

Press Release

5th December 2011

Press Release from the Joint Managerial Body Condemning the Government for its Failure to Honour its Promise to Protect Frontline Services in Education.

The Joint Managerial Body, representing the management of almost four hundred Voluntary Secondary schools, has expressed grave disappointment at the Government's failure to honour its promise to protect frontline services in education in Budget 2012 as outlined in the Programme for Government in March 2011.

Ferdia Kelly, General Secretary of the JMB points out that “ A change in the method of allocating guidance and counselling resources is in effect an increase in the Pupil Teacher Ratio of .8 of 1 point across post-primary schools. Such an increase means that schools will have to choose between individual subjects and making time available for guidance/counselling on the timetable. One way or the other it means 700 fewer teachers in post-primary schools. 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. This time round schools may have no option but to the reduce the pupil tuition week below the required 28 hours, “ states Ferdia Kelly.

“ The reduction in a counselling service in schools is unthinkable. At a time when young people urgently require the support of the counsellor in schools on a one to one basis it is disgraceful that the Government would contemplate reducing such a service. It is not acceptable for the Minister to suggest that the decision as to the allocation of teaching resources in a school lies with school management. Removing the ex-quota guidance/counselling allocation means that the service, of necessity, will have to be curtailed

in schools. This at the very time when this service is so essential to the well-being of our school going population is wrong” sates 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. This problem is compounded by the loss of numerous year head posts in schools due to the moratorium on filling posts of responsibility. The entire pastoral structure in schools is now under serious threat. This is no way to support our young people in their moment of need.”

“It is a stark reality that the Government cut capitation grants by 5% in Budget 2011. Costs of essential items such as energy, insurance and water charges have increased by at least 10%. Schools must now also try to absorb a reduction of 2 % in capitation grants in 2012. Parents cannot afford to make up the deficit in the running costs of schools as they have done for many years. The frontline education system simply cannot sustain this further worsening in the level of resources for basic teaching, learning and the pastoral care of pupils 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, “ states Ferdia Kelly.

Ferdia Kelly.

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