

Press Release

25th November 2011

Press Release from the Joint Managerial Body Calling on the Government to Honour its Promise to Protect Frontline Services in Education.

The Joint Managerial Body, representing the management of almost four hundred Voluntary Secondary schools, is demanding in the strongest possible terms the Government honours its promise in the Programme for Government in March 2011 and protect frontline services in education in Budget 2012.

Ferdia Kelly, General Secretary of the JMB urges that “Education be prioritised as this country strives to work itself out of the recession. Experience during recessions in other countries points to the absolute necessity not just to ring fence education, but in fact it is strongly recommended that resources for education be increased.”

” The views of experts focus on education as the driver that will assist this country work its way out of recession. At a time when a well educated cohort of young people is our hope for the future we must shout stop to any further damage to our education sector,” states Ferdia Kelly.

“ An increase in the Pupil Teacher Ratio at post-primary level cannot be seen in simplistic terms as an extra pupil in each class. In reality, it means fewer teachers in each school. Each teacher in a post-primary school is a subject specialist. Fewer teachers in a post-primary schools means fewer subjects available, critical subjects such as physics, chemistry and accounting being taken off school timetables and vital programmes such as Leaving Certificate Applied having to be removed from the school curriculum. We have already witnessed such losses as a result of the increase in the PTR to 19:1 in September 2009 “ states Ferdia Kelly.

Ferdia Kelly makes the point that “ in such circumstances it is invariably the most vulnerable pupils who will lose out as the staffing levels will be such as to prevent the school giving these pupils the attention not just to meet their learning needs but also essential pastoral supports.”

“It is a stark reality that the Government cut capitation grants by 5% in Budget 2011. In addition to the increase in Pupil Teacher Ratio in 2009, we have seen a serious loss of middle management supports in schools due to the moratorium on filling posts of responsibility and a reduction this year of 10% in the allocation of resources for pupils with special educational needs. The frontline education system simply cannot sustain a further worsening in the level of resources for basic teaching and learning in schools ”, says Ferdia Kelly.

“ Internationally we are bottom of the OECD league tables in terms of spending on education - 4.7% of GDP versus the OECD average of 6.2%. Our class sizes are among the largest in the EU. The Minister himself highlighted recently that today we are spending only 16% of the country’s gross expenditure on education as compared to 19% fifteen years ago. As a country and society we are now at a crossroads in relation to cherishing our young people. This generation of young people have only one opportunity to experience a quality education. Are we going to deny them that opportunity or are we going to make the hard call and, as the Government promised in the Programme for Government in March last, protect the resourcing of frontline education?” states Ferdia Kelly.

Ferdia Kelly.

General Secretary,
Joint Managerial Body/Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools.

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