

Budget cuts will have profound impact on students, schools and teacher employment – ASTI tells Minister

The ASTI has written to the Minister for Education and Skills expressing its anger at the subsuming of the Guidance Counsellor allocation into the overall teacher allocation for second-level schools.

In effect, this means an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio of almost one at second level. Seven hundred second-level teaching posts will be lost, meaning most second-level schools will lose a teacher. Schools are still reeling from the impact of the increase in pupil teacher ratio in 2009, which resulted in the majority of schools losing between one and three teachers.

The per capita grant for schools is also being targeted, and will be decreased by 2% next year, a further 2% in 2013 and a further 1% in 2014 and again in 2015. ASTI General Secretary Pat King said the axing of jobs and the reduction in school funding would have a profound negative impact on schools and students.

Pat King also said cuts to teacher numbers in Budget 2012 are devastating for hundreds of newly qualified teachers who cannot find work and thousands of temporary and part-time teachers who cannot find secure work. "This will be the final straw for many talented highly-motivated young teachers who will be forced to emigrate or leave teaching due lack of jobs."

In his letter to Minister Ruairi Quinn, Pat King said the decision to abolish the guidance counselling allocation for second-level schools is ill-considered and crude. "Schools will be left with an impossible choice and will have to either reduce guidance provision or identify subjects to be dropped from the curriculum," he told the Minister. (see full letter page 2).

For more see www.asti.ie

Budget 2012 - main measures affecting second-level schools

- ◆ A requirement for second-level schools to manage guidance provision from within their existing pupil-teacher ratio allocations;
- ◆ 700 second-level teaching posts to go in 2012;
- ◆ General reduction in capitation grant by 2% in both 2012 and 2013 and a further 1% in both 2014 and 2015.

Read more on page 3.

ASTI Diaries

ASTI Diaries for 2012 are being posted to schools this month. School stewards should receive one diary for each ASTI member in the school.

If you have not received your ASTI Diary by December 21, or you believe you have not received the correct number of diaries, please contact Brigid Fitzgerald on 01-6040160 or email bfitzgerald@asti.ie.

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The ASTI has written to the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn expressing dismay at the decision to abolish the guidance counsellor allocation for second-level schools.

Prior to the budget, ASTI representatives met with the Minister for Education and with a group of 35 teacher TDs. We made clear the damage that any cuts to education or teaching posts would do to a second-level system already under extreme pressure. The government cannot claim that they were not informed of the damage these cuts will cause.

Your support is vital

The ASTI wishes to thank members who participated in the pre-budget canvass of TDs and senators and also those members who marched behind the ASTI banner in the anti-austerity march in Dublin on 26 November.

Mr. Ruairi Quinn, TD,
Minister for Education & Skills,
Department of Education & Skills,
Marlborough Street,
Dublin 7.

6th December, 2011.

Re: Budget 2012

Dear Minister,

I wish to object in the strongest possible manner to the impact of the education cuts announced on 5th December. These cuts which are particularly targeted at second level schools will have a profoundly negative effect on the quality of education provided.

The decision to abolish the guidance counselling allocation for second level schools is ill-considered and crude. It gives no consideration to the essential nature of the advice and support provided by guidance counsellors for students who are at a most difficult time in their lives. This is on top of the ongoing dismantling of the pastoral care and year head structure in schools caused by the Posts of Responsibility moratorium.

The suggestion that this cut gives schools 'greater autonomy and flexibility' in balancing the need for guidance against other teaching demands can only be seen by educators as cynical. There are legal obligations placed on schools by Section 9 of the Education Act to ensure that provision is made for guidance. Thus schools will be left with an impossible choice and will have to either reduce guidance provision or identify subjects to be dropped from the curriculum. In such circumstances, as in the past, the subjects to go will be the very ones that experts advise are essential in creating the so called smart economy (e.g. science subjects and modern languages).

The impact of the latest round of cuts will have the effect of cutting 700 teaching posts in the second level sector. As a result many newly qualified teachers will find it impossible to find teaching employment and many part-time and fixed-term teachers will lose their jobs. Understandably this will cause great concern and anger amongst teachers.

ASTI members are in full agreement with you when you say that 'a modern progressive education system is the foundation of our economic recovery'. Regrettably teachers are more and more convinced that the opposite is happening. Teachers are reaching the conclusion that in the current context of cuts in teacher provision and education resources, proposals for enhanced literacy and numeracy levels and the reform of the junior cycle are merely aspirational and are becoming unachievable.

With every good wish.

Yours sincerely,



Pat King
GENERAL SECRETARY

Yet another attack on young teachers

New entrants to teaching will suffer a number of blows due to Budget 2012.

From December 6th 2011, any teacher being employed for the first time in a recognised school will not be able to obtain an allowance at a level greater than that applying to those who hold an honours degree. This means that the amount payable in qualification allowances including PGDE/H.Dip allowance will be capped at €4,426.

This new measure does not apply to existing teachers with qualification allowances. However, it will apply to existing teachers who acquire further qualifications.

No maintenance grants will be paid for new entrants to post-graduate courses from the 2012/13 academic year. This will affect graduates who qualified for undergraduate maintenance grants and who wish to undertake the PDE (formerly H. Dip in Education). Fees will continue to be paid for those students who previously qualified for the 'special rate' of grant. In addition, based on their means, some post-graduate students will be awarded a fee contribution grant.

New entrants to teaching since January 2011 are paid 15% less than their counterparts who entered the profession prior to 2011. In addition, a new pension scheme for public servants will mean some new teachers will pay more into their pension scheme than they will ever receive in pension benefits. ♦

Budget 2012 - main measures affecting second-level schools

- ♦ A requirement for second-level schools to manage guidance provision from within their existing pupil-teacher ratio allocations;
- ♦ 700 second-level teaching posts to go in 2012;
- ♦ General reduction in capitation grant by 2% in both 2012 and 2013 and a further 1% in both 2014 and 2015;
- ♦ 1-point increase in PTR in fee-paying schools to 21:1;
- ♦ The phased withdrawal from 2012 of some supports in "non-DEIS" schools, .i.e. schools from earlier disadvantaged schemes who do not have DEIS status.
- ♦ The maximum amount payable to new entrants in qualification allowances cannot exceed the amount payable for an honours degree (€4,426). This measure does not affect allowances being paid at present to existing teachers. However those teachers will not be paid any additional allowance if they acquire any further qualification.
- ♦ Second-level DEIS schools will be granted a decrease in the pupil-teacher ratio from 19:1 to 18.25:1.
- ♦ Resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants will be maintained at current levels.
- ♦ There will be a reduction in language support teachers in the 2013/14 and 2014/15 school years.
- ♦ The administration fee paid to schools for the supervision/ substitution scheme will be reduced from 5% to 2%.
- ♦ Changes to the book school grant will be announced in 2012.

For full information visit www.asti.ie.

Time is running out to claim your tax back

If you are owed a refund of overpaid income tax, PRSI, or the Health Levy for the year 2007, you will lose that money if it is not claimed before the end of this month.

Claims for refunds must be made within 4 years of the end of the year to which the claim relates.

Among those who may be affected are:

those who pay Class A PRSI and who were on maternity Leave or Sick Leave in 2007;

widows and widowers who paid Health Levy;

those who haven't claimed tax credits for health expenses, union subscriptions, service charges and other reliefs.

The tax credits, allowances and reliefs available in 2007 were far more generous than those available in 2011.

For information on claiming your tax credits for 2007, visit www.revenue.ie.

Budget 2012 included a provision to allow for the restoration of alleviation measures in relation to the filling of Assistant Principal posts in second-level schools. With effect from September 2012, schools will be able to maintain approximately half of the assistant principal posts held prior to the moratorium. For more information see www.asti.ie.

Christmas pay arrangements

The pay arrangements over the Christmas period in the months of December 2011 and January 2012 are as follows:

Payroll issue dates:

15th December 2011
22nd December 2011
12th January 2012

The only change to the Post-Primary payroll dates is that a payment will now be issued on December 22nd 2011, which is one week earlier than scheduled. All other pay dates are as normal.

Half price salary protection offer

ASTI members under the age of 35 can avail of a half price offer for the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme until December 31.

This special offer means that you could get the full benefits of the ASTI Salary Protection Scheme for half the normal cost until you reach your 35th birthday.

For more, see www.asti.ie.

Codes of Professional Conduct

The Teaching Council has developed an online survey to gather feedback on the draft revised Codes of Professional Conduct for Teachers. Read the draft Codes and give your feedback at www.teachingcouncil.ie.

Teaching Council elections

The third Teaching Council will take office for a three year term in March, 2012. The ASTI is entitled to nominate two persons to the Council and there are a further seven seats for election by second-level teachers.

ASTI candidates may apply to ASTI for endorsement or nomination. Full details are available on the ASTI website - www.asti.ie.

Application forms for ASTI endorsement or nomination are available from your branch secretary or school steward and must be received in ASTI head office by 5.00p.m. on Friday 13th January, 2012. ♦

Unregistered teachers paid at unqualified rate

Any teacher not registered with the Teaching Council who is appointed after September 2011 will be paid at the unqualified rate. For this reason it is very important that teachers apply for Teaching Council Registration at the earliest opportunity and that they maintain Teaching Council registration while seeking work.

Department Circular 0031/2011 aims to ensure, as far as possible, that people appointed to teach are registered teachers and that unemployed teachers are offered employment in preference to those who have retired.

Teachers who are concerned about the length of time they are waiting for Teaching Council registration and who are being paid at the unqualified rate should contact ASTI Head Office. The ASTI will explore possible avenues into recouping lost earnings following registration. ♦

Re-employment of mid-year retirees

In order to alleviate disruption to exam classes, the Department has issued a circular which allows schools to re-hire teachers who retire before 29 February 2012 for a limited period, under certain circumstances.

Teachers who retire between December 1 and February 29 and who were, immediately prior to retirement, teaching students preparing to sit Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate examinations in 2012 may be re-employed by the school until the end of classes for the 2011/2012 school year.

Where a teacher who is retired and is in receipt of a pension returns to teaching on or after 1 January 2011, he or she will start on the first point of the post-1 January 2011 incremental salary scale.

Teachers returning to teach following retirement should ensure that they renew their Teaching Council registration. For most teachers, the annual renewal date is March 2012.

For full details see Circular T/SNA 2011/01. ♦