

Post-primary Education Forum

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PRESS RELEASE

Education partners: ‘shock’ at savage cuts

The *Post-Primary Education Forum (PPEF)* is a forum involving the National Parents’ Council, management associations and teacher unions in the post-primary education sector. Notwithstanding the current economic climate, the PPEF wishes to express its shock at the measures in Budget 2009 which will seriously undermine the effectiveness of the education system at second level.

- The increase in the pupil-teacher ratio will have the effect of increasing class size and of reducing subject choice in second-level schools in Ireland. In the recent OECD report *Education at a Glance 2008* Ireland’s second-level pupil teacher ratio was only better than 7 countries out of 30 measured. To put us further down this particular league table is foolhardy and endangers our ability to produce rounded and well-educated young people.
- Several measures, far from protecting the disadvantaged, specifically target some of the most marginalised groups in Irish society for cutbacks. These include:
 - The reduction by €2 million in the capitation fund for Traveller education.
 - The reduction of 500 student places in the Back to Education initiative.
 - The re-imposition on the ceiling on the number of language support teachers per school.



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- The abolition of grants towards the Junior Certificate Schools Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied, LCVP and Transition Year programmes.
- The restriction of the aid for school books to scheme to DEIS schools. Disadvantage can and does occur in a dispersed manner and this measure is punishing those disadvantaged students in schools that are not within the current scheme for disadvantage (DEIS)
- The withdrawal of capitation top-ups and teachers from non-DEIS schools is another measure which will affect the most vulnerable students in our schools.
- The abolition of grants towards Choirs and Orchestras, Home Economics and Physics and Chemistry will further reduce the diversity of the Irish education system, a diversity which has contributed greatly to the creation of an adaptable workforce, which in turn is necessary for the renewal of economic prosperity.
- The changes to the supervision and substitution scheme are going to lead to chaos in many school throughout the country.
- The abolition of the early retirement scheme for teachers is short-sighted. The scheme is of great benefit to schools and costs the exchequer very little.

The importance of education to our past and our future economic well-being has been emphasised again and again; not only by the partners in the education system but by economists, politicians and business leaders. OECD reports in recent years have emphasised the fact that “spending” on education is in fact “investment” in education and they have provided clear and compelling analysis of the public and private rates of return from education.

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They have also emphasised that the returns from education cannot only be measured in economic terms, pointing out that better educated citizens are not only wealthier but they are healthier, they spend more and they contribute more to society. It is very foolish of the government at this point, where education can be a major influence on the success and the rapidity of our economic recovery, to cut now and pay later.



Issued by the *Post-Primary Education Forum*



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The Post Primary Education Forum partners are:
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Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools
Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland
Irish Vocational Education Association
Joint Managerial Body]
Teachers' Union of Ireland

