**Supplementary Questions PQ 16490/24**

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## What measures exist to support teacher supply in primary schools?

The Department of Education is implementing various initiatives to address the shortage of primary teachers:

1. Approval for 610 additional places on primary teacher education programs over two academic years.
2. Continuation of primary substitute teacher supply panels with 590 teaching posts allocated to cover nearly 2,900 schools.
3. Extension of the Droichead process for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) until the end of the 2024/2025 school year, allowing them to apply while employed on supply panels or release time posts.
4. Employment of job-sharing teachers as substitutes during their rostered off-duty periods. Job-sharing teachers can work as substitutes during their off-duty periods, and limits on substitute work for teachers on career breaks are suspended.
5. Enabling 3rd and 4th-year undergraduate teachers to apply for registration with the Teaching Council under Route 5. Currently, there are in the region of 3,600 student teachers registered under Route 5.
6. Extension of the waiver of abatement for retired teachers returning to teach for up to 50 days until the end of 2025.
7. Development of a portal by the Irish Primary Principals’ Network (IPPN) for recruiting teachers to long-term positions, matching demand and supply efficiently.
8. Continuation of the "Teaching Transforms" campaign to promote the teaching profession and encourage students to pursue teaching careers, utilising various media channels and a dedicated webpage.

## What are the measures that support post-primary schools?

The Department of Education is implementing measures to support post-primary schools in addressing teacher supply challenges:

1. Permitting job-sharing teachers to work as substitutes during their off-duty periods, and suspending the limit on substitute work for teachers on career breaks.
2. Enabling post-primary teachers to provide up to 35 additional hours of substitute cover per term in their qualified subjects.
3. 3rd and 4th-year undergraduate teachers can apply for registration with the Teaching Council under Route 5.
4. Extending the waiver of the abatement of 50 days for retired teachers returning to teach until the end of 2025.
5. Development by the Irish Primary Principals’ Network (IPPN) of a portal for recruiting teachers to long-term positions, facilitating efficient recruitment.
6. Funding the ACCS to provide the Turas Abhaile service that assists schools to recruit teachers.
7. Increasing places on teacher upskilling programs in mathematics, Spanish, and physics, with further plans to expand programs in other subjects.
8. Providing funding to expand the number of upskilling programmes available to French, politics & society, and computer science.
9. Launching an upskilling programme in Irish, with TCD to begin this programme later this year.
10. Delivering the Teaching Transforms that promotes the teaching profession via various media channels.

## What future measures is the Minister considering to address teacher supply issues?

* My Department is considering several future measures to address teacher supply issues:
  + exploring further innovative approaches to attract and retain teachers, once the impact of the PME incentive scheme is considered.
  + collaborating with stakeholders: working closely with teacher unions, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to develop effective strategies for addressing teacher supply challenges.
  + enhancing recruitment efforts; including targeted campaigns to attract individuals to the teaching profession.
  + developing measures to improve diversity in the teaching profession, building on the success of the various PATH1 projects such as the TOBAR project delivered though Marino Institute of Education that focuses specifically on supporting admission to ITE for Traveller students.
  + supporting the ongoing professional development of teachers, including training programs, mentorship initiatives, and career advancement opportunities.
  + Supporting UNESCO, the EU appointed contractor, in the development of a strategic workforce plan for teachers under the Technical Support Instrument (TSI). This will lead to Implementation of the recommendations from the report produced by UNESCO to develop a sustainable teaching profession in Ireland. Consultation with stakeholders will form a significant part of the work over the two years of the project which is due to commence in July this year.
  + Overall, my Department will explore a range of measures aimed at addressing teacher supply issues comprehensively and sustainably.

## What is the expected impact of demographics on teacher supply?

* My Department recently developed a new set of projections of enrolments taking into account more recent trends due to the war in Ukraine and post-COVID immigration patterns since the last set of projections
* The projections report presents the level of anticipated enrolments under three migration scenarios: high, medium and low.[[1]](#footnote-2)
* The high scenario ("M1F2") will now be taken on board for the next iteration of the Teacher Demand report, due to be published later this year.
* Primary enrolments peaked in 2018/19 school year and have been falling from this peak level since then.
* The annual intake into junior infants is projected to continue to fall from the 2022 level of 63,455 down to 54,465 by 2032, a 14% decrease.
* Primary enrolments are projected to start rising again from 2033, but are not expected to reach the 2018/19 levels again.
* In 2026, it is projected there will be some 6,500 fewer children entering junior infants than in September 2022.
* Enrolments in post-primary schools are yet to peak, though this school year (2023/24) is expected to be the highest intake into 1st year
* The previous model projected enrolment peak at post primary to occur in 2024, however, due to increased post-COVID migration and Ukrainian pupils enrolments, at both levels, the peak has now shifted
* Post-primary enrolments are projected to rise sharply over the coming years; it is projected 22,300 more pupils will enter post primary in 2024 than in 2022. Enrolments are projected to peak in 2025/26 school year with 433,268 pupils, some 26,870 higher than in 2022.

## Will the Minister review the duration of PME programmes or restructure year 2?

* Changes to initial teacher education (ITE) programs were initially made in response to recommendations in the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020, and these changes were incorporated into the Teaching Council's accreditation standards.
* Recently, the standards were updated by the Teaching Council in Céim (2020), specifying that post-graduate ITE programs should be a minimum of two years in duration.
* The Department has no plans to reduce the current duration of postgraduate ITE programs to one year; instead, it aims to develop innovative measures to improve teacher availability further.

## Should the PME be funded by Government to encourage more entrants to teaching?

* Many students in undergraduate initial teacher education (ITE) programs and some in Professional Master of Education (PME) programs receive grant assistance. This assistance is awarded to students attending approved courses in approved institutions who meet the prescribed conditions of funding, with eligibility determined primarily by SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland).
* In Budget 2024, it was announced that PME students graduating in 2024 will, subject to certain conditions, be eligible for financial assistance of up to €2,000.
* Student teachers completing their PME and registered with the Teaching Council are eligible for employment and payment by schools, with many engaged in providing substitute cover.
* It's important to note that PME students may be eligible for postgraduate student supports.

## What is the Minister’s response to the INTO suggestion to create a commission to consider teacher supply issues?

* Any proposals to improve teacher supply issues would be welcomed.
* My Department has not received a proposal from the INTO on this issues and should one be received, it will be carefully considered.
* My Department engages on a frequent basis with all stakeholders, including teacher unions, principals’ representatives, and the representatives of school management bodies on teacher supply issues.

## How will the PME incentive improve teacher supply?

* Additional funding of €4 million is being provided to introduce a professional masters of education (PME) incentive scheme that will support students that will graduate from PME programmes in 2024.
* The aim of the incentive is to encourage more graduates to consider a career in teaching and to encourage future newly qualified teachers (NQTs) with PMEs to take up teaching roles in Ireland after graduating.
* As announced in Budget 2024, PME students who graduate in 2024, will subject to some conditions be eligible for financial assistance of up to €2,000 payable in 2025.

## What has been done to help teachers with the cost of living increases?

* Pay and workplace reform measures for public servants have been governed by public service pay agreements for years.
* The new Public Service Agreement (PSA) includes baseline increases of 9.25% for over 100,000 staff in the school sector, including retired staff. These increases would raise the pay of a top point teacher to approximately €85,000 annually, with starting pay around €46,000 per annum, almost €20,000 higher than 2011 rates.
* Further amendments to teacher terms and conditions, including pay and allowances, are achieved through engagement and collective bargaining agreements between the Government and public service unions.
* Any proposal for different pay or allowances for specific regional locations would be considered in the broader context of the public sector.
* The Government is committed to delivering quality public services and approaches public service pay in a balanced manner, aiming for fairness to both public servants and taxpayers.

## What further post primary upskilling programmes will be provided?

* Funding of €1 million is being provided to expand the number upskilling programmes available. Free upskilling programmes are available for registered teachers to upskill in subjects where teacher supply is constricted.
* Currently there are upskilling programmes in Spanish, mathematics and physics. New upskilling programmes in Irish, French, politics & society, and computer science will be provided from funding provided in Budget 2024.
* The contract for the Irish upskilling programme for post-primary teachers has been awarded to Trinity College Dublin and is due to commence in late 2024.

## Could newly qualified teachers receive permanent fulltime posts?

* The recruitment and appointment of teachers is a matter for each school/ETB as employer.
* Teachers can be recruited on a permanent basis once the school/ETB is within its authorised allocation of teaching posts and the criteria outlined in Department Circulars for filling teaching posts are complied with.
* A teacher is usually entitled to a Contract of Indefinite Duration (CID) if they have worked on two continuous fixed-term contracts in the same school. Teachers in temporary positions will become eligible for CIDs after two years in a school, provided they meet the criteria for a CID.
* Data suggests that only a small percentage of teachers do not have full time hours available to them.

## Why did the primary PTR remain unchanged in Budget 2024?

* In the 3 previous budgets, I prioritised reducing the pupil teacher ratios in primary schools which has brought the teacher allocation ratio to an average of 1 classroom teacher for every 23 pupils in all primary schools, the lowest level ever seen at primary level.
* A three point reduction in the retention schedule, which I introduced in 2021, assists schools that would otherwise be at risk of losing teaching posts.
* I also improved teacher allocations for DEIS Urban Band 1 schools which now stand at an average of 17:1, 21:1 and 19:1 for junior, senior and vertical schools respectively.

## What is the Minister’s view on the post-primary teacher relocation proposal received from the TUI?

* The Department received a report from the Teachers’ Union of Ireland (TUI) in March 2023 proposing a national relocation scheme for teachers. This scheme would allow teachers to identify preferred locations for relocation through a portal and potentially "swap" positions with teachers in those areas.
* Officials from the Department subsequently met with TUI representatives to discuss the proposal, with a response issued to TUI in November 2023. The Department is currently reviewing a further response from TUI.
* It's worth noting that there is an existing voluntary redeployment pilot, separate from the proposed relocation scheme, aimed at assisting the Department in redeploying surplus permanent teachers. The Department regularly engages with teacher unions on various teacher-related issues and is committed to working closely with all stakeholders to develop and implement innovative solutions to address teacher supply challenges, including considering proposals such as the teacher relocation scheme.

## Does the Minister believe the status of teaching as a profession is in decline?

Teaching remains an attractive career choice:

* CAO first preference choices for post-primary teaching increased in 2023 by 14%, in addition to a 9% increase in 2022. CAO preferences for primary teaching showed increases at the closing date in February 2024 with overall mentions up 10% and first preferences increasing by 2% from 2023.
* Currently starting pay for Primary teachers is over €41,000 and over €42,000 for post-primary teachers. The new pay deal, with all three teacher unions having recently voted in favour of, will mean that teachers’ starting salary will increase to €46,000, almost €20,000 higher than the 2011 rates, rising to a maximum of €85,000 per year which compares well internationally
* Over 3,700 newly qualified teachers have registered with the Teaching Council in 2023, with over 122,000 now on the Teaching Council register.

## What measures are being implemented to support the Special Education sector?

* The Department emphasises the importance of providing timely and appropriate support to students with identified learning needs.
* The Special Education Teaching (SET) allocation for mainstream schools provides a unified allocation for special educational support teaching needs based on each school's educational profile. This allocation, frontloaded and ring-fenced, allows schools to provide additional teaching support tailored to individual student learning needs.
* Schools are responsible for deploying SET resources effectively to meet the needs outlined in Student Support Plans, which should align with the continuum of support framework.
* Once the Department allocates SET hours to a school, it becomes the school's and board management's responsibility to utilize the allocation to support students with identified learning needs.
* Special Education Teaching Hours should only be used for their intended purpose of supporting students with special educational needs.

## Why has the Department not agreed to extend the incremental credit measures to post-primary teachers

* Through the Teachers Conciliation Council (TCC), the teacher unions have lodged a claim concerning the recognition of private post primary teaching service outside the EU towards the award of incremental credit. At TCC, the Department of Education undertook to examine this issue as part of the 2024 budgetary process.
* The Department of Education examined this request as part of the 2024 budgetary process. While it was not possible to secure funding to progress this request through the 2024 budgetary process, other measures to assist with teacher supply were introduced in the budget including:
* An allocation of funding for an additional 1,000 posts of responsibility to be introduced across both primary and post-primary sectors for the 2024/25 school year. This has been an issue of key concern with the Teacher Unions
* The Department of Education will continue to examine ways in which the matter of incremental credit with respect to private post-primary teaching outside the EU may be progressed in the future.

## When will the regulations allowing teachers who qualified abroad undertake induction in Ireland?

* The Teaching Council, under the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015, holds statutory authority for regulating the teaching profession in Ireland and teacher registration. The Teaching Council (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation, as defined in Statutory Instrument No. 12 of 2023, has expired, closing the facility it provided.
* Any extension or amendment to this regulation would require a new Statutory Instrument, a decision which falls under the purview of the Teaching Council.
* As of February 1st, 2024, out-of-State applicants for registration must follow the standard application process, including providing evidence of full qualification and completion of induction in their country of qualification.
* The Teaching Council is considering whether further amendments to the Registration Regulations can be made to reinstate the provision for overseas qualified applicants to complete induction in Ireland, within the framework of relevant EU legislation and its legislative remit.  
  Under the Teaching Council Acts 2001-2015 the Teaching Council is the body with the statutory authority and responsibility for the regulation of the teaching profession in Ireland including the registration of Teachers in the State.

## Is the Department considering a “Dublin allowance” or further incentive payments for teachers?

* Any proposal for differential pay, allowances, or additional incentives for working in specific regional areas would require consideration within the broader context of the public sector.
* The Government is dedicated to providing quality public services and approaches public service pay in a fair and balanced manner, taking into account both the needs of public servants and the taxpayer.
* The Government recognises the challenges posed by housing issues and current price pressures, which affect all public service workers, including those in education. Housing remains a priority, led by the Minister for Housing, Local Government, and Heritage. The Housing for All strategy aims to increase housing supply and prioritize affordability, fulfilling commitments outlined in the Programme for Government.

1. <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/projections/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)