

Meeting of the Teacher Supply Steering Group

7 December 2020 @ 2.00 p.m.

Via WebEx

Minutes

Attendees:

- Deirdre Shanley, Asst Secretary General, DoE (Chairperson)
- Tomás Ó Ruairc, Director, Teaching Council
- Seamus Mulconry, CPSMA
- Antoinette Nic Gearailt, ACCS
- Anthony Finn, University of Glasgow
- Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector, DoE
- Aoife Conduit, Asst Secretary General, DoE

Also in attendance:

- Conor McCourt, APO, Teacher Education Policy, DoE

Apologies

- Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, DoE
- Lewis Purser, Director Academic Affairs, Irish Universities Association
- John O'Halloran, UCC
- Eithne Guilfoyle, DCU
- William Beausang, Asst. Secretary General, D/FHERIS
- Alan Wall, CEO, HEA

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th September 2020 were agreed.

2. Covid-19 public health emergency and teacher supply: updates

The Group considered the consequences of the Covid-19 emergency for the school system and issues arising and also noted the position in Scotland.

The following points were noted:

Job-sharing teachers and sub work

- The restriction on job sharing teachers undertaking substitute teaching hours has been removed for the 2020/21 school year.

(ii) Expansion of the primary substitute teacher supply panels.

- 115 supply panels have been created nationwide, incorporating 2,300 schools and employing 329 additional full-time, fixed term teachers.
- Schools report that the utilisation of supply panel teachers is high, with over 95% usage in the majority of panels.
- There are still some areas where the recruitment of substitute teachers remains challenging.

(iii) Teaching Council measures

The following points were noted:

Registration arrangements for NQTs qualified outside Ireland in 2020.

- Approximately 100 NQTs qualified outside of Ireland applied to undertake their induction in Ireland in 2020/21, which was made available to them on a once off time bound basis.
- UK HEIs were involved in publicising these arrangements.
- The 2020 registration arrangements will be reviewed by the Teaching Council.
- Approximately 500/600 NQTs who have trained outside the State apply annually for registration with the Teaching Council, of which 80% approximately are trained in the UK.
- Similar arrangements could be used again in 2021/22 if deemed necessary.

Campaign targeting registered teachers not active in the teaching workforce

- Following from the Teaching Council's campaign targeting registered teachers not active, the number of teachers registered with *Sub Seeker*, the central substitute teacher recruitment portal, has increased from 1,800 approximately in March 2020 to over 5,000 currently.
- The challenge for *Sub Seeker* is ensure that teachers registered with the portal maintain an up-to-date availability status. Ways of encouraging teachers to keep their status up-to-date are being explored.

Revised arrangements for school placements in 2020/21.

- Flexible school placement arrangements were agreed between the Teaching Council, the post primary ITE providers and the Department to enhance the availability of PME students to fill short term substitute vacancies.
- Data on the employment of PME students in these circumstances is not readily available.

Substitute teacher recruitment position 2020/21

The following points were noted:

- The overall position regarding recruitment of sub teachers not as problematic this year
- At primary level the recruitment of sub teachers can be problematic in some areas.

- At post primary level, schools are generally able to recruit sub teachers but not always in the correct subjects.
- Flexible arrangements for school placements for post primary PME students has helped schools to fill substitute vacancies.

3. Update on actions

(a) Data to support teacher supply planning

(i) Technical Report

The following points were noted:

- The report was updated early in 2020 with minor amendments, but not published.
- Statistics Section are updating the report to reflect recent changes (e.g. additional allocated posts, revised pupil projections)
- Consideration is being given to publishing an updated report in the 2021

It was agreed to explore with Statistics Section the inclusion in the report of projections of demand for, and supply of, teachers to teach in special education settings.

(ii) Analysis of post primary subject teacher demand

The following points were noted:

- Statistics Section is continuing its analysis of post primary teacher demand at subject level, which will take account of recent policy changes and other relevant developments (e.g. additional allocated posts, new ITE programmes, revised pupil projections)
- The analysis will be circulated, when it is at a more advanced a stage, to the TSSG, for discussion.

(iii) Potential use of the Teaching Council register to hold additional data to support teacher supply planning.

The following points were noted:

- The Department met with the Teaching Council recently to consider this matter.
- Following consultation between Statistics Section and Teacher Supply Secretariat, it is considered that minimal changes are needed to the Teaching Council database and that it is proposed that the focus will be to review internal DoE processes and data capture in order to improve the quality of data.

(b) Communications & promotion of the teaching profession

(i) Promotion campaign update

The following points were noted:

- The next phase of the campaign is due to commence mid/ end December to coincide with CAO and PME closing dates.
- The campaign will use social media, radio, newspapers, student papers (on-line)
- The campaign will incorporate the promotion of diversity in the teaching profession (e.g. highlighting teachers from minority ethnic communities, the traveller community, underrepresented socio economic groups, LGBT+ community)
- Focus groups, consisting of members of the various groups underrepresented in the teaching profession, were held to inform the diversity element of the campaign.

(ii) Development of a recruitment portal for long term teacher vacancies.

It was noted that the development by IPPN of the recruitment portal for long term vacancies is proceeding, with user testing ongoing and a “go live” date planned for January 2021.

It was agreed that it is important to ensure that the portal is used by the maximum number of schools.

(iii) Options for engagement with partners on teacher supply.

The following points were noted:

- It is planned to include teacher supply as an item for consideration at one of the regular engagements between the Department and the education partners.
- It is intended to meet in the New Year with teacher unions to update them on teacher supply issues.
- Consideration will be given to holding a national forum for stakeholders towards end of the current school year.

(iv) Teacher supply newsletter

It was noted that it is intended to publish a teacher supply newsletter in early 2021

(c) Higher Education

(i) ITE programme application numbers 2020

The following points were noted:

- As part of measures to support the calculated grades process in 2020, the HEIs were asked to increase places in high points courses, including ITE programmes
- The HEA is finalising programme level returns from the HEIs and will share the data with the Statistics Unit in the Department to inform the data model.

(ii) HEA call for upskilling programmes

The following points were noted:

- Programme to upskill already registered post primary teachers in mathematics, physics and Spanish were recently announced by the Minister.
- The programmes are due to begin in January 2021 using a flexible model of provision over two years.
- Two cohorts of 170 teachers approximately each are planned
- There is no fee cost to participating teachers.
- Early indications are that the programmes will be significantly oversubscribed

It was agreed, given the strong level of interest from teachers, to explore whether additional phases of the programmes could be put in place.

Potential for new upskilling programmes

The Group considered the potential for new upskilling programmes in 2021.

It was noted that although the ACCS has not undertaken a survey of school principals this year, reports from schools indicate that the recruitment of teachers of Irish, modern foreign languages and, to a lesser extent, home economics remain problematic.

(iii) Supports for ITE student

A note on Budget 21 measures was circulated to the Group for consideration. It was noted that measures include increases to both the SUSI fee grant and the fee grant income threshold, with effect from September 2021.

It was noted also that a review of the SUSI scheme has been announced.

(iv) School placements

It was noted that the Teaching Council and the Department plan to meet shortly in order to advance the actions from the school placement report.

It was agreed that it is important that guidelines on school placements for 2020/21 are issued to the system as soon as possible.

(d) Policies and arrangements for schools and teachers that impact on teacher supply

(i) Retired teachers and substitute work

The following points were noted:

- The waiver from abatement for 50 days will be applicable from January 2021 and a circular to this effect will issue in the near future
- DoE has engaged with DPER regarding a complete waiver from abatement for teachers given the Covid-19 position.
- DPER has indicated that they will respond immediately once a need for the recruitment of retired teachers is identified.

(ii) Potential for the employment of primary teachers in post primary settings

The following points were noted:

- The employment of primary teachers in post primary settings was considered by the Department with the education partners, when considering the development of a sequence for the employment of teachers in post primary schools in the context of the Covid-19 emergency.
- It is intended to continue to explore the potential for the employment of primary teachers in post primary settings.

(iii) Review of the refund of fees scheme for teachers: potential for the prioritisation of upskilling programmes.

The following points were noted:

- The review of the refund of fees scheme found that CPD supported under the scheme should address school and system needs, identifying the types of courses that link best to the priorities identified in the education system, and concentrate the available funding in these areas.
- It is proposed that CPD to support post primary teachers to meet Teaching Council registration requirements in an additional subject is included as a priority in the scheme.
- A Steering Committee will meet shortly to consider the findings and recommendations contained in the report and progress their implementation.

(iv) PDST return to teach resource

The following points were noted:

- PDST has developed “Teaching in Ireland” an online “toolkit” which provides an overview of the education system in Ireland, including recent developments at both primary and post-primary levels and information on schools structures, curriculum, school self-evaluation and teaching and learning

- The resource will be useful to teachers returning to teaching or teachers from other jurisdictions planning to work in Ireland.

It was agreed that a link to the resource will be sent to the members of the TSSG.

4. Teacher Supply Action Plan

The Group considered the latest draft of the Teacher Supply Action Plan (Version 13 August 2020).

The following points were agreed:

- TSSG members will provide their observations on the plan to the Teacher Supply Secretariat.
- Consideration will be given to the publication of a revised action plan in 2021

5. AOB

None

6. Next meeting

It was noted that a schedule of dates for meetings in 2021 will be circulated to members shortly.

**Teacher Supply Secretariat
December 2020**