

Meeting of the Teacher Supply Steering Group

Via WebEx

7 September 2021 @ 2.00 pm

Minutes

In attendance:

Deirdre Shanley, Asst Secretary General, Department of Education (Chairperson)
Aoife Conduit, Asst Secretary General, Department of Education
John McDermott, APO, Department of Education (for Fiona O'Byrne)
Tomás Ó Ruairc, Director, Teaching Council
Antoinette Nic Gearailt, ACCS
Anthony Finn, University of Glasgow
Lewis Purser, Director of Learning & Teaching and Academic Affairs, Irish Universities Association
Declan Kennedy, School of Education, UCC (for Fiona Chambers)
Anne Looney, Executive Dean, Institute of Education, DCU
Conor McCourt, APO, Department of Education (for Chris Kelly)

Also in attendance:

Damien O'Neill, HEO, Department of Education

Apologies

Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Department of Education
Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector, Department of Education
Seamus Mulconry, General Secretary, CPSMA
Fiona Chambers, Head of the School of Education, UCC
Áine Doyle, Minister's Adviser
Fiona O'Byrne, PO, DFHERIS
Chris Kelly, PO, Department of Education

1. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 27 May 2021 were agreed.

2. Covid-19 emergency: teacher supply measures

Flexible student placement arrangements

The following points were noted:

- Updated guidance has issued from the Department to schools and ITE providers regarding school placement arrangements in 2021/22, including allowing for the recognition of all sites of practice (in school; synchronous on-line; asynchronous on-line; home-school collaboration) as appropriate.
- As in 2020/21, flexible school placement arrangements are being put in place to enhance the availability of post primary PME students to fill short term vacancies.

2021 registration arrangements for NQTs qualified outside Ireland

The following points were noted:

- Approximately 60 NQTs who qualified outside Ireland have to date applied to complete their induction in Ireland, under the new regulations made by the Council, and which apply on a time bound, exceptional basis.
- Applications will be accepted to end October 2021 and it is anticipated that the number of applicants will increase in the coming period.

Primary substitute teacher supply panels

The following points were noted:

- An additional 16 primary substitute teacher supply panels have been set up for 2021, most of which are in the Dublin area.
- There are now 131 panels covering 80% of primary schools (approximately 2,550 schools) and employing 376 teachers.
- The operation of the supply panels will remain under review.

Teaching Council campaign

The following points were noted:

- The Teaching Council contacted all registered teachers requesting those not currently working or those who otherwise have capacity to be available for substitute posts, to make themselves available through *Sub Seeker*.
- The communication from the Council to teachers coincided with the highest number (277) of *Sub Seeker* registrations in a single day to date.

Waiver on abatement of pensions

The following points were noted:

- From September 2021, abatement of pensions will continue to apply to retired teachers with more than 50 days service.
- DPER has agreed to consider a waiver of abatement, where requested, on a case-by-case basis.
- The Department will continue to engage with DPER in this matter as required.

Covid-19 and education: current issues in Scotland

The Group was updated on the current situation in Scotland with regard to Covid-19 and the re-opening of schools, including implications for teacher supply and support, and arrangements for national examinations in 2022

The following points were noted:

- Primary and secondary schools in Scotland are fully re-opened with 3rd level institutions to continue with a blended learning approach in the coming year.
- The demand for supply (substitute) teachers in Scottish schools has increased.

General position

The following points were noted:

- Teacher supply pressures may be less in 2021/22 due to the high level of vaccination uptake, and the adoption of other Covid-19 alleviation measures.
- The situation remains uncertain and additional measures therefore will continue to be applied to support teacher supply.

The Group noted with appreciation the various measures and cooperative approaches taken by the stakeholders to support teacher supply during the Covid-19 emergency.

3. Update on actions

(i) *Data to support teacher supply planning*

Survey of unmet demand in schools

The Group was updated on plans to conduct an online survey of unmet demand for subject teachers in post primary schools

The following points were noted:

- The survey is being developed by Statistics Section and the Teacher Supply Secretariat with the involvement of the post primary management bodies
- The survey is designed to capture data on posts/ subjects not filled, the use of out of field teachers and adjustments to timetables arising from teacher supply issues
- Survey results will be used by Statistics Section to inform projections of post primary subject teacher demand and supply
- Survey results will be shared with the management bodies, as appropriate
- Management bodies will have an important role in encouraging schools to complete the survey.
- The timing of the survey is being finalised, but it is intended that it will issue at some point in late September / October 2021.

The Group considered the possible uses of the data from the survey as well as the potential for a survey of the broader needs of the schools (e.g. in relation to wellbeing/SEN/management positions).

Post primary teacher demand and supply report

The following points were noted:

- Work on the post primary teacher demand and supply report is well advanced
- The Data WG Group has agreed that data from the 2021/22 DTR returns should be used in the analysis of teacher demand.
- The report is being updated to reflect the latest projections in pupil enrolments, which assume a faster reduction in fertility rates than had been previously anticipated.

(ii) *Communications and promotion of the teaching profession*

Update on teaching transforms campaign

The following points were noted:

- The latest phase of the teaching transforms campaign ran in late June 2021 to coincide with the CAO change of mind process.
- The next phase will coincide with the lead in to the CAO and PME application closing dates (December 2021/ January 2022)
- The *Teaching Transforms* campaign has been nominated for a Civil Service Excellence Award, highlighting innovative approaches and the development of in-house skills.
- CAO offers are issuing today and initial indications are that the numbers on undergraduate ITE remain steady.

Development of a recruitment portal for long term teacher vacancies

The following points were noted:

- Some data protection concerns were expressed by school management bodies
- A Data Protection Impact Statement (DPIA) is being developed by the IPPN which it is intended will be circulated in the coming weeks to all relevant stakeholders for feedback.
- Each individual stakeholders will be invited to meet with IPPN for a 1:1 demonstration of the portal.
- Once all parties are happy with the DPIA, it is intended that the portal will go live.

Turasabhaile

The following points were noted:

- *Turasabhaile* 2021 focussed on recruiting teachers of priority subjects.
- Approximately 250 teachers registered with the portal. The majority (50% - 60%) were teachers of STEM subjects, with fewer language teachers (approximately 10 – 15 total number).
- Approximately 75 schools and a number of ETBs used *Turasabhaile*.
- There was a significant number of late applications to register with the portal.
- Approximately 100 teachers were employed directly through *Turasabhaile*, mainly maths and science. However, *Turasabhaile* is not informed of the all successful appointments, and, as 50 teachers remain on the site, it is assumed that an additional 100 teachers found employment.

The Group considered the future role of *Turasabhaile*, including the scope for its expansion and its role once the recruitment portal for long term vacancies is operational.

(iii) Higher Education

Post primary teacher upskilling programmes

The following points were noted:

- Places will be increased on the upskilling programmes (maths, physics and Spanish) in 2022.
- Funding for the additional places has been sought through the estimates process.

New Irish upskilling programme

The following points were noted:

- The Department is working with the HEA on the development of a call for a new programme to upskill teachers in Irish, to commence in 2022
- The timescale is challenging if the programme is to be in place for January 2022

It was agreed to explore the possibility of informing the HEIs of the call in advance of the commencement of the actual call process.

The Group considered factors affecting the supply of teachers of Irish, including that many have registered but do not teach the subject, that some PME students with Irish in their undergraduate degree choose not to include Irish as a subject in the PME and the potential positive effect of four year undergraduate ITE programmes on the supply of teachers of Irish.

Evaluation of programmes

It was noted that an RFT for the evaluation of the upskilling programmes has been drafted and is being finalised.

It was agreed that the evaluation of the upskilling programmes is essential to ensure that the programmes are fulfilling their intended purpose.

Review of school placement guidelines / implementation of Working Group report

The following points were noted:

- The working group established to oversee the development of a student placement system is meeting on 7th September.
- A report on the innovative school placement practices adopted by ITE providers/ schools during the Covid-19 emergency was recently published by the Teaching Council.

The Group noted with appreciation the innovative school placement practices developed by ITE providers and schools as well as the cooperation between schools and ITE providers to ensure meaningful school placement experiences for ITE students.

Teaching Council review of the impact of the reconfigured ITE programmes

The following points were noted:

- Discussion on the review is ongoing between the Department and the Teaching Council
- It is proposed to conduct a market sounding exercise before proceeding to full procurement.
- An information note on the review will be prepared for the next meeting of the TSSG.

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

Update on new approach to the Policies and Arrangements WG.

The following points were noted.

- The Policies and Arrangements WG at its last meeting decided to focus on three priority areas: CPD, the employment of primary teachers in post primary special education settings and EPV leave.
- These issues overlap with actions in the Building Momentum Action Plan and DPER will require regular progress reports on their implementation
- Two subgroups are being put together to progress these issues.

4. Update on issues raised at the National Consultative Forum

Diversity in the teaching profession

The following points were noted:

- Diversity in the teaching profession emerged as an issue at the Teacher Supply Consultative Forum in May 2021.
- The Department will take a strategic approach to diversity and the coordinated efforts of various sections of the Department as well as DFHERIS, the HEA and relevant stakeholders (e.g. management bodies) will be required.
- Diversity in the teaching workforce was included on the agenda of a meeting on the National Access Plan chaired by DFHERIS on 1 September.

Irish medium schools

The following points were noted:

- A discussion paper on the development of a policy for Irish-medium schools outside of the Gaeltacht has recently been approved by the management board and the Minister. The Gaeltacht Unit is leading on this issue.
- An intradepartmental group has been established to progress the development of the policy.

5. Teacher Supply Action Plan

The following points were noted.

- The latest version of the Action Plan has been circulated to the TSSG for information purposes.
- The plan been updated to take account of corresponding actions in the Building Momentum Action Plan (policies and arrangements actions 20, 21, 22 and 24).
- This latest version has also been circulated to all teacher supply working groups for information and observations on timelines.
- It is intended to update the teacher unions on the plan prior to its publication.
- The timing of publication of the plan will need further consideration.

6. AOB

Engagement with Australian teaching regulators

It was noted that there is significant interest in Ireland's experience in addressing teacher supply challenges among Australian teaching regulators and that the Teaching Council is due to meet shortly with a number of these regulators .

Capital grants

The Group queried the mechanism of applying for capital grants to support ITE programmes (Action 17 in the Teacher Supply Action Plan). The Department agreed to liaise with DFHERIS on this issue.

Teachers for SEN posts

The Group considered the qualification requirements for teachers to work in SEN settings and the demand for and supply of teachers for such settings.

It was noted that the development of the School Inclusion Model is linked to this issue.

Short-term statutory leave

The Group noted the increasing difficulty for schools to provide substitute cover for teachers taking statutory leave and considered whether there might be mechanisms to support schools specifically in relation to this leave.

It was noted that the Policies and Arrangements WG is considering the issue of leave and teacher demand/supply.

7. Date of next meeting

16th December 2021.

**Teacher Supply Secretariat
September 2021**