

Keep our schools open

Budget 2021 briefing



Help keep our schools open – lower class sizes

In 2020, an unprecedented pandemic hit the world. Here at home, our schools closed as the battle to contain the outbreak commenced. For months school teachers around the country set up ad hoc workspaces from their homes and sought to ensure the continuity of learning.

As work began to reopen our schools, the country became aware of a problem the INTO had raised repeatedly for many years. Ireland is home to supersized classes, the largest in the EU. This hindered our ability to reopen and may very well be a reason some schools cannot remain open. We have to get our class sizes under control, with too many pupils learning in cramped classrooms of thirty pupils and more.

As we practice social distancing and attempt to keep pupils apart to contain the virus in our schools, we need to reduce our class sizes.

Why are we the worst in Europe?

While some previous budgets have lowered the numbers in classes pupil to teacher ratio in our schools, class sizes in Ireland remain well above the EU and OECD averages and there was no overall reduction in Budgets 2019 or 2020.

Ireland has the largest class sizes in the EU, with the European average class size of 20. Yet one in five primary pupils in Ireland is taught in a class of 30 or more children.

Why does this matter?

Younger children benefit greatly from smaller classes – initial education lays the foundations for future learning, so smaller class sizes are especially valuable for the early years of education when children are developing literacy and numeracy skills. Evidence shows that children from disadvantaged backgrounds do better in smaller classes.

The complexity of the contemporary classroom is such that, with larger class sizes, teachers find it difficult to meet the broad spectrum of children's needs. When class numbers are of a more reasonable size, modern teaching methods work, and teachers can spend the time needed with children. The methodologies which are recommended are achievable in classes with smaller numbers and so the quality of teaching and learning is improved.

During a pandemic, which we may have to live with well into the future, our supersized classes pose serious challenges when it comes to social distancing. Our schools may not be able to keep their doors open if this is not tackled in the forthcoming budget.

Why are disadvantaged pupils losing out?

As part of the extra support package available to schools in the DEIS Scheme (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), there is a lower staffing schedule in DEIS Band 1 schools of 20:1 in junior schools, 22:1 in vertical schools (schools with junior and senior classes) and 24:1 in senior schools.

While there was a small reduction in general class size in Budgets 2016 and 2018, there was no corresponding reduction in our most disadvantaged schools.

The reduction in class size must be passed on to DEIS schools to provide supports for our most vulnerable children so that they may have the opportunity they deserve to achieve their educational potential.

Throughout the pandemic, we have heard time and time again that disadvantaged pupils have suffered the most from the closure of our schools. It's time to act.

It's time to lower our class sizes

INTO is calling for a reduction of at least one pupil per year in the staffing schedule over the lifetime of this government. The government must deliver on its commitment to tackle our supersized classes and commit to this reduction in the forthcoming budget.

The cost of lowering primary school class sizes by one student is €4.8 million in 2021 and over the course of a full year amounts to €13.5 million in an education budget of €11 billion.

Source: Dáil Q&A no.170, 16 April 2019, Dáil Q&A no.534, 28 July 2020.

Add your voice to our campaign and ensure we can keep our schools open.

It's time to lower our class sizes.

Help keep our schools open – support school leaders

Over the last number of months, our school leaders have stepped up and ensured each and every primary school in the country reopened at the end of August. Their tireless work is a credit to the whole profession.

For many years, the INTO highlighted the supports our school leaders need to run their school effectively. The government's own Primary Education Forum has recognised the issue of workload as it relates to teaching principals, in particular. The INTO, alongside other key stakeholders, has called for effective management of the pace of change.

We have called on the Department of Education and Skills (DES) to initiate a comprehensive review of school leaders' terms and conditions of employment. Teaching principals have seen their conditions of employment change considerably and workload increase exponentially in recent years. Increased paperwork and initiatives have seen school leaders overwhelmed and under-resourced. Time and time again, our teaching principals have shared the growing levels of stress and worry felt by post holders, who are grossly overworked and underpaid.

How can we help our school leaders?

The INTO is calling for one leadership and management day per week for teaching principals who are overburdened and over-stretched with an ever-increasing administrative workload in addition to their teaching duties.

In response to the challenges posed in reopening our schools, the government has introduced a weekly release day for our teaching principals. However, we need to ensure this is retained and becomes a permanent fixture.

How might this work in practice?

The INTO is currently supporting a DES 'cluster' model whereby a number of schools with teaching principals may pool their administrative days to hire one teacher to cover all leadership days in the cluster. This is advantageous to all parties, including pupils who benefit from the continuity of the same teacher covering for their class teacher.

€10.2m has recently been allocated to support principals and deputy principals who also undertake teaching duties in primary schools. This funding will provide each teaching principal with one release day per week. It also provides release days for deputy principals in those schools that have an existing administrative principal.

Source: Dáil Q&A no. 659, 30 July 2020

We need to provide in-school support to our school leaders

During the recession period, a moratorium on promotion in schools was imposed. Over 5,000 'posts of responsibility' (PORs) were lost, meaning an inability at the school level to meet the growing challenges in curricular and regulatory changes. These middle management posts were also positive steps on the career ladder for teachers. Such posts, referred to as 'assistant principals', involved a teacher taking on particular responsibility for activities or a curricular area (for example choir/music, sport and physical education, science etc.) in return for a responsibility allowance (€3,769 or €8,520). As a result of the ban, no assistant principal posts in schools could be filled, and even when the moratorium was relaxed slightly, there remained very tight restrictions on the appointment of assistant principals.

The cutting of these posts left schools without supports in a range of curricular and other areas and abolished career progression for many teachers. Coupled with the issue of pay inequality for post-2011 entrants, for younger teachers this served as a factor which fuelled their interest in travelling abroad to teach overseas, enabling them to avail of opportunities denied in Ireland.

2017 saw the first, and to date, the only, structured restoration of assistant principal posts to schools since the moratorium was first introduced in March 2009. Though acknowledging some movement on this issue, the filling of these posts is merely a start. While 1,300 posts were restored in 2017, there were no further restorations in Budget 2018, Budget 2019 or Budget 2020. The INTO demands full restoration.

Why are primary school leaders paid less?

A burning injustice in the primary education system is the ongoing pay disparity between school leaders in primary schools and those in secondary schools. This simply isn't fair. School leaders of similar-sized schools do the same job and they should be paid the same.

Thirteen years ago, in 2007, a public service pay review recommended an award for primary school leaders to align their pay more closely with those at second level. This followed an exhaustive review. Why has this still not been paid? Governments repeatedly acknowledge this is an outstanding debt which will be paid. When?

We are in danger of losing great school leaders who simply won't stay in the post unless we get this sorted quickly. Our schools will lose out. Our pupils will lose out. Society will lose out.

It's time to pay our school leaders fairly.

Help keep our schools open – time to Invest

As the COVID-19 crisis has shown, our primary schools are victims of chronic under-investment. The crisis has highlighted the lack of handwashing facilities, a hot water supply as the exception in schools, minimal provision for cleaning and cramped and inadequate facilities for learning and play commonplace.

How are our schools currently funded?

The main funding for primary schools comes through a capitation payment (per pupil) paid by the DES into the school account each year.

While the recent additional COVID-19 payment to schools is essential, this has done little more than restore the level of capitation funding of €200 per pupil which was in place in 2010 before severe cuts were made.

The standard capitation funding for 2020/2021 stands at €183. This has been augmented by a COVID-related €25 per pupil to help schools meet extra bills related to the pandemic. But, even at €208, our schools must continue to fundraise for basic costs like heating, cleaning and insurance.

Post-primary schools are funded at a rate above €300 per pupil. This is a glaring, unacceptable and unreasonable disparity.

The Education at a Glance 2020 (OECD Report) shows Ireland as 14th of 23 EU countries in per-pupil spending at the primary school level. This leaves us behind countries such as Austria, the UK, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Germany and Slovenia.

And research by school management shows that parents raise some €46 million per annum simply to help schools meet their basic needs.

How can we fix this?

We must at a minimum maintain the current funding (€208 per pupil including COVID capitation payment) for the 2021/22 school year.

Cost: To restore annual funding to pre-2010 levels would cost €3.3 million in 2021 (*Dáil Question number 684, 30 July 2020*), while €4.8 million is the 2021 cost of retaining funding including the COVID capitation payment.

Why are some of our teachers still paid less than their colleagues?

The scandal of unequal pay continues to affect those who entered teaching from 2011 to 2014. While the INTO has, through successive pay agreements, managed to restore equal pay for more recent entrants, the 2011-2014 cohort are still short-changed.

We have a government statement of intent to resolve this issue since April 2019, and increment skips are in place which are achieving equal pay for many newer entrants.

But more is needed to resolve this issue for the 2011-2014 cohort.

It is deeply unfair and offensive to breach the 'equal pay for equal work' principle at any time, but doubly so for teachers who have worked hard to reopen and keep open our schools in the Pandemic.

How can we end this practice?

The further increment skip needed to achieve pay equality for the 2011-2014 cohort must commence in 2021.

Cost: Various estimates of cost have been provided by the DES. Information from the Department indicates that, in total, less than 3,000 primary teachers, and below 5,000 teachers between primary and post-primary, are in the 2011-2014 cohort. This indicates a cost of under €6 million at primary and post-primary combined in a full year (and just a portion of this in year one as those entrants would skip a specified increment only when this was reached).

It is time to invest in our schools and our teachers.

Appendix 1 - class sizes compared

- i. Table D2.1 (p.387) from The OECD *Education at a Glance 2019* – this shows EU average class size as 20 and Ireland's as 25. <https://bit.ly/2GOF6D1>.

Table D2.1. Average class size, by type of institution (2017) and index of change between 2005 and 2017

By level of education, calculations based on number of students and number of classes

		Primary				Lower secondary					Index of change between 2005 and 2017 (2005 = 100)							
		Public institutions	Private institutions			Total public and private institutions	Public institutions	Private institutions			Total public and private institutions	Primary			Lower secondary			
			Total private institutions	Government-dependent private institutions	Independent private institutions			Total private institutions	Government-dependent private institutions	Independent private institutions		Total public and private institutions	Public institutions	Total private institutions	Total public and private institutions	Public institutions	Total private institutions	Total public and private institutions
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)			
OECD	Countries																	
	Australia	23	24	24	a	24	21	24	24	a	22	97	m	98	87	m	89	
	Austria	18	19	x(2)	x(2)	18	21	21	x(7)	x(7)	21	92	92	92	88	85	87	
	Belgium	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	
	Canada	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	
	Chile	28	32	33	25	31	29	31	33	25	30	85	102	95	82	95	89	
	Colombia	25	19	a	19	23	31	24	a	24	30	m	m	m	m	m	m	
	Czech Republic	21	15	15	a	21	22	18	18	a	22	103	m	103	93	m	93	
	Denmark	22	19	19	a	21	22	20	20	a	21	109	m	108	109	m	108	
	Estonia	19	16	a	16	19	19	14	a	14	18	97	m	96	81	m	81	
	Finland	20	18	18	a	20	19	19	19	a	19	m	m	m	m	m	m	
	France	23	25	25	a	24	25	26	27	12	25	m	m	m	104	104	104	
	Germany	21	21	x(2)	x(2)	21	24	24	x(7)	x(7)	24	95	91	95	97	91	97	
	Greece	17	21	a	21	18	21	22	a	22	21	88	m	89	85	m	85	
	Hungary	22	21	22	17	22	21	21	22	16	21	110	110	110	96	96	96	
	Iceland	19	15	15	a	19	20	13	13	a	20	104	111	104	101	107	101	
	Ireland	25	m	a	m	m	m	m	a	m	m	101	m	m	m	m	m	
	Israel	27	25	25	a	27	29	24	24	a	28	98	m	96	94	m	91	
	Italy	19	19	a	19	19	21	21	a	21	21	104	m	104	101	m	101	
	Japan	27	28	a	28	27	32	33	a	33	32	96	83	96	96	92	96	
	Korea	23	27	a	27	23	28	27	27	a	27	71	84	71	77	77	77	
	Latvia	17	9	a	9	16	16	13	a	13	16	m	m	m	m	m	m	
	Lithuania	17	15	a	15	17	18	19	a	19	18	114	149	114	83	123	83	
	Luxembourg	15	20	20	20	16	19	19	19	20	19	99	105	101	100	93	98	
	Mexico	24	20	a	20	24	28	24	a	24	28	123	91	120	94	89	93	
	Netherlands ¹	23 ^a	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	105 ^a	m	m	m	m	m	
	New Zealand	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	
	Norway	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	
	Poland	19	12	11	12	18	22	17	22	15	22	92	100	90	92	101	91	
	Portugal	21	21	23	20	21	22	24	25	23	22	117	96	114	98	101	98	
	Slovak Republic	18	18	18	a	18	19	18	18	a	19	92	m	92	84	m	84	
	Slovenia	18	21	21	a	18	20	20	20	a	20	101	m	101	97	m	97	
	Spain	21	25	25	21	22	25	27	27	22	25	107	102	105	104	100	103	
	Sweden	20	18	18	a	19	21	22	22	a	21	m	m	m	m	m	m	
	Switzerland	19	m	m	m	m	19	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	
	Turkey	22	18	a	18	21	26	19	a	19	25	79	m	79	m	m	m	
United Kingdom	28	a	28	12	27	24	a	25	12	23	108	m	110	100	m	104		
United States	21	18	a	18	21	27	20	a	20	26	102	99	102	101	95	100		
OECD average	21	20	m	m	21	23	21	m	m	23	100	m	99	94	m	94		
Average for countries with available data for both reference years	21	20	m	m	21	23	22	m	m	23	99	m	99	94	m	94		
EU23 average	20	19	m	m	20	21	20	m	m	21	m	m	m	m	m	m		
Partners	Argentina	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m		
	Brazil	24	18	a	18	23	28	24	a	24	27	94	m	91	84	m	85	
	China	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m		
	Costa Rica	15	17	x(2)	x(2)	15	35	21	x(7)	x(7)	33	m	m	m	m	m		
	India	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m		
	Indonesia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m		
	Russian Federation	20	13	a	13	20	20	12	a	12	19	130	m	129	103	m	103	
	Saudi Arabia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	
	South Africa	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	
G20 average	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m		

1. Primary education includes pre-primary programmes.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2019). See Source section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>).

Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.

Appendix 2 - per pupil funding

- ii. Table C1.1 (p.280) from The OECD *Education at a Glance 2020* – this shows per pupil funding in Irish primary schools to be 11.4% below the EU average and places us in the bottom half of EU countries (14th of 23) when it comes to funding. <https://bit.ly/2FzO9Hz>.

Table C1.1. Total expenditure on educational institutions per full-time equivalent student (2017)

In equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP, direct expenditure within educational institutions, by level of education

	Primary	Secondary					Post-secondary non-tertiary	Primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	Tertiary				Primary to tertiary	Primary to tertiary (excluding R&D)	
		Lower secondary	Upper secondary			Short-cycle tertiary			Long-cycle tertiary	All tertiary	All tertiary (excluding R&D)				
			General programmes	Vocational programmes	All programmes										
												All secondary			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	
OECD	Countries														
	Australia	10 238	13 181	14 019	7 371	11 825	12 640	8 504	11 270	10 943	23 261	20 436	14 314	13 272	11 935
	Austria	12 754	16 794	14 425	18 054	16 593	16 705	5 700	15 097	18 457	19 206	19 089	13 711	16 319	14 672
	Belgium	11 106	14 524	14 210 ^d	14 896 ^d	14 606 ^d	14 578 ^d	x(3, 4, 5, 6)	13 054	12 965	19 649	19 422	12 539	14 287	12 954
	Canada ^{1, 2}	10 238 ^d	x(1)	x(5)	x(5)	13 891	13 891	m	11 380 ^d	18 820	27 948	24 671	m	14 428 ^d	m
	Chile	5 259	5 440	4 393	8 342	5 033	5 167	a	5 213	4 821	11 503	9 610	9 079	6 487	6 333
	Colombia ^{2, 3}	3 494	4 468	x(5)	x(5)	3 436	4 177	m	3 855	x(11)	x(11)	2 335	1 331	3 538	3 328
	Costa Rica ³	m	m	m	m	m	m	a	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Czech Republic	5 971	10 081	8 174	9 645	9 246	9 666	2 763	8 052	18 866	11 462	11 484	7 217	8 732	7 887
	Denmark	13 278	13 127	x(5)	x(5)	9 526	11 164	a	12 163	17 623	18 116	18 062	8 778	13 499	11 396
	Estonia	7 481	7 622	6 878	7 670	7 208	7 404	8 053	7 462	a	14 580	14 580	9 618	8 946	7 912
	Finland	9 633	15 400	8 719	7 985 ^d	8 180 ^d	10 454 ^d	x(4, 5, 6)	10 133	a	17 730	17 730	9 874	11 637	10 082
	France	8 319	11 252	13 944	16 227	14 743	12 748	9 897	10 867	15 359	17 442	16 952	11 638	12 080	11 020
	Germany	9 572	11 975	12 963	17 960	15 466	13 283	12 403	12 195	11 284	18 487	18 486	10 436	13 529	11 822
	Greece	6 085	6 951	5 834	8 756	6 638	6 789	m	m	a	3 294	3 294	2 137	m	m
	Hungary	5 491	5 259	7 961	9 494	8 465	6 867	13 642	6 780	4 675	13 256	12 878	10 838	7 797	7 457
	Iceland	13 333	15 620	10 785	13 426	11 503	13 122	15 532	13 254	9 682	16 497	16 270	m	13 819	m
	Ireland	8 215	10 054	x(5)	x(5)	8 890	9 445	35 312	9 218	x(11)	x(11)	16 794	16 185	10 489	10 386
	Israel	9 155	x(3, 4, 5)	6 940 ^d	17 258 ^d	9 079 ^d	9 079	1 205	9 064	5 584	15 795	12 310	8 382	9 671	8 936
	Italy	9 160	10 073	x(5)	x(5)	10 883 ^d	10 574 ^d	x(5, 6)	10 036	4 240	12 277	12 226	8 131	10 473	9 655
	Japan	8 824	10 511	x(5)	x(5)	11 510 ^d	11 024 ^d	x(5, 6, 9, 10, 11)	9 963	13 617 ^d	20 209 ^d	18 839 ^d	m	11 896	m
	Korea	11 702	12 597	x(5)	x(5)	14 394	13 579	a	12 704	5 791	11 948	10 633	8 400	11 981	11 202
	Latvia	6 379	6 492	7 048	8 628	7 680	7 102	8 585	6 766	8 141	8 381	8 346	6 379	7 121	6 679
	Lithuania	6 340	5 994	6 066	5 832	6 002	5 997	5 857	6 094	a	8 428	8 428	6 353	6 652	6 156
	Luxembourg	19 690	23 073	22 236	22 546	22 427	22 724	1 951	21 244	27 920	55 433	52 089	32 325	23 324	22 053
	Mexico	2 782	2 438	3 115	3 980	3 418	2 823	a	2 803	x(11)	x(11)	6 586	5 263	3 320	3 139
	Netherlands	9 301	13 527	11 365	15 776	14 274	13 889	a	11 931	11 467	20 493	20 445	13 104	13 809	12 190
	New Zealand	8 533	10 059	12 004	13 859	12 401	11 117	10 059	9 937	11 279	17 096	16 068	12 755	11 098	10 471
	Norway	13 906	13 906	17 398	16 982	17 191	15 735	21 168	14 848	20 615	23 522	23 439	13 414	16 644	14 548
	Poland	7 806	7 286	6 798	8 639	7 838	7 577	3 742	7 597	27 938	10 041	10 044	7 843	8 144	7 652
	Portugal	8 766	10 993	x(5)	x(5)	10 463 ^d	10 721 ^d	x(5, 6)	9 836	7 451	11 941	11 788	9 126	10 220	9 696
	Slovak Republic	6 836	6 121	7 217	7 441	7 370	6 652	6 383	6 711	8 345	11 776	11 715	9 075	7 562	7 113
	Slovenia	9 062	11 336	9 199	7 599	8 110	9 370	a	9 223	3 757	14 100	12 787	10 302	9 897	9 427
	Spain	8 161	9 567	9 732	12 851 ^d	10 711 ^d	10 134 ^d	x(4, 5, 6)	9 166	9 795	14 387	13 446	10 052	10 105	9 360
	Sweden	12 189	12 894	11 078	14 723	12 427	12 634	5 883	12 339	6 874	27 167	25 584	11 928	14 505	12 271
	Switzerland	m	m	x(5)	x(5)	18 966 ^d	m	x(5)	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Turkey	4 002	3 912	5 448	6 159	5 776	4 859	a	4 594	x(11)	x(11)	9 708	7 857	5 586	5 227
	United Kingdom	11 604	11 749	13 429	8 978	11 480	11 592	a	11 597	19 093	29 131	28 144	22 291	14 209	13 226
	United States	12 592	13 654	x(5)	x(5)	15 202	14 411	15 908	13 511	x(11)	x(11)	33 063	29 153	17 993	17 096
	OECD average	9 090	10 527	10 051	11 521	10 888	10 547	m	9 999	12 422	17 566	16 327	11 234	11 231	10 103
	EU23 average	9 269	10 963	10 383	11 774	10 836	10 786	m	10 344	13 014	17 126	16 688	11 339	11 515	10 503
Partners	Argentina	m	m	m	a	m	m	a	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Brazil	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	China	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	India	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Indonesia ³	m	m	m	m	m	m	a	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	Russian Federation	x(3, 4, 5, 6)	x(3, 4, 5, 6)	5 651 ^d	2 582 ^d	5 382 ^d	5 382 ^d	x(3, 4, 5, 6)	5 382	5 379	9 776	8 629	7 750	6 090	5 898
	Saudi Arabia	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	South Africa	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
	G20 average	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m

Note: See *Definitions and Methodology* sections for more information. Data and more breakdowns available at <http://stats.oecd.org>, Education at a Glance Database.

1. Primary education includes pre-primary programmes.

2. Post-secondary non-tertiary figures are treated as negligible.

3. Year of reference 2018.

Source: OECD/UIS/Eurostat (2020). See *Source* section for more information and Annex 3 for notes (<https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en>).

Please refer to the Reader's Guide for information concerning symbols for missing data and abbreviations.



Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann-Múinteoirí Éireann

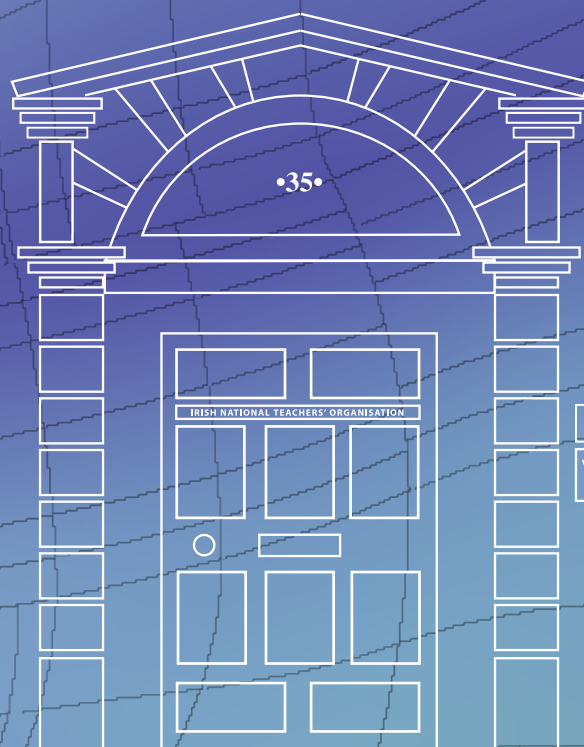
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