



ASTI100
A century of service



**What Price
Education?
One year on**

**An update on the effects of budget cutbacks on 20
second-level schools.**

One Year On

Introduction

In the wake of Budget decisions in 2008 and 2009, the ASTI undertook case study research into the impact of cutbacks on 20 schools.

Its publication *What Price Education?* provided a 'snapshot' of how 20 schools were coping with an increased pupil-teacher ratio; the abolition of subject grants; and changes in the Supervision and Substitution Scheme. Since then, schools have had to contend with a moratorium on appointments to posts of responsibility introduced in March 2009.

The ASTI revisited the 20 schools to find out how they are coping with the cutbacks one year on and with the moratorium in place. Irrespective of school type, the picture that emerges universally is one of schools under pressure on several levels. The most apparent - and the most serious - pressure is on the curriculum, arising from the increased pupil-teacher ratio. Schools are taking all sorts of measures to ensure that students continue to have access to a broad curriculum. They have combined Fifth Year and Sixth Year classes; combined ordinary and higher level classes; and managed to retain programmes such as Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Applied by reducing subject range. However, as the table on page 3 demonstrates, schools are finding it increasingly difficult to provide a broad curriculum and to meet students' needs.

The dominant themes emerging from this research exercise are:

- ◆ **pressure on the school curriculum and the learning environment due to staffing restrictions;**
- ◆ **damage to administrative capacity of schools from the moratorium on posts;**
- ◆ **increasing numbers of parents experiencing difficulties in meeting the costs of education.**

Note on staffing second-level schools

The allocation of teachers to second-level schools is complex. 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 of the number of teachers available to the school, their qualifications and expertise, and the needs of students in terms of subject choice and ability levels. An increase in the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) means there are fewer teachers in the school overall. This in turn, requires that the number of classes in subject areas may have to be reduced and/or the number of students in classes may have to be increased. It also means that there are fewer teachers to allocate to teach classes in programmes such as Transition Year or Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Cert Vocational. Some schools in the current study year ceased to provide such programmes precisely because of staffing restrictions. Schools have been able to obviate the worst effects of staffing levels by appealing for and getting concessionary posts from the Department of Education and Science, leading to higher numbers of non-permanent teachers in schools.

Curriculum under pressure

The increase in the pupil-teacher ratio announced in Budget 2009 came into operation in September 2009. In last year's survey, principals were unanimous in their concerns about how this staffing level would affect the curriculum choice for students in the current school year. The evidence from this year's survey vindicates this concern.

In total 53 posts were lost between the 20 schools

10 schools lost permanent posts

9 schools lost non-permanent posts

It is clear that each school is experiencing challenges to provide a curriculum suitable to students' needs and is seeking to meet these challenges in a variety of ways. Indeed, this theme of a curriculum under pressure is the dominant theme in principals' observations.

Changes in staffing levels

School	Number of students (change from last year)	Change in number of permanent teacher posts	Change in number of non-permanent teacher posts
Dublin West	811 (+32)	No change	-1 post
Donegal	575 (+25)	- 4 posts	No change
Meath	769 (-13)	- 4 posts	+ 1.2 posts
Cork	328 (-8)	No change	- 2 posts
Kilkenny	670 (+20)	No change	No change
Offaly	512 (-3)	+ 2 posts	No change
Cork	1270 (+25)	No change	- 4.6 posts
Longford	615 (+17)	- 2 posts	- 2 posts
Roscommon	377 (-13)	No change	No change
Tipperary	680 (+4)	No change	No change
Mayo	345 (+8)	- 1 post	No change
Monaghan	700 (same)	- 3 posts	- 2 posts
Dublin	689 (-1)	- 2 posts	- 2 posts
Kerry	180 (-6)	+1.5 posts	- 1 post
Kerry	504 (+24)	- 1 post	- 1 post
Dublin City	441 (+12)	- 2.5 posts	No change
Cork	400 (-22)	- 1 post	No change
Clare	279 (+6)	+ 2 posts	No change
Carlow	350 (-26)	No change	No change
Dublin City	577 (-33)	- 7.5	- 9 posts

Curriculum under pressure

School	Combining 5th and 6th Year classes	Combining Ordinary & Higher level classes	Reduced number of classes
Dublin West		Maths, Irish, Architecture and Construction Studies	
Donegal	Music	French, Sciences Business,	
Meath	German	German, Accounting	Next year - Art, Home Economics, Business
Cork		Irish, English Maths, French	
Cork	Year 1 & 2 in LC Applied	Physics	
Longford		Biology, French, Geography, Home Economics	
Tipperary		Yes	Physics, Design & Communication Graphics, Biology, Arch & Construction Studies
Mayo			Irish, English Maths
Monaghan	Year 1 & 2 LC Applied	Physics	
Dublin City		English, Maths, Hstory, Geography	
Kerry	Higher Level Maths, Home Economics, Physics	Maths, Home Economics, Physics	
Kerry	Transition Year with 5th Year for some subjects. Year 1 & 2 Leaving Cert Applied		
Cork		English, French	
Clare	Design & Communication Graphics		
Dublin City		Foundation and ordinary maths	Irish, English, French, Science subjects

Ceased to provide subject or programme	Transition Year	LC applied / LC Vocational Programmes
LC Applied	Reduce range of learning modules	
	Reduce range of learning modules	Reduce range of learning modules in LC Applied and LC Vocational
Economics (next year)	Reduce range of learning modules	
Choice of science subjects reduced. Business to go next year		Reduce range of learning modules in LC Applied and LC Vocational

Chemistry, Music, LC Vocational Programme	Reduce range of learning modules	
	Down from 2 to 1 classes. Reduce range of learning modules	
Accounting, German	Reduce range of learning modules	
Art	Reduce range of learning modules	
	Reduce range of learning modules	
	Reduce range of learning modules	Reduce range of learning modules in LC Vocational
	Reduce range of learning modules	Reduce range of learning modules in LC Applied

Restriction on learning environment due to increase in pupil-teacher ratio	No. of schools
Combining Fifth and Sixth Year classes	7
Combining higher and ordinary level classes	12
Reduce number of classes in subject area	4
Reduce modules in Transition Year	10
Reduce modules in Leaving Certificate Applied or Leaving Certificate Vocational	4
Drop subjects or programmes	6

Taking everything into consideration, how has the increase in pupil-teacher ratio affected your school community in the current school year?	Directly affected	Indirectly affected	Not sure at this stage
Range of programmes provided in school	4	7	5
Range of subject choice provided in Junior Cycle	2	5	10
Range of subject choice provided in Senior Cycle	4	5	7
Disciplinary climate in school	7	2	8
School's capacity to meet the needs of all students	10	4	3
Range of extra-curricular activities provided by school	9	6	3
Morale of teaching staff	12	3	3
Operation of school's Pastoral Care structures	7	7	4
School's capacity to provide a broad and balanced educational experience	10	4	4

Impact of increased Pupil-Teacher Ratio on junior cycle curriculum

Overcrowding in Junior Cycle Classes	Overcrowding in Junior Cert Maths and/or Science Classes	Reduced number of classes for Junior Cycle subjects
10 schools	8 schools	6 schools

Impact of moratorium on appointment to promotional posts

In March 2009, a moratorium on appointment to posts of responsibility in schools was introduced with immediate effect. The post structure in second-level schools is vital to the effective administrative and organisational operation of the school. In terms of the latter, the structures in place for managing student behaviour; pastoral care and student welfare; timetabling; organisation of examinations; school attendance and retention; school development and planning; curriculum planning and many extra-curricular activities that sustain the delivery of a holistic education are all dependant on effective 'middle-management' post-holders.

The impact of the moratorium on schools was and continues to be greatly exacerbated by the rapid rise in the number of teachers retiring - largely in response to concerns about salary cuts and changes to the public service pension. Given that many more teachers have signaled their intention to retire in 2010, many of the principals indicated their anxiety about how this will impact on their schools next year.

19 out of 20 schools lost middle management posts. A total of 53 middle management posts were lost - an average of 3 per school.

Across the 20 schools, the most damaging impact of the moratorium has been on the administrative capacity of schools and on the process of school development and planning. Many principals commented that, so far, they had been able to 'protect' the curriculum from the adverse consequences of the moratorium but were fearful that in the coming year, they would not be able to ensure, for example, a coordinator for Transition Year or Leaving Certificate Applied or Leaving Cert Vocational programmes.

Across all 20 schools, the principals repeatedly referred to the increased workload they and the deputy principals have to sustain because of the moratorium. Many referred to an 'unsustainable workload'. Principals' capacity to provide educational leadership is greatly diminished because of the demands of the now increased demands on day-to-day administration. An education system cannot continue to function when the leaders of schools are in positions where workload becomes so unsustainable as to be impossible.

"I am totally frustrated - workload is becoming impossible for principals and deputy principals. Huge amount of time taken up with tasks that have nothing to do with educational leadership." (boys' secondary school, Tipperary)

"I have had to take Fifth Year French classes ... I worked 63 hour-weeks this school year ...generally 50 hours. The job from the leadership point of view is unsustainable since too many balls have to be kept in the air." (boys' secondary school, Carlow)

School	Number of posts lost	Reason for loss of posts	
		Posts lost due to retirement	Posts lost due to other reasons
Dublin West	1	-	1
Donegal	6	3	3
Meath	4	3	1
Cork	3	2	1
Kilkenny	2	1	1
Offaly	2	2	-
Cork	2	-	2
Longford	2	1	1
Roscommon	2	1	1
Tipperary	3	2	1
Mayo	3	2	1
Monaghan	5	2	3
Dublin	4	2	2
Kerry	1	1	-
Kerry	3	3	-
Dublin	2	2	-
Cork	4	2	2
Clare	-	-	-
Carlow	1	-	1
Dublin	3	-	3

How the moratorium has affected the 20 schools	To a great degree	To some degree
Loss of post/s has reduced the number of teachers involved in the school's pastoral care team	3	8
Loss of post/s has negatively affected curriculum planning in the school	8	5
Loss of post/s has affected the school's adult education programme	2	2
Loss of post/s has negatively affected the school development and planning process in the school	10	4
Loss of post/s has damaged the school's administrative capacity	13	3

Financial pressures on parents

A major theme referred to again and again in the replies from principals was the increased cost of education to students and their families. The abolition of the subject grants in Budget 2009, though dealt with in the Renewed Programme for Government, is continuing to hit students who are required to pay for materials in home economics and science classes.

Boards of management have had to increase the amount paid by parents in so-called 'voluntary contributions' in 10 of the 20 schools. In practically every school, the principal provides an example of how parents are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the costs of education - mainly because of rising unemployment.

"In addition to introducing charges for specific school activities, we had to seek support from local business and the local authority, as well as the local branch of the St Vincent de Paul. Unemployment among parents' [main source] of difficulties." (boys' secondary school, Dublin)

"School had to pay for all textbooks for some students and also their transports fees to school plus the mock examination fees." (girls' secondary school, Kerry)

Increase in parents' voluntary contribution	10
Ask Trustees / other external body for money	6
Charge students for specific activities	16
Increase school 'hardship fund'	15

Ask students to pay for home economics material	9
Ask students to pay for science materials	7
School had to find additional monies for home economics classes	10
School had to find additional monies for science classes	11

Factsheet

Curriculum under pressure

13 schools have lost one or more teacher.

10 schools have overcrowded classrooms for junior cycle subjects

4 schools have reduced the number of classes provided in a subject area

7 schools have amalgamated Fifth and Sixth Year classes

12 schools have amalgamated higher level and ordinary level classes

10 schools reported that the increase in pupil-teacher ratio has directly affected the school's capacity to meet the needs of all students

10 schools reported that the increase in pupil-teacher ratio has directly affected the school's capacity to provide a broad and balanced educational experience

10 schools have scaled back Transition Year

5 schools have scaled back LCVP

4 schools have scaled back LCA; 1 school ceased offering the option to students.

6 schools have dropped or are in the process of dropping at least one subject or programme.

Moratorium on posts

19 schools have lost promotional posts

53 posts were lost between the 20 schools

14 schools said the loss of posts has negatively affected the school development and planning process in the school

16 schools said the loss of posts has damaged the school's administrative capacity

13 schools said the loss of posts has negatively affected curriculum planning in the school

11 schools said the loss of posts has reduced the number of teachers involved in the school's pastoral care team

Financial pressures

10 schools increased the rate of parents' voluntary contributions

16 schools introduced charges for specific activities

15 schools allocated more money to school fund to assist families experiencing financial problems

9 schools require students to make financial contributions for home economics

7 schools require students to make financial contributions for physics and chemistry

Rowan Secondary School

Teachers lost
Classes merged

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 and county. Town traditionally has a large Traveller population.

Student population: 615 students - girls' only, an increase on 17 since last year. 40 girls are foreign nationals, 48 come from the Traveller community and 30 have Assessed Special Educational Needs.

Changes in staffing levels: School has lost 2 permanent teacher posts and 2 non-permanent teacher posts. Its staffing level is currently 33 permanent posts and 7 non-permanent teachers.

Impact

Impact of Pupil-Teacher Ratio on Rowan's curriculum

Junior cycle: this year Rowan was not able to provide art or home economics to all students who requested the subjects.

Leaving Certificate: honours and pass classes have been amalgamated in French, biology, geography and home economics.

Transition Year: Rowan "reduced the number of modules and brought an end to the trip abroad."

Impact Of Pupil-Teacher Ratio on school community

'Directly impacted' on school's capacity to meet the needs of all students, especially in relation to pastoral care structures and the range of extra-curricular activities provided to the girls."

Moratorium on promotional posts

School has lost 1 assistant principal and 1 special duties post due to a retirement and sick leave. Three areas most affected are extra-curricular activities, school development and planning process and school's administrative capacity.

Abolition of grants

Being an all-girls school, with a big uptake of home economics, Rowan is continuing to experience problems in the provision of materials for practical work, where students must continue to make a financial contribution for materials. Students who study physics and chemistry are also required to make a financial contribution for material. The school library is continuing to experience difficulties in purchasing stock.

Financial burden On families

Last year the Board of Management was concerned that it would have to increase the rate of parents' voluntary contribution and charges for specific class activities in the school. The Board had to introduce both measures this year. "Provision of uniforms for the Traveller community and books for disadvantaged students are big issues".

How changes In Supervision and Substitution Scheme are affecting school this year

School was unable to take part in the Young Scientist Exhibition this year. School visits to career fairs are also affected. 'Participation in sporting competitions greatly curtailed.'

Principal's reflections on changes since last year

"Increasingly difficult to offer the same - and expected - level of service to the local community. Definite problems with morale of teachers ... however, their sense of service continues to outweigh the problems and morale issues."

Beech Secondary School

Administrative
capacity damaged
Classes combined
and overcrowded

Profile

School Name: Beech Secondary School

School Ethos: "To develop the student's 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 town in Munster serving rural and urban population with a total of three second-level schools. Town and surrounding area currently experiencing high unemployment levels.

Total Student Population: 400 students - boys only, down 22 students. 38 boys are Assessed Special Educational Needs students. There are 10 foreign national students.

Increase in Pupil Teacher Ratio: Beech has lost 1 permanent teacher post.

Impact

PTR and the Curriculum

Junior Cycle: Beech has reduced the number of classes for French and English, leading to over-crowding in both. Overcrowding also in Irish classes.

Leaving Certificate: Ordinary and Honours levels classes combined for English and French; number of classes in both subjects reduced.

Transition Year: "Changes in Supervision and Substitution Scheme making it difficult to organise out-of- school activities"

PTR and the School Community

In Beech, the changes to the pupil-teacher ratio have directly affected "the disciplinary climate, the range of extra-curricular activities and the operation of the school's pastoral care structures."

Moratorium on Posts

Beech has lost 4 Assistant Principal posts due to 2 teachers retiring, 1 on sick leave. "Loss of these posts has damaged the school's administrative capacity." Curriculum planning has also been badly affected.

Changes in Supervision and Substitution Scheme

Overall it has reduced out-of-school trips for classes and has also affected participation in sport competitions.

Abolition of Grants

School library is continuing to be affected; stock of books has not been kept up to date.

Financial Burden on Families

The Board of Management has not increased the voluntary contribution but it has introduced charges for school activities and has had to allocate additional funding to school 'hardship fund'. Number of families seeking assistance with costs of education has increased. The school responded by providing funds to buy uniforms and books and by facilitating payment of voluntary contribution in installments.

Principal's reflections one year on

"I am annoyed that school planning and development is virtually impossible ... and angry that the moratorium on posts deprives school leaders of support to manage and lead the staff in a collegial manner."

Oak Secondary School

Subject choice
restricted

Extra curricular
activities scaled
back

Profile

School Name: Oak Secondary School

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. Oak is a DEIS school.

School Population: Student numbers are up by 25 to 575, girls only. 20 students are Assessed Special Educational Needs students.

Increase in Pupil Teacher Ratio: Despite increase in students, the number of permanent teacher posts in Oak has decreased by 4.

Impact

PTR and the Curriculum

Leaving Certificate: Fifth and Sixth Year classes have been combined for Music. Ordinary and Higher level classes combined for French, science subjects and Business.

Leaving Certificate Applied Programme: As anticipated last year, the options for students have been reduced.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme: School has restricted the number of students taking this programme and has also reduced learning modules.

PTR and the School Community

In Oak, the increase in the PTR had "directly affected" the school's capacity to meet the needs of all students as well as the subject/curriculum choice for students.

Moratorium on Posts

Oak has lost 2 Assistant Principal posts and 4 Special Duties posts - due to 3 retirements, sick leave and an appointment to deputy principalship. This loss of posts is "directly affecting" curriculum planning in the school and has damaged the school's administrative capacity.

Changes in S&S Scheme

School was not able to take part in the Young Scientists' exhibition this year. All areas of extra-curricular activities have been scaled back. School has also reduced release of teachers for inservice training.

Abolition of Grants

In Home Economics, students have to bring in money for materials and the school has had to find additional monies for this subject. Similar for both Physics and Chemistry. School has had to seek additional funding to ensure continuity of school choir/orchestra because of the abolition of the grant.

Financial Burden on Families

As anticipated last year, the Board of Management was required to both increase the level of the parents' voluntary contribution and to introduce charges for specific activities: "Very difficult to get fees in - if at all."

Principal's reflections one year on...

"My input to this questionnaire is limited precisely because I am so busy with day-to-day school management."

Sycamore Secondary School

Administrative
duty pressure
Combined and
overcrowded
classes

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. Currently high unemployment levels in both the town and county. Town traditionally has a large Traveller population.

School Population: Girls' school. Enrolment has dropped slightly by 13 students to 769. Number of assessed Special Educational Needs down slightly from 32 to 28; number of foreign national students is 42.

Increase in Pupil Teacher Ratio: Sycamore has lost 4 permanent teaching posts: number of non-permanent teachers has gone up by 1.2 of a post.

Impact

PTR and the Curriculum

Junior Cycle: "students can now only take one language; heretofore, they had a choice to take two languages". Overcrowded classes in English and Gaelige. "There is great demand for Art: only 1 permanent Art teacher; second Art teacher is a curricular concession - if that goes, the subject will decline radically."

Leaving Certificate: Fifth and Sixth Year classes for German are now combined. "This will also happen in Accounting next year...Economics also under threat of being dropped next year." Number of classes provided next year in Home Economics, Art and Business will be reduced.

Transition Year: Reduced number of modules available to students and amalgamated TY groups. "Next year, there will be more radical changes in provision". Next year, Sycamore will reduce number of students allowed to take Transition Year.

PTR and the School Community

In Sycamore, the changes to the PTR have directly affected the school's capacity to meet the needs of all students; its extra-curricular activities; and the morale of the teaching staff.

Moratorium on Posts

Sycamore has lost 3 assistant principals posts and 1 special duties post - due to 4 teachers retiring. Loss of posts has directly affected "curriculum planning, and overall school development and planning". These changes have greatly added to the workload of the Principal: "the work still has to be done."

Changes in Supervision and Substitution Scheme

School no longer organises out-of-school trips unless they are part of the syllabus or the examinations. Games after school "are continuing, however, no 'friendly' matches, only league games, a huge loss to the students." School planning and staff meetings "are a disaster area - all teachers are so busy that some recognition of meeting time for each subject department should be allowed for by the Department."

Abolition of Grants

Chemistry and home economics students are now required to make a financial contribution for the cost of materials.

Financial Burden on Families

The Board of Management has increased the amount of parents' voluntary contribution and has introduced charges for school activities. Board has sought additional funds from Trustees to meet costs. An increased number of parents had sought assistance from the school because of job losses or loss of social welfare payments.

"The school paid for or subsidised many aspects of school life that add to the educational environment, but may be considered in political circles as 'non-essentials'. For example, canteen facilities, lockers, computers, photocopiers, study rooms, etc. Parents' voluntary contribution has been increased to meet the cost of these 'non-essentials'.

Principal's reflections one year on...

"It was clear to me last year that 09/10 would not be the year of the greatest impact of the cutbacks, as the Department of Education was facilitative regarding curricular concessionary hours for schools. This cosmetically reduced the impact of the changed Pupil-teacher Ratio for the current year. Schools were given temporary hours, But we cannot plan a curriculum operating with staffing on an ad-hoc year to year basis. We need better PTR for permanent staffing."

Posts Moratorium:

"This aspect of the cutbacks has most school principals completely stressed. The blanket ban on promotions just doesn't make sense, when the same number of students, parents, classes have to be catered for and cared for, and the same level of administration is expected. Yet the DES continues to expect the same standards as before, the same (or more) administrative tasks. Also school principals are supposed to be 'instructional leaders' rather than micro-managing. Where is the DES coming from? Completely out of touch with reality of school life"

Elm Secondary School

Profile

School Name: Elm Community School

School Ethos: "Together We Learn, Together We Care, Together We Respect"

Community: City school in Munster serving an area with an extremely high level of social and educational disadvantage. Elm is a DEIS school.

School Population: Student numbers down 8 students to 323. At same time, number of students with assessed Special Educational Needs up from 45 to 50 as is the number of foreign national students from 22 to 28.

Increase in Pupil Teacher Ratio: While the number of permanent teachers in Elm remains static at 34, school has lost 2 non-permanent teachers.

Subjects dropped
Increased
financial burden

Impact

PTR and the Curriculum

"This year we refused requests from 18 students to transfer (change) subjects because classes in practical classes (technology subjects and Home Economics) are full thanks to cutbacks in subject choice."

Junior Cycle: As anticipated by the Principal last year, the school has dropped Business Studies. Classes are now overcrowded in Science. Junior Certificate School Programme: this programme is for the most educationally disadvantaged students and "the class size has now moved well above the recommended level of 15 students."

Leaving Certificate: the number of classes in Science and other subjects has been reduced so students have less choice. "We are likely to drop Business next year". School has amalgamated Ordinary and Higher level classes in Irish, English, Maths and French.

Leaving Certificate Applied Programme: a programme for the most disadvantaged students, "the viability of which is in doubt next year". This year, Elm has had to reduce the number of modules provided to students: "the range of activities has all but been eliminated, which has affected student motivation"

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme: Elm has reduced the number of modules provided to students as well as the number of students allowed to take this programme. "Activities, time for (teacher) planning and a reduction in options have all affected student participation."

Transition Year: number of activities reduced and this year "The programme is less exciting and developmentally not as productive as other years. Our students do not have the resources to absorb the loss of the grant."

Pupil-Teacher Ratio and the School Community

In Elm, the increase in the PTR had "directly affected" a wide range of aspects of school life such as the curriculum choices for students, range of subjects at Senior Cycle, the school's capacity to provide a broad and balanced educational experience and its "capacity to attract a broad range of students from the local community."

Moratorium on Posts

Elm has lost 1 Assistant Principal post and 2 Special Duties posts due to a retirement and 2 teachers on career break. Loss of these posts has affected "to a great degree" curriculum planning in the school, whole school development and planning and has damaged the administrative capacity of the school.

"As Principal, my workload had increased dramatically in terms of administration but also in terms of the emotional demands from the families who are struggling financially and who need support."

Changes in Supervision and Substitution Scheme

School trips are continuing because the Principal or Deputy Principal is now doing the supervision. Similar for sports and competitions. School concerts and plays are no longer organised.

Abolition of Grants

In Home Economics, amount of practical work is reduced and students have been asked to pay for materials.

Financial Burden on Families

As anticipated last year, the Board of Management was required to both increase the level of the parents' voluntary contribution and to introduce charges for specific activities such as Transition Year trips. While it was not anticipated that the Board would have to allocate more money to its hardship fund last year, it has in fact had to do so in response to the needs of parents: "Students are now being asked to contribute for a whole range of school activities ... Many parents either said they could not pay or needed to pay in installments for such items as the school jacket, examination fees, etc".

Principal's reflections one year on

"The school is just about meeting the minimum level of organisational and administrative requirements. However, over the next year, serious cracks will appear (in these areas)...giving rise to more disciplinary problems, loss of subject choice and will impact on (students') level of educational achievement."

Hazel Community School

Leaving Cert
Applied
Programme
dropped

Profile

School Name: Hazel Community School

School Ethos: "Coeducational school with Christian ethos with an open and inclusive enrolment policy."

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

School Population: Student numbers are up by 32 to 811. 60 students are foreign nationals.

Increase in Pupil Teacher Ratio: Despite increase in students, the number of permanent teachers in Hazel remains static at 49. Hazel has lost 1 non-permanent teacher.

Impact

PTR and the Curriculum

Leaving Certificate: Sixth Year Ordinary and Higher level Architectural & Construction Studies classes are combined. Similar for Fifth Year Maths and Irish.

Leaving Certificate Applied Programme: Despite serving a largely disadvantaged community, the school has had to drop this programme - as anticipated last year. "We are now in a position where we can only run it every second year."

PTR and the School Community

In Hazel, the increase in the PTR had "directly affected" a wide range of aspects of school life such as the curriculum choices for students, range of subjects at Senior Cycle, the operation of the pastoral care structures and the morale of the teaching staff.

Moratorium on Posts

Hazel has lost 1 Special Duties post due to maternity leave.

Changes in Supervision and Substitution Scheme

"Staff planning meetings are not happening ... School tours, visits to careers fairs, syllabus field trips, Young Scientists' Exhibition - all gone."

Abolition of Grants

In Home Economics, students have to bring in money for materials and the school has had to find additional monies for this subject. Similar for both Physics and Chemistry. The quality of the school library service continues to be directly affected by the abolition of the grant.

Financial Burden on Families

As anticipated last year, the Board of Management was required to both increase the level of the parents' voluntary contribution and to introduce charges for specific activities. The contribution increased from €40 to €90. Last year, while it was not anticipated that the Board would have to allocate more money to its hardship fund, it has in fact had to do so in response to the needs of parents. Parents Association was asked to fundraise for the school.

Principal's reflections one year on

"Education is under serious threat as schools are being dismantled in front of our eyes ... We have been lucky this year but next year will be different as a number of senior teachers are considering retirement"

Quotes from principals

Impact of increase in pupil-teacher ratio on curriculum

"We have reduced the number of classes for SPHE. At senior cycle, we had to drop chemistry and music. We amalgamated Fifth and Sixth Year of the Applied and Leaving Certificate programme and had to drop the Leaving Certificate Vocational entirely." (coeducational community school, Cork)

"Demand for Transition Year was comparable to last year but we could not provide two classes as we did previously. We also had to facilitate the students by introducing a rolling work placement arrangement ... We had to amalgamate aspects of the TY programme with Fifth Year subjects ... We also scaled back on the number of modules offered in the TY. Year 1 and 2 of the Leaving Certificate Applied programme had to be amalgamated for some subjects." (boys' secondary school, Roscommon)

"The school has had to merge Year 1 and 2 of the Leaving Certificate Applied programme into one class. We scaled back on the options in Transition Year - musical is now gone." (boys' secondary school, Monaghan)

"We are not able to offer home economics or art to all the students who want to study these subjects. At senior cycle, we have amalgamated ordinary and higher level classes for French, biology, geography and home economics." (girls' secondary school, Dublin)

"We now have overcrowding in most junior cycle classes. In the Leaving Certificate classes, Fifth and Sixth Year classes are combined for higher level maths; same for home economics and physics." (girls' secondary school, Kerry)

"We have amalgamated ordinary and higher level at Leaving Certificate in English, history, maths and geography. We pay part-time teachers for 15 to 20 hours per week out of the College's fund for the Transition Year." (girls' secondary school, Dublin)

"At Junior Cycle and senior cycle, we have had to reduce the number of classes provided in English, Irish and maths, and also in art at senior cycle ... In the Transition Year, we no longer offer the ECDL module and have far fewer trips. We are having difficulties in the Leaving Certificate Vocational programme because of the loss of the posts." (boys' secondary school, Mayo)

"We had to drop German at all levels, and also accounting at senior cycle. We reduced the number of Leaving Certificate classes in physics, biology, design & communication graphics and (architectural and) construction studies." (boys' secondary school, Tipperary)

Impact on workload of Principal

"I am currently doing the work of two post-holders in addition to my other duties. If there are more retirements in 2010/11, the whole middle management in my school will collapse and leadership opportunities will be denied to teachers ... great pity." (boys' secondary school, Roscommon)

"There is a lot of generosity among teachers and so much work goes unnoticed. In the present circumstances, I look for creative ways of adapting to the cutbacks. We must be positive for our students and teachers." (girls' secondary school, Kerry)

"Impact of the cuts have fallen back on to the principals and increased their workload. If the union directives were implemented fully, management would have to close the school due to health and safety concerns." (girls' secondary school, Kerry)

"I have had to take Fifth Year French classes ... I worked 63 hour-weeks this school year ...generally 50 hours. The job from the leadership point of view is unsustainable since too many balls have to be kept in the air." (boys' secondary school, Carlow)

"Very frustrated with the fact that due to the non-promotion of colleagues to fill vacant posts, the work has to be done by the Principal and Deputy Principal ... It's a very difficult time for young teachers in Ireland today ... getting work is a real problem for them (because of the increase in the PTR)." (boys' secondary school, Monaghan)

"Moratorium on posts has created a crisis for the school; who is to carry out the functions of the Year Head, the Transition Year Coordinator? ...Principal's function is now purely administrative - filling out forms, financial management,etc. No time for educational leadership ... The worst part is the service to students. It is very difficult to sustain teacher morale even though in this school we have a great team of teachers." (boys' secondary school, Mayo)

"I am totally frustrated - workload is becoming impossible for principals and deputy principals. Huge amount of time taken up with tasks that have nothing to do with educational leadership." (boys' secondary school, Tipperary)

Financial pressures on parents

"In addition to introducing charges for specific school activities, we had to seek support from local business and the local authority, as well as the local branch of the St Vincent de Paul. Unemployment among parents (main source) of difficulties." (boys' secondary school, Dublin)

"We had to bring in charges for certain Transition Year activities and for use of buses on extra-curricular activities." (boys' secondary school, Carlow)

"Loss of the book grant was mindless attack on the disadvantaged students. There is great difficulty for parents in paying for books - some have had to approach the St Vincent de Paul." (boys' secondary school, Mayo)

"School had to pay for all textbooks for some students and also their transports fees to school plus the mock examination fees". (girls' secondary school, Kerry)

"School has had to seek support from the Lions Club, the Rotary Club and the St Vincent de Paul to help families ... no money for books, mock examination fees, trips." (boys' secondary school, Tipperary)

Impact of changes to Supervision & Substitution Scheme

"Students have had to make their own arrangements to visit a careers fair this year ... School has had to fundraise (to provide supervision) for games and sporting competitions." (girls' secondary school, Kerry)

"Participation in inter-school debates were cancelled this year, as were school tours. Sports have been reduced to just football and basketball." (girls' secondary school, Kerry)

"Participation in the Young Scientists Exhibition was an absolute nightmare ... getting parents to supervise...worried about insurance issues. Visits to career fairs severely limited. We now only participate in basketball leagues; soccer league gone." (boys' secondary school, Mayo)

"Participation in the Young Scientists Exhibition not possible this year ... time for staff planning totally reduced." (boys' secondary school, Tipperary)

"School has had no option but to increase fundraising for sports and cultural/artistic programmes in the school. We have to call on parents to help out." (boys' secondary school, Monaghan)