

(Supplementary Order Paper)

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DÁIL ÉIREANN

Dé Céadaoin, 11 Eanáir, 2012
Wednesday, 11th January, 2012

2.30 p.m.

GNÓ COMHALTAÍ PRÍOBHÁIDEACHA PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Fógra i dtaobh leasuithe ar Thairiscint : Notice of Amendments to Motion

38. “That Dáil Éireann:

- recognises the right of every child to equal opportunity through education as enshrined in Article 28.1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and that the Education Act 1998 makes specific reference to provision for the education of persons with disabilities or special educational needs, and that a stated objective of the Act is ‘to give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children, including children who have a disability or other special educational needs’;
- notes that the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 promotes inclusive education for children with special educational needs and confers on parents a series of rights in relation to their child with special educational needs;
- notes that Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Band One and DEIS Band Two schools provide essential support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs, so that they are able to leave school with the skills necessary to fully participate in the social and economic activities of society and to live independent and fulfilled lives;
- notes that in total there are 199 DEIS Band One schools, 32 of which were in the former Breaking the Cycle (BTC) programme that predated DEIS; DEIS Band One BTC Junior Schools will operate a staffing schedule of 18:1; DEIS Band One BTC Senior Schools will operate a staffing schedule of 24:1; Vertical (junior and senior pupils) Band One BTC Schools will operate separate staffing schedules of 18:1 at junior and 24:1 at senior level;
- notes that other DEIS Band One schools (167 schools that are not in BTC) will function as follows: DEIS Band One Junior Schools will operate a staffing schedule of 20:1; DEIS Band One Senior Schools will operate a staffing schedule of 24:1; DEIS Band One Vertical (junior and senior pupils) Schools will operate a staffing schedule of 22:1;
- notes that Junior DEIS schools are to be treated on a pupil/teacher ratio of an ‘alleviated’ level: 18:1 from 15:1 and that DEIS Band Two schools will increase from a 24:1 ratio to 28:1;

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- notes that a number of administrative principals are to be lost; the support teacher scheme is ending; the learning support system allocation changed and an estimated 250 teachers in DEIS disadvantaged primary schools are to be transferred to mainstream schools;
- notes that more than 428 DEIS teaching posts from 270 primary schools and 163 post-primary schools will be lost and that schools with classrooms designed to cater for a 15:1 pupil/teacher ratio will be unable to accommodate larger classroom sizes;
- commends the dedication and work of teaching staff in DEIS schools and recognises the incremental improvements that have resulted from dedicated programmes designed to help children who struggle to reach their educational potential;
- notes that the decision to reduce the pupil/teacher ratio from 22:1, as originally set out in Budget 2012, to 18:1, will still result in the significant loss of teachers to disadvantaged schools covered by DEIS Band One and DEIS Band Two;
- acknowledges that cuts to DEIS schools will result in the dismantlement of essential educational supports for pupils with a high level of need in school and that this is a continuation of past Government budgetary policies that have resulted in cuts in education services designed to assist children from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds;
- notes that many DEIS Band One and DEIS Band Two schools have already lost a range of services including special needs assistants, traveller allocation teachers and language support teachers and the withdrawal of visiting support teachers for travellers, the phasing out by 2012 of senior traveller training centres all of which have contributed to improving numeracy and literacy standards;
- acknowledges that the loss of an estimated 700 plus career guidance counsellors in second level schools, as a result of the decision in Budget 2012 not to provide these posts on an ex-quota basis, will seriously reduce the level of support for children experiencing a range of emotional and learning difficulties;
- notes that it contradicts OECD recommendations to prioritise educational resources for socio-economically marginalised urban and rural areas and will undermine the Government's EU commitment to reaching the EU 2020 target of 10 per cent early school leavers nationally;
- notes that the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy that has been prioritised by the Government and seen as essential to improving standards in schools will be undermined and will result in the loss of much of the progress that has been made in assisting children who have benefited greatly from the establishment of DEIS schools in 2005 and the Breaking the Cycle scheme which was initiated in 1996;
- acknowledges that the targeting of DEIS schools will have serious implications for society in the medium to long-term, and will contribute to greater social exclusion of many young people who are unable to avail of a fair and equitable education;
- notes that this is yet another attack on some of the most vulnerable children and undermines the Government's commitment to protect the educational rights of children and those marginalised by poverty;
- notes that cuts in DEIS schools contrasts with the Government's prolonged review into State funding for private schools and its decision to implement a two-point increase in the staffing schedule in second-level fee-paying schools, with one teacher for almost every 22 pupils;
- notes that phased staffing adjustments in small schools with fewer than five teachers will leave an estimated 1,500 small schools struggling with higher pupil/teacher ratios and will lead to the closure of many rural schools;
- calls upon the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn T.D., to rescind these

cuts as a matter of urgency and protect the rights of children to obtain their education entitlement by ensuring DEIS schools are adequately funded and retain their current pupil/teacher ratio;

- calls upon the Government to retain the current scheme of giving DEIS Band schools a ‘top up’ allocation on the existing standard staffing schedule to enable them to implement reduced class sizes of 20:1 in junior classes and 24:1 in senior classes;
- calls upon the Government to reverse its decision to withdraw, from 2012, supports in some schools from disadvantage schemes predating DEIS;
- calls upon the Government to rescind its decision to cut teaching posts from DEIS Band One and DEIS Band Two schools;
- calls upon the Government to reverse these indefensible cuts to essential education services which will impact on the life chances of young people and have broader ramifications for Irish society and its economy; and
- calls upon the Government to ring-fence funding and supports for DEIS Band One and DEIS Band Two schools in order to break the cycle of deprivation, marginalisation and disadvantage and to promote fairness and equality.” — *Seán Crowe, Gerry Adams, Michael Colreavy, Pearse Doherty, Dessie Ellis, Martin Ferris, Pádraig Mac Lochlainn, Mary Lou McDonald, Sandra McLellan, Jonathan O'Brien, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Aengus Ó Snodaigh, Brian Stanley, Peadar Tóibín.*

Leasuithe:

Amendments:

1. To delete all words after “Dáil Éireann” and substitute the following:

“ calls on the Government to:

- ensure that the allocation of funding for education is a priority as committed to during Fianna Fáil’s private members’ motion on education in April 2011;
- protect the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme which provides essential support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and in schools with the highest concentration of educational disadvantage in view of the significant progress made in these schemes;
- reverse its decisions in Budget 2012 to remove 428 legacy DEIS posts from primary and post primary schools which will result in a significant increase in the pupil/teacher ratio in DEIS Band One and DEIS Band Two schools;
- maintain the existing allocation system for guidance provision in view of the importance of this service, particularly for vulnerable children;
- protect the significant investment in rural schools over the past 15 years which resulted in the doubling of the number of teachers working in small rural schools; and
- publish all impact analysis carried out by the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn T.D., prior to announcing the loss of 428 DEIS posts, changes to the allocation of guidance provision, and changes to staffing schedules in small rural schools.” — *Brendan Smith, John Browne, Dara Calleary, Niall Collins, Barry Cowen, Timmy Dooley, Seán Fleming, Billy Kelleher, Seamus Kirk, Michael P. Kitt, Micheál Martin, Charlie McConalogue, Michael McGrath, John McGuinness, Michael Moynihan, Éamon Ó Cuív, Willie O’Dea, Seán Ó Feargháil, Robert Troy.*

2. To delete all words after “Dáil Éireann” and substitute the following:

- “— acknowledges that the plans set out by Government in Budget 2012 form an important step in returning Ireland’s economy to a sound footing and regaining our economic sovereignty;
- recalls the pioneering measures first taken in 1996 by the then Fine Gael - Labour Government by the introduction of dedicated supports for tackling educational disadvantage, with the purpose and objective of ensuring that educational attainment is not confined by the circumstances or place of a child’s birth, and that each child has the opportunity to attain their full educational and social potential;
- notes the further development since that time of a series of initiatives including the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Programme;
- commends the commitment, dedication and unstinting work since that time of teachers, principals, school staff, parents, and others in the school communities concerned who have worked to ensure the success of DEIS and related schemes in the face of multiple challenges and difficulties;
- notes the successes that have been achieved to date in improving educational opportunities and the life chances of the children who have benefited from these measures;
- notes the resources that have been committed to these schools under a range of headings including over €158 million that is being provided in 2012 in additional resources and supports for primary and second level schools included in DEIS, in the form of:
 - teaching posts to implement more favourable class sizes;
 - additional capitation funding;
 - additional funding for school books;
 - access to the School Meals Programme;
 - access to numeracy/literacy supports and measures at primary level such as Reading Recovery, Maths Recovery and First Steps;
 - access to Home School Community Liaison services;
 - access to the School Completion Programme;
 - access to planning supports;
 - access to a range of professional development supports; and
 - provision for school library and librarian support for DEIS Second Level schools, access to the Junior Certificate School Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied;
- notes the priority that has already been afforded by the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairí Quinn T.D., to the core issue of improving literacy standards and literacy strategy that is currently being implemented; and
- welcomes:
 - the firm commitment of the Government to the principle of equality of educational opportunity;
 - the determination of the Government to further the attainment of this goal through the design and implementation of coherent and evidence-based strategies which builds on these achievements;
 - the engagement by the Minister for Education and Skills with school principals, teachers, parents and communities in recent weeks, to hear their concerns and clarify the position in relation to changes announced under

Budget 2012 to posts allocated to schools under previous schemes to tackle educational disadvantage; and

- the fact that, following this engagement, the Minister for Education and Skills has asked his Department for a report within the next four weeks on the position of DEIS Band One and Band Two schools who currently have posts under older schemes, in the context of the staffing allocations due to issue to all schools in the coming weeks.” — *An tAire Oideachais agus Scileanna*.