensure that a child with special educational needs in secondary school gets full support from an SNA. That support should not stop when they leave primary school. It is a problem that needs to be addressed.

**Chairman:** We will move on to subhead A9, school transport services. I ask members to indicate in respect of questions they would like to ask. I assume the Minister of State, Deputy Halligan, will respond.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Depending on what figures one looks at, the numbers are going up. Someone said there are four new routes this year but the number of students has gone down. It is very static. What plans does the Minister of State have for the school transport scheme? Are changes proposed for this year? Will there be more reviews or will it stay the way it is without changes being made to it?

**Deputy Carol Nolan:** On the same issue, the 2017 targets aim for fewer children to be provided with school transport services in terms of numbers and percentages. This is despite an increase in the overall student population. The figures also show a target for a reduction of 250 routes compared with 2015 figures with the relevant funding remaining the same. Can the Minister of State elaborate on the policy decisions behind this and on how he intends to implement it? Significant numbers of children are on concessionary transport each year and this number is growing. It appears that the only means by which these targets can be met is if the students currently availing of school transport are refused. I am aware of situations where this has happened. I would be grateful if the Minister of State could outline his rationale for the figures and his plan for dealing with this issue in the future.

**Chairman:** Are there other queries?

**Deputy Catherine Martin:** I brought this subject up before. I do not know if the Minister of State spoke to the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Deputy Ross, about the vision for transport and the possibility of biofuel or looking at a greener way of running school buses.

**Deputy John Halligan:** A number of issues were raised. Approximately 114,000 children use school transport. This number has been increasing significantly. About 12,000 special needs students use school transport. The cost of school transport works out at about €182 million per year. Out of that, 30% is spent on special needs. Members should remember this is a very comprehensive and detailed service. We are talking about over 4,000 vehicles on a daily basis serving primary and post-primary schools, covering almost 100 million km and moving 114,000 children twice a day. In respect of the plans for school transport, it is very simple. An analysis will be done every year on the number of children who indicate, particularly those who are eligible. Members should remember the school transport scheme is basically for those who are eligible for school transport although we carry thousands of concessionary children. The number of concessionary children has increased dramatically over the past four or five years. The Department tries to get an indication to the best of its ability as to how many children are taking up the transport scheme, particularly eligible children, from one year to another. We specifically put emphasis on special needs, which is of significant importance to us, to make sure every special needs child who needs school transport will get it. The total number of children using school transport has actually increased this year from approximately 113,000 to 114,716. Interestingly, 410 new services were introduced in 2016, which is 30% more than in 2015. A total of 365 of those services were for children with special educational needs. Every six months or as often as we can, we assess the number of eligible children and special needs children who

need school transport. We do our best within the budget we are obliged to work within. Of course, criteria are set down covering things like routes and definition of routes.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Will there be changes to those criteria this year?

**Deputy John Halligan:** We are looking at the appeals system about which many members rightly spoke and with which they have some difficulty. We expect to receive some information on the appeals process over the next five or six weeks. We carried out a complete review of concessionary transport. We will write to everyone over the next couple of weeks regarding changes we are proposing. The objective will then be to bring together again the group of Deputies from all parties regarding what we have done with concessionary transport and appeals. This is very difficult. Essentially, almost 99.9% of people are happy with the system. There are some flaws and difficulties, particularly on concessionary transport, buses and minimum numbers required for a bus. I must make it clear that a Deputy will often state the minimum requirement for a bus is ten but as members know, someone will come along with seven. Where do we stop? Do we bring it down to five, four, three or two? Some criteria must be laid down. Overall, the statistics prove that an overwhelming majority of people whose children use the transport system are happy with it. There are some glitches and difficulties in the system that we are still trying to iron out with the review regarding concessionary transport and appeals. I have put some relevant questions to the Department that the Deputy requested me to ask. The Department will come back to me in a number of weeks. We will have a meeting with the group of Deputies to go through it again.

**Chairman:** Are there any supplementaries relating to that? We will move on to subhead A14, miscellaneous grants and services, on page 16 of the briefing.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** This probably really comes in under subhead A10 but the Chairman will probably let me away with it. It is about capitation. The circular on school costs issued by the Minister last week is all bark and no bite. The Minister set down a list of rules for schools to comply with but in respect of the capitation grant, he said that when resources allow, he would put in some penalty or give some incentive for schools to comply with the circular. Are schools obliged to comply with the circular? Are manufactured-in crests illegal or can schools continue to do what they have always done? The circular says that all elements of a school uniform shall be purchasable from various stores but it then goes on to talk about how exclusive supply arrangements must go out to tender. I do not know the exact text because my iPad has died. Those two statements seem to conflict. The circular says that elements of a uniform shall be purchasable from various stores but then envisages exclusive supply. When will these penalties or incentives be brought in? What happens if schools do not comply with the circular in the mean time?

**Chairman:** Are there any other queries?

**Deputy Carol Nolan:** The 2016 target for high-speed broadband in primary schools was 25%. Can the Minister advise if this has been achieved and what allocation has been set aside to improve high-speed broadband access in primary schools? Is there high-speed broadband in all post-primary schools?

**Chairman:** Similarly, I was looking to see where the capitation grant would come in and felt that it was possibly under this heading. That is one of the most important issues for parents and communities. Every year, surveys carried out by Barnardos and the credit union movement find that families, especially those with more than one school-going child, are under

severe pressure and must significantly increase their borrowings. The capitation grant must be increased because schools find it difficult to raise the funds they need as they rely on local communities, which can be extremely difficult depending on location.

I was surprised by the correlation of certain metrics in different expenditure areas. The highest number of metrics - five - was for this subhead. Provided the metrics are appropriate, the more of them that are available, the better because they allow us to examine how money is spent and what types of outputs are delivered. While broadband in schools is extremely important, it is also important that schoolchildren have access to broadband at home. I was surprised that the only metrics provided are on high-speed broadband. It is important that children are computer literate and can use information technology for research purposes and so on. I wonder if DEIS grants are included here. Surely there should be other ways of measuring other grants and services. I ask the Minister to comment.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** On school costs, what we have set out are principles of a keen cost approach, if one likes. We have made it a requirement that schools consult parents. We have also set out principles such as the need to use generic and low-cost items rather than branded and higher specification items using an approach where they are available in different locations. These are the principles of keen cost. We recognise that some schools have arrangements in place and we make the point that these arrangements can deliver keen costs. For example, schools can tender collectively and achieve a keen cost outcome. We are providing that these agreements should be tendered at least once every three years and that keen cost principles should be applied in new tenders. This means schools should not opt for high-cost branded items.

This reflects the view expressed by the Chairman that parents are under pressure. In an ideal world, we would be able to ease this pressure by increasing capitation. However, there are many other pressures in the education system and we are seeking to ensure schools co-operate by taking a keen cost approach. It is appropriate that the Department supports schools which take this approach. When capitation is increased, I will give recognition to schools that seek to keep down costs. These are the guidelines that apply in schools.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** The Minister has not yet made any announcements in this area. There are no penalties and incentives applied.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** There are no penalties.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Schools do not have incentives either.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** There is an incentive in that if schools fail to deliver keen costs, we will, in time, provide a greater increase in capitation to schools that operate a keen cost approach.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** The Department has not yet done that.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** We have made provision to take that approach.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** When will the Department do so?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Each year, we examine our budget and what is available to invest. This is providing an incentive which immediately offers parents access to lower costs where these can be delivered, while also recognising schools that are making an effort by allow-

ing an additional support to those schools in future.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** When will that occur?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** We have to negotiate each year in the budgetary context. I cannot make a commitment at this stage but it is part of the five-year programme of Government to increase capitation.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** One would be forgiven for believing this approach was already in place as the Department has issued a circular and made a public announcement on the issue. It is not in place, however. This is a case of all bark and no bite.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** There was no suggestion that this approach was in place. It was always made clear that what we are trying to do is establish principles of keen cost provision. We want to provide for consultation with parents and this will be done over time through a parent and student charter. We are providing that where exclusive agreements are in place, they should be open to tender. We are also providing an incentive to support this approach. This will not happen overnight but a process is in place that will keep down costs.

As the Chairman noted, reports from the Irish League of Credit Unions have shown the pressure parents are experiencing. Everyone in the education system must make a contribution to keeping down costs. Schools must not specify expensive branded pads when other cheaper items could be used.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** Will the Minister clarify the issue of branded products in schools? Has the Department banned the use of uniforms where crests are sewn or manufactured into items? Has the Minister instructed schools not to use these types of products?

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** We have made provision in this area. If the school has an agreement with a supplier, the agreement can continue but it would have to be tendered again within a period.

**Chairman:** I am conscious that the debate is straying again into the area of policy.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** This is a very important issue. Schools are waiting to find out if capitation will be increased or decreased and the Minister is not giving anything away on the issue. He has, however, raised expectations among parents that it is being dealt with when that is clearly not the case.

**Chairman:** I am conscious of time because the joint committee is due to meet on higher education at 5.30 p.m.

**Deputy Thomas Byrne:** The witnesses can appear again tomorrow.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** On the roll-out of high-speed broadband, all post-primary schools have access to high-speed broadband and the number of primary schools with access to high-speed broadband has increased from 200 to 1,100 since 2015. Clearly, much remains to be done in rolling out broadband. According to the statistical report, 3,262 or 33% of primary schools were supported by the Department.

**Deputy Carol Nolan:** To provide some clarity on capitation rates, which were not increased in last year's budget, will they definitely be increased in this year's budget?

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**Deputy Richard Bruton:** Nothing has been decided for this year's budget. Consultation will take place across all Departments. The Ministers for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform will invite all partners to make contributions, as they did last year, and everyone will have an opportunity to contribute to the budgetary process. We have just been through a series of meetings with teachers' unions, management bodies and other stakeholders in the education system. There are a substantial number of asks, if one likes, but the allocation of resources will not be decided until budget time.

**Chairman:** I will briefly take questions on the other subheads in programme A as the joint committee is due to discuss the Cassells report with four witnesses at 5.30 p.m. I ask members to specify the subheads to which they wish to refer and keep questions short. After the Minister responds, we will adjourn our discussion of the Revised Estimate and reconvene at another time, either later this evening or on another day. I suggest, therefore, that we complete the discussion on programme A before deciding how to proceed. Do members have other questions on programme A? As there are no further questions, we will adjourn. I thank the Minister for Education and Skills, Deputy Richard Bruton, the Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills, Deputy John Halligan, and their officials for their attendance.

The select committee adjourned at 5.30 p.m. until 4 p.m. on Tuesday, 16 May 2017.