

What Price Education?

**A 'snapshot' of the
impact of Budget '09 on
20 second-level schools**



What Price Education?

Introduction

Directly after the publication of the October Budget, ASTI Head Office received daily phone calls from teachers and principals worried about the impact of the Budget on their allocation of teachers. Without exception, every call confirmed that schools would lose teaching staff in the next school year as a result of the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio.

Great concern was also expressed in relation to the capacity of schools to secure 'concessionary' teaching hours for essential subjects where a teacher of that subject has retired for the next school year. The combined effect of the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio and the cutbacks on funding to schools has caused great uncertainty as to whether schools can continue to provide a curriculum to meet the needs of all students in the coming year. If a school loses one teacher, this means that 32 classes are lost to the school. Two teachers less means 64 classes are lost and so on. This illustrates what a reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio means for second-level schools.

Budget '09 also made changes to the Supervision & Substitution Scheme in schools which have severely restricted replacements for teachers on school business.* Hundreds of schools have indicated that vital activities - many directly related to modernised syllabuses and examination requirements - have ceased because teachers cannot be released from their timetabled classes. National sporting organisations such as the GAA and the Federation of Irish Sport have approached the ASTI seeking its support to preserve school games - activities which are central to young people's well-being.

The abolition of a range of subject and other grants have greatly reduced the financial resources available to schools and are already causing greater financial pressures on parents.

The ASTI conducted a 'case study' survey of a representative sample of schools in order to provide solid examples of the destructive impact of the cutbacks of Budget '09 on the education service. Irrespective of school type, there is clear evidence that all schools are facing serious challenges and will have to make stark decisions in relation to subject choice, fundraising, and how to ensure that the most needy students are looked after. The surveys were completed by the principals of each school.

*Schools are no longer allowed to use the Supervision and Substitution Scheme to cover for teachers who are absent on un-certified sick leave or on school business. Prior to January '09, schools could use the scheme to call on a qualified teacher inside or outside the school to serve as a substitute. This meant that when teachers were absent with one class on school trips, such as theatre visits, sporting activities, field studies, etc., a qualified teacher was available to teach their remaining classes. Changes in the Budget have resulted in a per capita allocation of .16 hours per pupil, i.e. 16 hours for a school with 100 pupils; 32 hours for a school with 200 pupils; 64 hours for a school with 400 pupils, etc.

Case study examples of
schools hit by Budget '09 follow

A 'Snapshot' of the Impact of Budget '09 on Schools

Survey of schools

The survey was completed by principals across a representative sample of 20 non-fee-paying schools. The experiences of seven schools were selected on the basis of the comprehensiveness of their answers to the questionnaires. The trends evident in these case studies are also explicit in the other 13 schools, confirming strong anecdotal evidence of the across-the-board impact of the education cutbacks.

Staffing in second-level schools

The assignment of teachers to second-level schools is a complex business. The second-level curriculum is highly differentiated both in terms of subject choice at Junior and Senior Cycle and in terms of the range of programmes provided. The school timetable represents a complex balancing act in terms of the number of teachers available to the school and their qualifications and expertise. Schools are committed to providing a broad curriculum to sustain student motivation across a wide ability range and to enrich the overall quality of their education service.

Staffing allocations to schools based on the flat pupil-teacher ratio must invariably be supplemented by 'concessionary posts'. These are typically given to enable specific subject provision; provide resource teacher posts for students with special needs; provide learning support posts for students with literacy problems; and provide English language support teachers for foreign national students. Some schools also have additional posts such as increased allocations for guidance counsellor posts, home school liaison posts and posts arising from a school's disadvantaged status.

Consequently, second-level schools have significant numbers of non-permanent or part-time teachers in employment at any given point in time. These teachers are vital to the delivery of the broad curriculum and frequently perform a variety of teaching roles in the school. They also make an important contribution to schools' pastoral care and extra curricular programmes. The combined impact of the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio and the restrictions imposed on the Supervision and Substitution Scheme are squeezing these teachers out of the education system. This trend is confirmed by the schools surveyed.

'Non-permanent teachers' refers to full-time and part-time temporary teachers
'Permanent teachers' refers to full-time and part-time permanent teachers

Moratorium on posts of responsibility

This survey was carried out before the announcement of a moratorium on the posts of assistant principal and special duties teachers in schools, which will inevitably mean a severe diminishment of the administrative, pastoral and organisational service in schools.

Number of non-permanent teachers each of the 20 schools surveyed is estimated to lose arising from increase in pupil-teacher ratio and changes to the Supervision and Substitution Scheme

Voluntary secondary school, Donegal	3
Voluntary secondary school, Cork	4.6
Voluntary secondary school, Dublin	2
Voluntary secondary school, Wexford county	1.5
Voluntary secondary school, Cork county	2
Voluntary secondary school, Clare	2
Voluntary secondary school, Kilkenny	2
Voluntary secondary school, Longford	2
Voluntary secondary school, Meath	2
Voluntary secondary school, Tipperary	4
Community school, Cork	2
Voluntary secondary school, Mayo	4
Voluntary secondary school, Monaghan	2.64
Voluntary secondary school, Dublin	1
Voluntary secondary school, Roscommon	2
Voluntary secondary school, Offaly	1
Voluntary secondary school, Kerry	1
Community school, Dublin	5
Voluntary secondary school, Kerry	3
Voluntary secondary school, Dublin	2

Impact of budget '09 on families

Principals were asked if school management had considered how to make up the shortfall in school funding across 4 options. The table below represents the number of schools which will respond to the Budget measures in the following ways

Increase rate of parents' voluntary contribution	15
Introduce charges for specific activities	17
Seek support form external body, e.g. Trustees	5
Allocate more money to school fund for disadvantaged students	11

Impact of increase in pupil-teacher ratio on the school community

Principals were asked to indicate how measures in Budget '09 would impact on the overall quality of school life. The table below represents the number of schools which will be 'directly affected' by the Budget measures in the following ways

Reduce range of programmes provided in school	9
Reduce subject choice in Junior Cycle	9
Reduce subject choice in Senior Cycle	11
Impact on disciplinary climate in school	5
Affect capacity to meet needs of all students	13
Reduce range of extra-curricular activities	15
Affect workload of teachers	16
Affect morale of teachers	18
Affect operation of pastoral care structures	10
Affect capacity to provide a broad & balanced education	17
Affect capacity to attract a broad range of students from local community	12

Impact of abolition of School Book Grant

Principals were asked to indicate how the abolition of the School Book Grant would affect the school library. The table below represents the number of schools which indicated the following effects

Will reduce stock	13
Will impoverish quality of service	14
Will require school to seek additional funding	16

Impact of abolition of Home Economics Grant

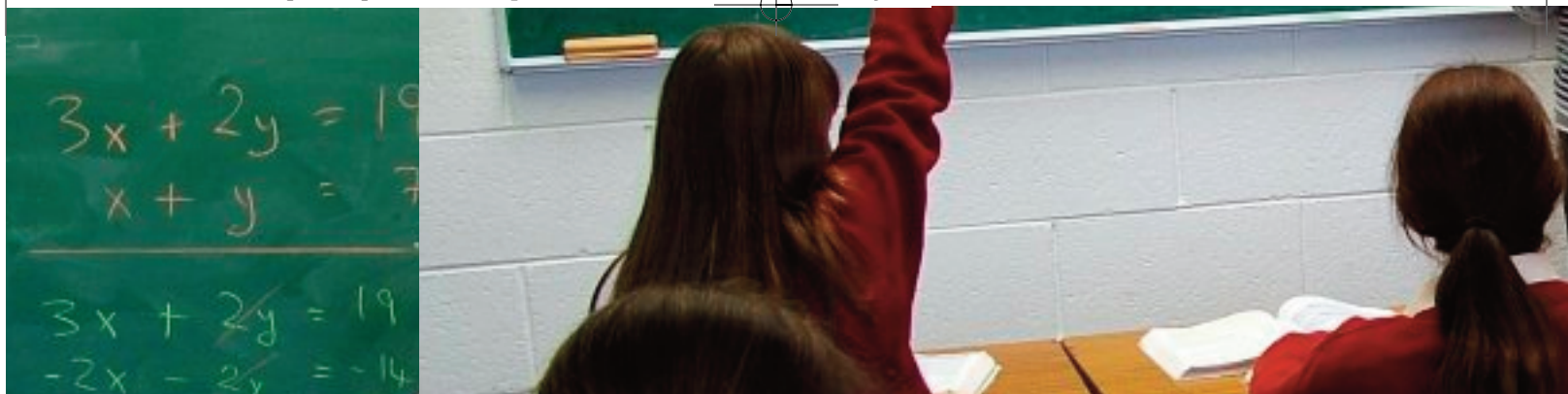
Principals were asked to indicate how the abolition of the Home Economics Grant would affect the provision of home economics. The table below represents the number of schools which indicated the following effects

Restrictions on student numbers	7
Financial contribution from students	12
Reduce practical work	9

Impact of abolition of Physics and Chemistry Grant

Principals were asked to indicate how the abolition of the Physics and Chemistry Grant would affect the provision of science subjects. The table below represents the number of schools which indicated the following effects

Restrictions on student numbers	5
Financial contribution from students	12
Reduce practical work	11



Rowan Secondary School

Profile

School Name: Rowan Secondary School

School Ethos: "Respect for the dignity of each student with her unique background, traditions and beliefs"

Community: Large county town in Leinster serving rural and urban population. Cyclically high unemployment levels in the town. Town traditionally has a large Traveller population.

Total Student Population: 598 students - girls only. 31 students are international students and 42 are from the Traveller community. 32 students have been assessed as having Special Educational Needs.

Teaching Staff: School has 41 permanent teachers and 8 non-permanent teachers.

Curriculum Profile: Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Transition Year

Impact

Junior Cycle curriculum

"Restrict availability of art and music. Spanish will also present some difficulty. Only for the sacrifices of the staff has it been possible to continue all activities". with existing allocation.

Mainstream Leaving Certificate

Classes in Spanish, religion and physical education will be affected. In terms of out-of-school activities, "again the cooperation of teachers has enabled us to continue, but in full year (in '09) this will be more difficult as we got a lot of sports, etc., finished before Christmas".

Transition Year

Introduced in 1997. Cutbacks will mean "loss of revenue; need for efficiencies; need to ask parents for more money".

What losing teachers will mean for Rowan School

The school will lose 2 non-permanent teachers in September '09. These teachers are currently working with international students and Traveller students. "The Traveller children are very challenging in educational terms - at least half need learning support". Out of the 31 International students, at least 20 will require ongoing English language support: "To date, we were able to allocate two teachers for these students - we will be lucky to have half a teacher's hours in September." Loss of teachers will also affect the numbers who can take geography and art.

Abolition of grants

Home economics students will be asked to make financial contribution; fewer students will be allowed to take the subject; and practical work will be affected. The same results can be expected arising from the abolition of the Physics and Chemistry Grant.

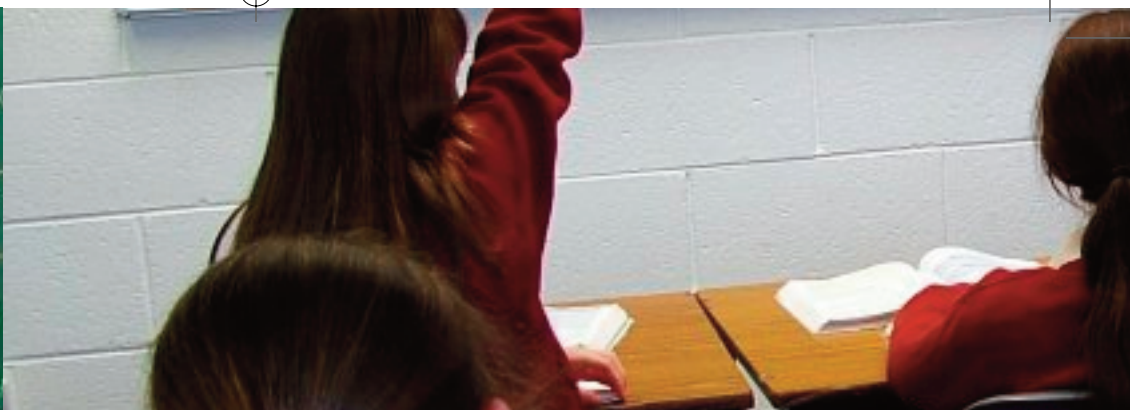
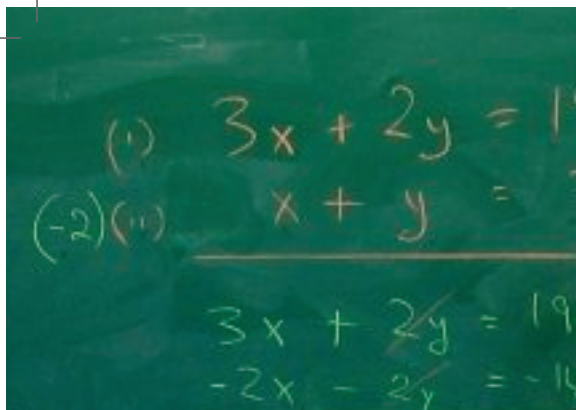
Impact of Budget '09 cutbacks on families

Board of Management will have to introduce charges for specific school activities and increase the amount of the voluntary contribution. It will also have to get financial support from the Trustee body - especially in relation to the school Book Rental Scheme and the supports for Traveller children. A number of families have contacted the school requesting a waiver on the payment of monies for Transition Year activities.

Quality of life in school today

"Staff have been enthusiastic and eager to keep things at a high level but this will be difficult to sustain in the long term as energy levels will be depleted."

"Am very worried about subject choice: to maintain this we will probably have to stop supports for Traveller and international students and put them back to the mainstream classes."



Willow Secondary School

Profile

School Name: Willow Secondary School

School Ethos: "The school ethos of being open and accountable to all is greatly endangered by the cutbacks ... The poor will suffer most".

Community: Small city serving rural and urban population in Munster. School has traditionally catered for the more disadvantaged communities.

Total Student Population: 650 students - boys only. 20 students are foreign nationals.

Teaching Staff: School has 40 permanent teachers; 3 non-permanent teachers.

Curriculum Profile: Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Transition Year

Impact

Junior Cycle curriculum
 Music will be dropped in September. Practice of providing separate classes for the significant number of students who have been exempted from Irish because of learning difficulties will cease. They will have to remain in the mainstream classroom - no supervision available.

Mainstream Leaving Certificate
 Music and home economics will be dropped. German will be available to restricted numbers. School had provided smaller classes in English and Irish to help the weaker students: these will go. Changes to S&S Scheme mean that when teachers are absent, school cannot get a qualified substitute; classes are, therefore, missing out on instruction. They "are babysat" rather than taught.

Leaving Certificate Vocational
 Introduced in 1997; has 107 students. Changes to the S&S Scheme means that group work will cease, making it difficult for students to really benefit from the mandatory modules on Enterprise Education and the World of Work. Home Economics was taught as a core practical subject but this will now be dropped as the teacher will not be replaced.

Transition Year
 Introduced in 1990; numbers will be very restricted as the budget will be down by €9,000. Classes will have to be larger - this will impact on the active learning and project work.

What losing teachers will mean for Willow Secondary School
 The school will lose 2 non-permanent teachers in September '09. The school will not be in a position to provide music. Physical education and home economics are also uncertain.

Abolition of Grants
 Abolition of School Book Grant will have an immediate effect on the quality of learning which has been developed to support students' learning across the curriculum.

Impact of Budget '09 cutbacks on families
 Board of Management will introduce charges for specific school activities and also have to make more funds available to the school fund for disadvantaged students. The school is down €11,000 - "we will have to dig deep to replace this".

A number of families have contacted the school requesting a waiver on the examination fees, including mock fees, and for school trips: "We have paid quietly for some of these families".

Quality of life in school today
 Restrictions on out-of-school work of great concern: "Out-of-school activities are vital for good staff-student relationships: it's what makes our system unique"
 "We will have to make do but the whole experience is dispiriting. We know the recession is deep but the school is no longer a sanctuary (for students) from the outside world."



Beech Secondary School

Profile

School Name: Beech Secondary School

School Ethos:

"To develop the students' full academic and intellectual potential and to enhance their sense of dignity and self-worth. The school is committed to the holistic development of all students."

Community: Large county town in Munster serving rural and urban population with a total of three second-level schools

Total Student Population: 422 students - boys only. 13 students are foreign nationals; 31 have been assessed as having Special Educational Needs

Teaching Staff: 31 permanent teachers, 3 non-permanent teachers

Curriculum Profile: Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Transition Year

Impact

Junior Cycle

"Less scope for cross-curricular work such as CSPE action projects for the Junior Certificate examination"

Mainstream Leaving Certificate

Science subjects will be dropped and it "will not be possible to provide Information Technology classes in Senior Cycle". Definitely not be able to provide agricultural science in Senior Cycle, despite serving a large farming community. Physics or chemistry will also have to go."

Transition Year

Introduced in 1982; average of 60 students. Out-of-school activities already affected - the trip to Paris was canceled. In the future, all TY activities will have to be self-financing.

What losing teachers will mean for Beech Secondary School

School will lose 2 non-permanent teachers. One of these is a qualified resource teacher who assists special needs students. Changes in staffing levels will reduce choice of Leaving Certificate science subjects from five to three. The increased pressures on teachers time will mean that the art teacher, who currently provides Leaving Certificate art classes after school for which students pay a fee, will be so busy that she will have to discontinue this after-school tuition.

Abolition of grants

Abolition of Physics and Chemistry Grant reduces opportunities for practical work and will lead to restrictions on the number of students allowed to take these subjects. Students will be required to make financial contributions for science subjects.

Impact of Budget '09 cutbacks on families

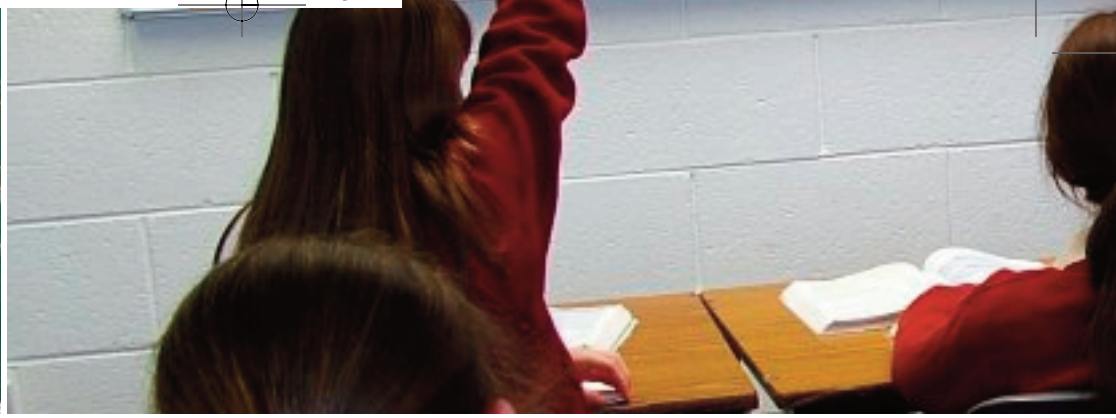
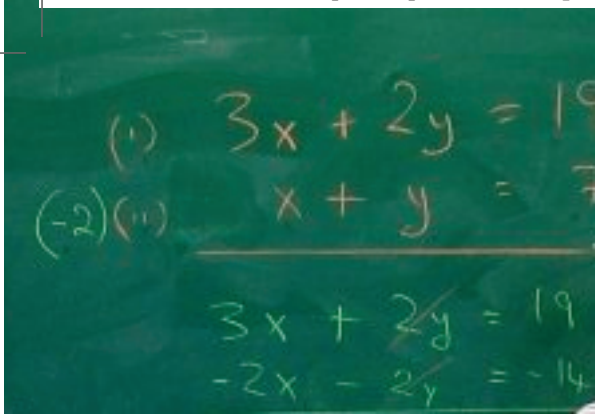
Board of Management will increase the rate of parents' voluntary contribution. This was last increased in September '08 but will go up again in September '09. A number of families have contacted the school requesting a waiver on the examination fees. During the year, a number of cheques made out to the school bounced "arising from cash flow problems of parents".

Quality of life in school today

"(Cutbacks) make it difficult to provide a holistic education. Teacher morale is low due to combined effect of cutbacks and the desire to provide the best possible service for students".

"The cutbacks will make it impossible to meet the needs of all students; subjects will be dropped, especially at Senior Cycle. Viability of the Transition Year will be questioned as activities will have to be self-financing and in the current circumstances this will be very difficult for many families".

"Annual trip to Young Scientists' Exhibition had to be canceled ... Transition Year tour had to be canceled. A number of trips are facilitated by the goodwill of the teachers ... Opted out of a number of sports/games competitions".



Oak Secondary School

Profile

School Name: Oak Secondary School. Oak is a DEIS school, ie. it has designated disadvantaged status.

Ethos of School: "Our aim is to provide a holistic education in an atmosphere of care, in a pleasant environment with particular emphasis on the marginalised and disadvantaged students."

Community: Small town with a total of two second-level schools in area serving dispersed rural population in north-west. Traditionally high unemployment in the area.

Total Student Population: 550 - co-educational.

Mix of Students: 106 students have been formally assessed as having Special Educational Needs; 23 students are foreign nationals.

Teaching Staff: 47 permanent teachers, 5 non-permanent teachers.

Curriculum Profile: Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

Impact

Junior Cycle

Music and technical graphics will probably be dropped. Changes in the S&S scheme have meant that First Year students have not had any field trips, etc., since January.

Mainstream Leaving Certificate

Design and communication graphics - the follow-on subject to technical graphics at Junior Cycle - will be dropped. Accounting and music will also be discontinued. Changes in the S&S scheme have meant that "Geography and biology field trips, visits to an art gallery and the cinema as part of the art and media studies classes have been canceled. Music workshops and visits to local enterprises have also stopped ... Only 90 hours allowed for cover for absent teachers from January to the end of May."

Leaving Certificate Vocational

Introduced in 1998: two class groups. Unsure if can continue the programme in the next school year. If so, would be restricted to one class group.

Leaving Certificate Applied

Introduced in 2002 for "students who cannot cope with traditional Leaving Certificate...they stay on in school and frequently get a distinction in this type of examination". Unsure if can continue the programme in the next school year.

What losing teachers will mean for Oak School

Will lose three non-permanent teachers. Accounting, music and design and communications graphics will be dropped from the Senior Cycle curriculum. As Oak School is a DEIS school, it has a home school liaison teacher. This teacher will retire next year. Their replacement will come from inside the existing staff. The teacher who is appointed to the position will not be replaced because of the revised ratio. As a result of this, the school is likely to lose its only qualified physical education teacher.

Abolition of grants

Abolition of Home Economics and Physics and Chemistry Grants will "most definitely" reduce opportunities for practical work; require students to make financial contributions; and require the school to find other sources of funding to ensure viability of the subject.

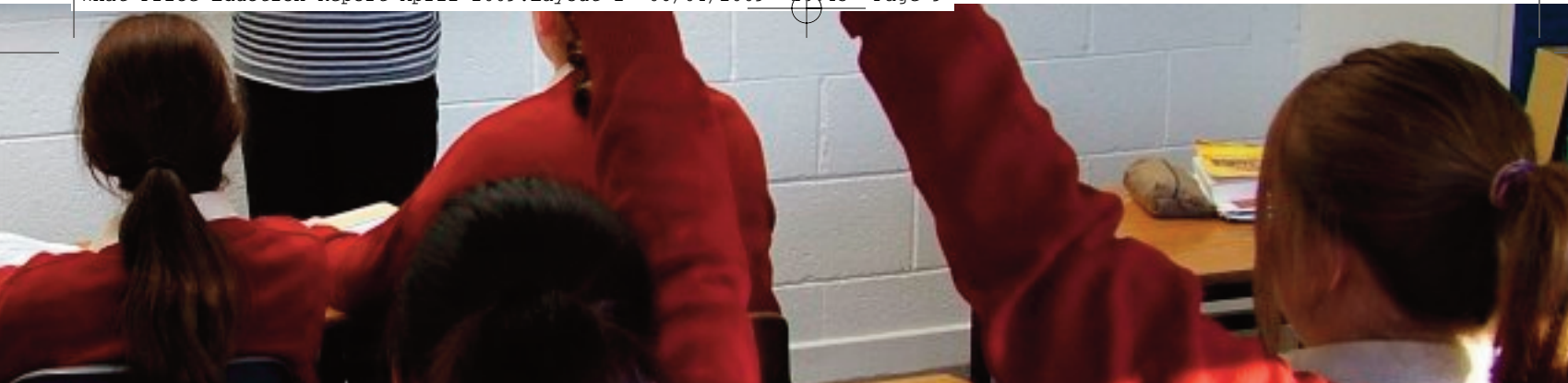
Impact of Budget '09 cutbacks on families

Board of Management will have to consider options including an increase in the rate of parents' voluntary contribution and the introduction of charges for specific activities provided by the school. It will also have to allocate more money to the school fund to assist students from disadvantaged families. The school has already been contacted by parents to discuss financial difficulties such as "problems in paying exam fees; paying for updates to private psychological assessment for students because of delays in issuing of medical cards".

Quality of life in school today

"Teacher morale has been greatly lowered and they have been curtailed from taking part in extra-curricular activities because of lack of cover."

"Overall, I am depressed at the inability to provide a full range of subjects. Increased workload for all assistant principals next year... teachers will most likely have to teach subjects which they have not taught for many years..."



Sycamore Secondary School

Profile

School Name: Sycamore Secondary School

School Ethos:

"Holistic education - to develop the human, spiritual, social and academic potential of each student"

Community: Large county town in Leinster serving rural and urban population. Cyclically high unemployment levels in the town. Town traditionally has a large Traveller population.

Total Student Population: 782 students - girls only. 40 students are international students; 32 students have been assessed as having Special Educational Needs. 13 students are from the Traveller community.

Teaching Staff: 48 permanent teachers, 7 non-permanent teachers.

Curriculum Profile: Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Transition Year

Impact

Junior Cycle curriculum

Students will not be able to choose two languages as is currently the case. "Field trips greatly restricted, e.g., trip to Young Scientists' Exhibition and theatre visits ... Discipline issues in some classes as have no cover for absent teacher."

Mainstream Leaving Certificate

"Classes will be bigger, especially in maths and Irish. Teachers aren't free to do extra work to prepare students for practical elements of examinations."

Transition Year

Will provide it next year but will have to be reviewed. Will be restricted to one group of students instead of the current two groups.

What losing teachers will mean for Sycamore School

School will lose four non-permanent teachers. One of these serves as the resource teacher and language support teacher. The loss of these teachers will require re-allocation of permanent teachers across the timetable, which will result in reduction in school guidance and counseling service; merging very weak and high ability classes in core areas of maths, English and Irish. Physical education will not be available to 6th Years; IT modules previously provided as separate class to each year will have to be merged in mainstream classes. "Creative timetabling to take account of the very mixed ability levels of students is gone".

Abolition of grants

Home economics, physics and chemistry students will be asked to make financial contributions. Abolition of library grant is very damaging - there is huge demand because of disadvantaged students. "The Traveller students in the school will be very affected - I know that the four Traveller girls in 5th Year will not return in September because of the cost of schools books and uniforms."

Impact of Budget '09 cutbacks on families

Board of Management has decided to increase the rate of parents' voluntary contributions and to introduce charges for specific school activities. "Extra-curricular activities will have to become completely self-financing: heretofore heavily subsidised by the school".

"Increasing numbers of families have been in contact with the school - no money for exam fees; no money to replace torn uniforms; no money for books; requesting financial help in many areas. I've never seen it escalate so badly and I'm a longtime principal"

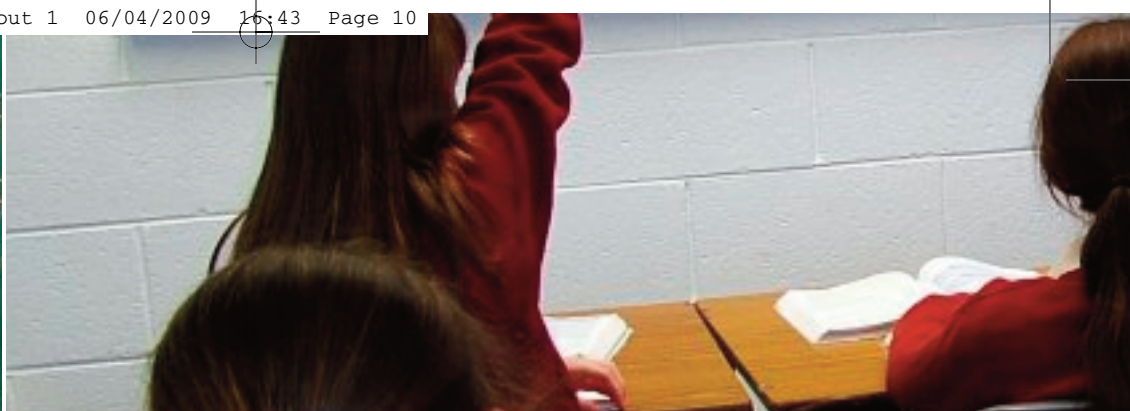
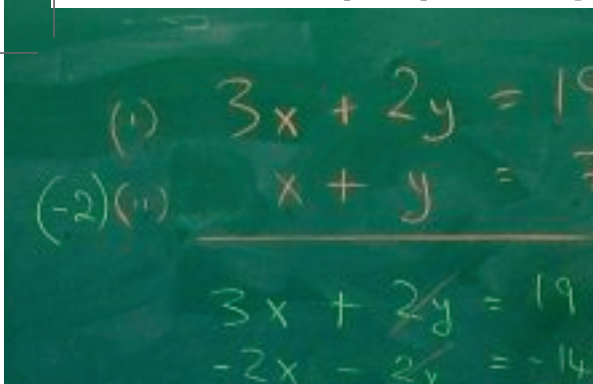
Quality of Life in School Today

"Social scene has changed so much ... huge commuter influx to town ... many families in distress ... I personally spend hours with parents ... these are the children who will lose out most."

"Classes not covered for teachers on uncertified sick leave leads to indiscipline and lack of focus in school atmosphere. Eventually, there will be safety issues ... Break supervision cannot be put in jeopardy to cover classes."

"Staff morale has been knocked ... staff who willingly offer help at all times questioned whether they should continue to do so ... they are asking 'where is this all going?', 'we are being taken for granted', etc."

"I feel anger that the students will suffer at all levels, especially the disadvantaged students."



Elm Secondary School

Profile

School Name: Elm Community School. Elm is a DEIS school, ie. it has designated disadvantaged status.

School Ethos:

"The school is in a very disadvantaged area - it is a DEIS school. Our loss of €7,000 in grant aid and staff losses seriously undermine the school's ability to provide the sort of activities which seek to improve the aspirations and expectations of students."

Community: City school serving a largely disadvantaged area in Munster.

Total Student Population: 331 students - co-educational. 45 students have been assessed as having Special Educational Needs; 22 are foreign nationals and 14 are Traveller students.

Teaching Staff: 34 permanent teachers, 3 non-permanent teachers.

Curriculum Profile: Leaving Certificate Applied, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Transition Year

Impact

Junior Cycle curriculum

"Have already applied for concessionary hours to allow business studies to remain on curriculum. The number of activities and events has dropped dramatically - staff have agreed that what time is available (under S&S Scheme) will be used for matches and essential curriculum events."

Leaving Certificate Vocational

Introduced in 1998; 105 students. Since January it has not been possible to release teachers to liaise with employers for work experience or visits to enterprises.

Leaving Certificate Applied

Introduced in 1994: "It provides a path to school completion for less able who would otherwise leave school because they cannot cope with mainstream." Even so, the Board of Management has decided that with current resources it will not be in a position to provide the programme in September.

Transition Year

"Introduced in 1990: 62 students. Student fee of €120 per year will have to double to €240 or else activities will have to be cut. Activities have been severely curtailed this year."

What losing teachers will mean for Elm School

School will lose two non-permanent teachers. Both are the only teachers available in school who teach French. "Total uncertainty as to how school will provide a modern language in curriculum in September".

Abolition of grants

Home economics, physics and chemistry students will be asked to make financial contribution. Abolition of library grant is very damaging - huge demand because of disadvantaged students.

Impact of Budget '09 cutbacks on families

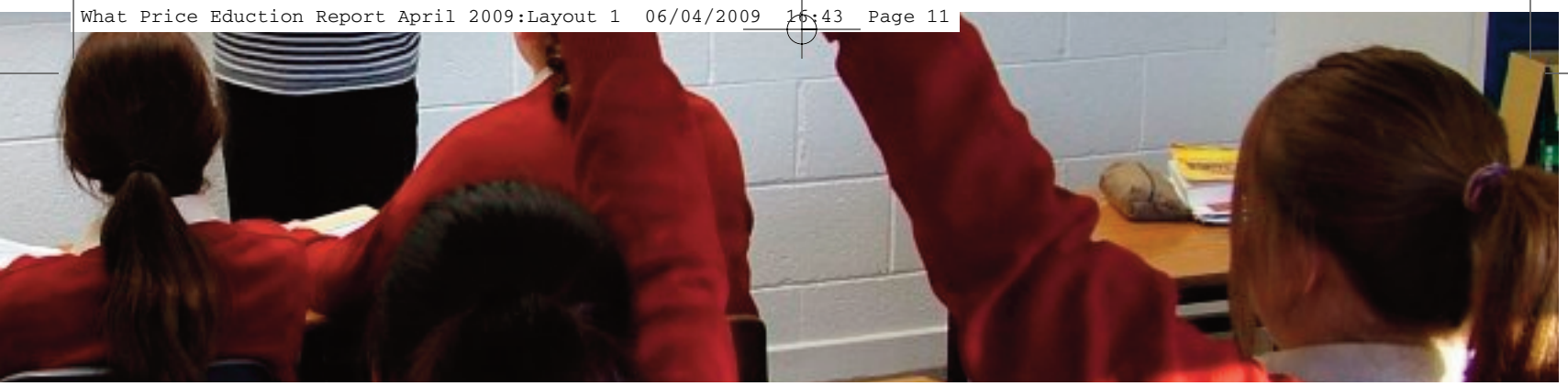
Board of Management has decided to increase the rate of parents' voluntary contributions and to introduce charges for specific school activities. It will also seek support from external sources.. "Formerly, grants covered a lot of the programme costs ... parents were rarely asked to contribute more than a nominal amount. The costs of these programmes will now have to be fully met by families."

Families have been in contact with the school on financial matters. "There is already high unemployment in the catchment area ... now there is huge concern around simple issues of replacing damaged or missing parts of the uniform ... The parents' association is very concerned about the passing on of costs by the school to parents."

Quality of life in school today

"I believe that the educational experience for all students will diminish; retention levels will fall; and relationships with students assisted by extra-curricular activities will be affected."

"It is a very difficult time to lead a school when the standard of provision will undoubtedly suffer due to lack of resources ... Students will be confined more and more to the classroom as the only sphere of education and teachers will have less opportunities to enhance the teaching and learning experience."



Hazel Community School

Profile

School Name: Hazel Community School

School Ethos: "Co-educational school with Christian ethos with an open and inclusive enrolment policy"

Community: Urban school serving a largely disadvantaged community in the greater Dublin area

Total Student Population: 789 students - co-educational. 77 students are foreign nationals and 51 students have been assessed as having Special Educational Needs. 9 students are from the Travelling Community.

Teaching Staff: 49 permanent teachers; 11 non-permanent teachers.

Curriculum Profile: Leaving Certificate Applied, Transition Year

Impact

Junior Cycle curriculum

"Music and technical graphics are in danger of not running in September."

Mainstream Leaving Certificate

Very weak and very high ability students will have to be in the same class. Either physics or chemistry are likely to be dropped. "Geography trips had to be localised and, in one case, postponed."

What losing teachers will mean for Hazel School

Main problem will be larger classes and having to put students of very different ability levels into same class, especially at Leaving Certificate level. It will be struggle to keep chemistry. Because of large number of disadvantaged students, school had provided small withdrawal classes with resource teachers. These will no longer be possible. School would like to provide Leaving Certificate Applied but cannot at moment as there are not enough teachers. School will lose its home school liaison teacher (not in DEIS). Principal is struggling hard to keep her as she had one year to go to get a CID. If she is kept, she will be allocated resource teacher hours and PE hours.

Abolition of Grants

Students will be asked to make financial contribution to these subjects, and the numbers able to take these subjects will definitely be restricted. Abolition of library grant is very damaging - huge demand because of disadvantaged students. Abolition of Choirs and Orchestra Grant will require the school to seek other sources of funding to keep school music group going.

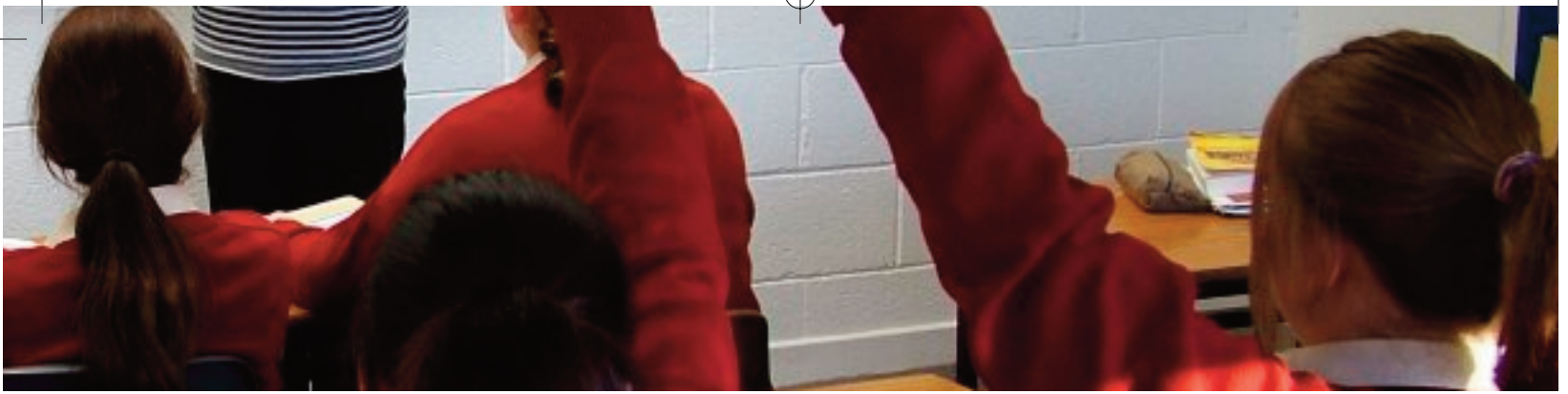
Impact of Budget '09 cutbacks on families

Board of Management has decided to increase the rate of parents' voluntary contributions and to introduce charges for specific school activities. It will also seek support from external sources. "Contribution will probably increase by €40 and the Transition Fee also". Unemployed parents have contacted the school on financial matters: "Families and out-of-work parents and those on medical cards seeing assistance."

Quality of Life in School Today

"Teacher morale is good but will suffer and consequently the quality of their involvement will suffer and that of student achievement".

"I feel that we are being forced to make choices which will have consequences for the future of our youth at a stage when they are relying on the adults to make good decisions for them".



Vox Pops

What principals of other schools profiled had to say about the situation in their schools

Girls' secondary school, Leinster

"All elective inservice is gone...staff members were very enthusiastic about professional development ...all gone! Time for school planning has been most seriously affected of all - how can we plan with no time?"

Boys' secondary school, Leinster

"If I was at retirement age now I would retire. This attack on my school's ability to provide the best possible education service has dented everyone's morale ... Unless I get a curricular concession, I will not be able to provide 27 classes of Irish and Geography in 2009."

Co-educational secondary school, Connaught

"Teachers cannot be released for planning meeting, trips, etc... All learning must take place in the classroom, giving a very narrow range of education opportunities ... There have been difficulties in helping students complete examination projects outside of timetabled classes - geography and history projects - because teachers cannot be released."

Boys' secondary school, Leinster

"Am totally depressed as I believe a huge amount of work has been totally undone ... support structures to assist the most vulnerable have been undermined, which will mean that discipline and pastoral care structures will be affected."

Co-educational secondary school, Munster

"We have doubled up classes - 1st and 2nd Year are together, 5th and 6th Year home economics and physics are together ... Computer maintenance is a very high expense in our school. We already have to charge pupils a small fee towards the cost of home economics, woodwork, science and art ... Some parents cannot afford the bus fee of €7 or €11 to bring the pupils to matches."

Boys' secondary school, midlands

"Families are concerned about the cost of books, uniforms, etc. I have had to refer them to the Community Welfare Officer on advice from the local TD ... Our school, like every other school, will change; activities will be curtailed and the burden to operate the school falls to the Principal and Deputy Principal - we have to cover extra classes."