

*(Supplementary Order Paper)*

10

**DÁIL ÉIREANN**

*Dé Máirt, 31 Eanáir, 2012*  
*Tuesday, 31st January, 2012*

2.00 p.m.

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**GNÓ COMHALTAÍ PRÍOBHÁIDEACHA**  
**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

*Fógra i dtaobh leasú ar Thairiscint : Notice of Amendment to Motion*

39. “That Dáil Éireann:

- condemns the Government for introducing changes to the staffing schedules in 1, 2, 3 and 4 teacher schools in Budget 2012;
- objects to this policy decision which unfairly targets schools with less than 86 pupils and which will result in a loss of 250 posts and an increase in the pupil/teacher ratio between now and 2013;
- further objects to the Government’s covert approach to amalgamation and closure of 1, 2, 3 and 4 teacher schools;
- condemns the severe impact this will have on gaelscoileanna, scoileanna Gaeltachta and minority faith schools in particular;
- further condemns the Government decision to apply the new staffing schedule based on 2011 enrolment figures;
- recognises that small schools are at the heart of communities;
- rejects the Government’s:
  - argument in relation to small schools having a more favourable pupil/teacher ratio which fails to take into account the challenges of multi-grade teaching; and
  - claim that frontline services have been protected in Budget 2012 and recognises that teachers in 1, 2, 3 and 4 teacher schools provide a critical frontline service;
- notes that:
  - research has shown that learning outcomes in the smaller schools are on a par with learning outcomes in larger schools; and
  - 47% of the 3,200 primary schools in the State have 5 teachers or fewer; and
- calls on the Government to:
  - protect existing 1, 2, 3 and 4 teacher schools this year and in the coming

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years;

- recognise the disproportionate impact this cut will have on gaelscoileanna, scoileanna Gaeltachta and minority faith schools and to ensure these schools are protected;
- protect the significant investment in small schools by Fianna Fáil Governments over the past 15 years which resulted in the doubling of the numbers of teachers working in small schools, and significant capital investment to allow for replacement, refurbishment and improvement of school accommodation across the country;
- explain the rationale for this decision and publish any impact analysis carried out by the Department of Education and Skills in relation to this decision and the effect it will have on 1, 2, 3 and 4 teacher schools;
- recognise the important role of these schools in local communities and the damaging effect this will have on communities throughout Ireland;
- acknowledge the damaging consequences that will result from the budgetary changes to the staffing schedule which will lead to the forced amalgamation and closure of small schools in the coming years;
- accept the uncertainty that this is creating for local communities; and
- provide detailed clarification on the appeals mechanism for staffing changes.” — *Brendan Smith, John Browne, Dara Calleary, Niall Collins, Barry Cowen, Timmy Dooley, Seán Fleming, Billy Kelleher, Seamus Kirk, Michael P. Kitt, Micheál Martin, Michael Moynihan, Charlie McConalogue, Michael McGrath, John McGuinness, Éamon Ó Cuív, Willie O’Dea, Seán Ó Fearghail, Robert Troy.*

*Leasú:*

*Amendment:*

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

- “— recognises that:
  - at a time of great strain on our public finances, we have to ensure that the very valuable, but limited resources available to the education system are used in the best way possible; and
  - public services, including schools, must continue to be an important part of the social fabric of rural communities;
- notes that:
  - as part of the Budget 2012 decisions, the number of pupils required to gain and retain a classroom teaching post in small primary schools will be gradually increased between September 2012 and September 2014;
  - there are 3,200 primary schools across Ireland, of which over two thirds of those schools have more than 86 pupils and have much higher average class sizes than the small primary schools;
  - small schools receive much more favourable capitation and other grant payments due to the practice of minimum payments: for example, schools receive a minimum capitation payment based on a 60 pupil enrolment, meaning that a school with 12 pupils receives the same capitation payment as a school with 60 pupils, in addition to the fact that construction costs per pupil for capital projects are much higher in small schools than in larger schools;

- at present, a two-teacher school with 12 pupils has an average class size of 1 teacher for 6 pupils, while in contrast, a typical ten-teacher school with 272 pupils has an average class size of 27.2 pupils;
- a value for money review on small primary schools is currently being finalised by the Department of Education and Skills, submissions for which, were invited from the public as part of a public consultation process during 2011 and a large number of responses were received;
- while the threshold for additional teachers in small schools will rise, a small school will still receive a second teacher with 14 pupils, a third teacher with 51 pupils and a fourth teacher with 83 pupils in September 2012; and
- as a result of these changes the average class sizes in small schools will still be as low as 7:1 in a two-teacher school, 17:1 in a three-teacher school and 20.75:1 in a four-teacher school in September 2012;
- acknowledges that:
  - even when all of these phased increases are implemented, the threshold for small schools will still be significantly lower than the minimum of 28 pupils that was required for the appointment of a second teacher in schools prior to the mid-1990s;
  - it is hoped that the three-year phasing in of this measure will allow communities the opportunity to debate the possibility of amalgamations or clustering arrangements within their communities;
  - if amalgamations take place, they will be voluntary and follow decisions taken by local communities and not by the Department of Education and Skills; and
  - the value for money review is part of the normal review processes undertaken by all Departments on an annual basis on selected areas of expenditure and is being conducted in line with the standard procedure for value for money reviews; and
- welcomes that:
  - the Department of Education and Skills will be notifying schools in the coming weeks of the new staffing arrangements for the 2012/13 school year;
  - small schools will continue to benefit from additional favourable supports as outlined above;
  - the Budget measure relates to the allocation of teaching posts and is not a measure to close small schools;
  - an independent Primary Staffing Appeals Board is available to all schools as part of the allocation process each year; and
  - in particular, this appeals mechanism will be available to those small schools which are projecting increased enrolments that would be sufficient to allow them to retain their existing classroom posts over the longer term.”  
— *An tAire Oideachais agus Scileanna.*