

Meeting of the Teacher Supply Steering Group

4 March 2021 @ 2.00 p.m.

Via WebEx

Minutes

Attendees:

- Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, DE (Chairperson)
- Deirdre Shanley, Asst Secretary General, DE
- Tomás Ó Ruairc, Director, Teaching Council
- Seamus Mulconry, CPSMA
- Antoinette Nic Gearailt, ACCS
- Anthony Finn, University of Glasgow
- Aoife Conduit, Asst Secretary General, DE
- Lewis Purser, Irish Universities Association
- Declan Kennedy, School of Education, UCC (for Dr. Fiona Chambers)
- Anne Looney, Institute of Education, DCU
- Chris Kelly, PO, DE
- Fiona O'Byrne, PO, DFHERIS

Also in attendance:

- Conor McCourt, APO, Teacher Education Policy, DE

Apologies

- Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector, DE
- Alan Wall, CEO, HEA
- Áine Doyle, Minister's Advisor
- Dr. Fiona Chambers, School of Education, UCC

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th December 2020 were agreed.

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

(i) Job-sharing teachers and sub work

The following points were noted:

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

- Approximately 170 post primary teachers (excluding teachers in ETB schools) and 500 primary teachers have undertaken teaching hours outside their usual job-sharing pattern in the current school year, equivalent to over 5,500 teaching days.
- There are approximately 1,290 post primary teachers (excluding teachers in ETB schools) and 3,000 primary teachers job-sharing in the current school year.

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

The following points were noted:

- The supply panel scheme, established on a pilot basis in 2019/20, has been expanded significantly in 2020/21 to address the challenges of the Covid-19 emergency.
- 115 supply panels have been created nationwide, incorporating approximately 2,250 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.

(iii) Teaching Council measures

2021 registration arrangements for NQTs qualified outside Ireland

The following points were noted:

- Approximately 100 NQTs who qualified outside of Ireland applied to undertake their induction in Ireland in 2020/21.
- The Teaching Council will consider a proposal to allow similar arrangements for NQTs in 2021 at its next meeting.
- Awareness raising amongst students and HEIs abroad will be required in order to maximise the effect of this measure in 2021.

Arrangements for school placements in 2020/21.

The Group considered the operation of school placements in 2020/21, including the arrangements in place in the context of the Covid-19 emergency and challenges for HEIs in finding placements.

The following points were noted:

- Guidelines on school placements for 2020/21 have been issued by the Teaching Council.
- Initial feedback indicates that placements are operating successfully in accordance with the guidelines.
- Ongoing feedback from stakeholders indicates that the arrangements agreed with HEIs and school management for post-graduate student teachers while on school placement continue to operate successfully.
- The Teaching Council is in ongoing engagement with the HEIs and other stakeholders regarding school placement arrangements.

3. Update on actions

(a) Data to support teacher supply planning

(i) *Technical Report*

Update

The following points were noted:

- The Technical Report, Teacher Demand and Supply in Ireland 2020-2035, was published in November 2019.
- Statistics Section is currently finalising an updated report to reflect recent changes (e.g. additional allocated posts, revised pupil projections).
- It is intended to complete a revised draft for the Teacher Supply Data WG and subsequent consideration by the Teacher Supply Implementation Group.

Potential for the inclusion of teacher demand and supply in special education settings.

The Group considered the supply of teachers for SEN settings, including qualification requirements.

The following points were noted:

- The potential for projecting teacher demand and supply in special education settings was considered by the Teacher Supply Data WG.
- There is potential to estimate the demand for teachers in SEN settings having regard to the profile allocation model (for students with special education needs in mainstream settings) and the PTR in special schools and special classes. Statistics Section intends to engage with Special Education Section in this regard.
- Projecting the supply of teachers for special education settings is a complex task.

(ii) *Analysis of post primary subject teacher demand*

The following points were noted:

- Statistics Section is continuing to work on the development of a model for post primary subject teacher demand and supply
- Demand projections are based primarily on Deployment of Teaching Resource (DTR) returns, pupil demographics, payroll data etc .
- Supply projections are based on ITE programme graduate numbers, Teaching Council registration data etc.
- For 2021, it proposed that the Technical Report and the projections of post primary teacher demand and supply at a subject level will be published separately.
- Consideration will be given to the publication of a single report addressing both aspects of teacher supply after 2021.
- It is intended to consult further with stakeholders before publication of projections of post primary teacher demand and supply at a subject level.

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

It was noted that the Teaching Council is considering a request from the Department for the registration process to be amended in regard to the record of a teacher's employment and that the Council will respond in due course.

(b) Communications & promotion of the teaching profession

(i) Promotion campaign update

The following points were noted:

- The "Teaching Transforms" campaign (digital, radio and video) has been ongoing since late 2018 to promote the teaching profession. The campaign aligns with significant dates on the educational calendar e.g. CAO and PME application closing dates.
- The most recent phase of the campaign coincided with the closing date for CAO applications (1 February 2021), during which time visits to the *Teaching Transforms* webpage increased significantly.

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

The Group considered the Development of a recruitment portal for long term teacher vacancies.

The following points were noted:

- The portal is intended to streamline the teacher recruitment process and to be a single reference point for teachers who are seeking employment.
- User testing is ongoing with a potential launch towards the end of March.
- New features are being developed for *Sub Seeker*, the portal for the recruitment of teachers to substitute positions, including:
 - Allowing schools to contact multiple teachers for one job.
 - Allowing schools to contact multiple teachers for multiple jobs.
- Primary management bodies have expressed some concerns about the project and a meeting of the management bodies, the Department and IPPN is being arranged to address these.

(iii) Turasabhaile 2021

The Group was updated on *Turasabhaile*, the portal developed by ACCS for the recruitment of post primary teachers resident abroad.

It was noted that ACCS intends to operate *Turasabhaile* again in 2021

It was agreed that consideration will be given to creating awareness of *Turasabhaile* amongst teachers resident abroad.

(iv) Meeting with the teacher unions 23 February 2021

The following points were noted:

- The Department met with the teacher unions on 23 February 2021 to update them on teacher supply developments and to consider the draft updated Teacher Supply Action Plan
- The teacher unions have been invited to provide their observations on the draft plan

(v) National Consultative Forum 2021

It was agreed to hold a virtual National Consultative Forum at the end of May 2021, subject to Covid-19 restrictions.

(c) Higher Education

The Group acknowledged the contribution of the higher education institutions to teacher supply, including the provision of new ITE programmes, additional places on existing programmes in the context of the Covid-19 emergency and implementing flexible school placement arrangements.

(i) Post primary teacher upskilling programmes

Recently commenced programmes

The following points were noted:

- Following a call by the HEA, programmes to upskill post primary teachers in Spanish, mathematics and physics commenced in January 2021.
- Two cohorts of approximately 170 teachers each are provided for across the three programmes.
- There was strong interest amongst teachers and application numbers were significantly in excess of available places.
- A Steering Group is being established and an evaluation of the programmes is planned.

Potential for new upskilling programmes in 2021

- It was noted that further upskilling programmes are being planned. The Group considered possible subjects for upskilling, including STEM subjects and Irish.

(ii) *Supports for ITE student*

The following points were noted:

- A Covid-19 once off emergency grant of €250 per person was paid to further and higher education students, including to students not in receipt of SUSI supports. Most payments were made in December 2020.
- The review of the SUSI scheme, as proposed in the Programme for Government, has gone to tender

(iii) *School placements*

The following points were noted:

- The Teaching Council and the Department have agreed a plan to advance the recommendations of the report of the School Placement Working Group
- It is intended to publish the report end March / early April 2021.
- An implementation group and working groups aligned to priority actions will be established.

3. *Policies and arrangements for schools and teachers that impact on teacher supply*

(i) *Retired teachers and substitute work*

The following points were noted:

- A waiver from abatement for 50 days is now in place and a circular to this effect issued on 29 January 2021.
- Pensions Section are engaging with Payroll and IT regarding the management of the waiver on the retired teacher payroll.

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

The following points were noted:

- Upskilling which enables a teacher to meet the Teaching Council's criteria for a post primary subject has been included as one of the priority categories for funding in the draft refund of fees circular, which has been considered by stakeholders.
- It is planned to publish the circular in Q1 2021.

(iii) *Arrangements for teacher CPD*

The following points were noted:

- In the context of the Covid-19 emergency, the significant majority of CPD provided by the Department's support services and the education centres is being provided remotely and outside of classroom contact time.
- It is intended to compare data on teacher absences during equivalent periods in the current and previous school year.

It was noted that there is an opportunity to facilitate discussion on future arrangements for the delivery of CPD.

4. Updated Teacher Supply Action Plan

The following points were noted:

- The draft plan is being amended following a recent meeting of the Teacher Supply Data WG.
- Observations from the teacher unions will be considered when finalising the plan.
- A final draft, to include a contextual piece incorporating developments to date will be circulated to the TSIG.
- The updated action plan may be included on the agenda for the National Consultative Forum planned for May 2021.

5. AOB

The group considered various teacher supply measures that have been introduced in response to the Covid-19 emergency, including expanded teacher supply panels at primary level, career break arrangements and arrangements for the delivery of CPD.

Then following points were agreed:

- The continued requirement for Covid-19 measures should be reviewed.
- Consideration will be given to the inclusion of Covid-19 measures on the agenda of the National Consultative Forum.

The Chairperson expressed the Department's thanks to the various stakeholders for their cooperation and flexibility in addressing the teacher supply challenges arising from the Covid-19 emergency.

6. Next meeting

27th May 2021

Teacher Supply Secretariat

March 2021