

Education Investment is key!

INTO Pre-Budget Submission 2023



Irish Primary Education

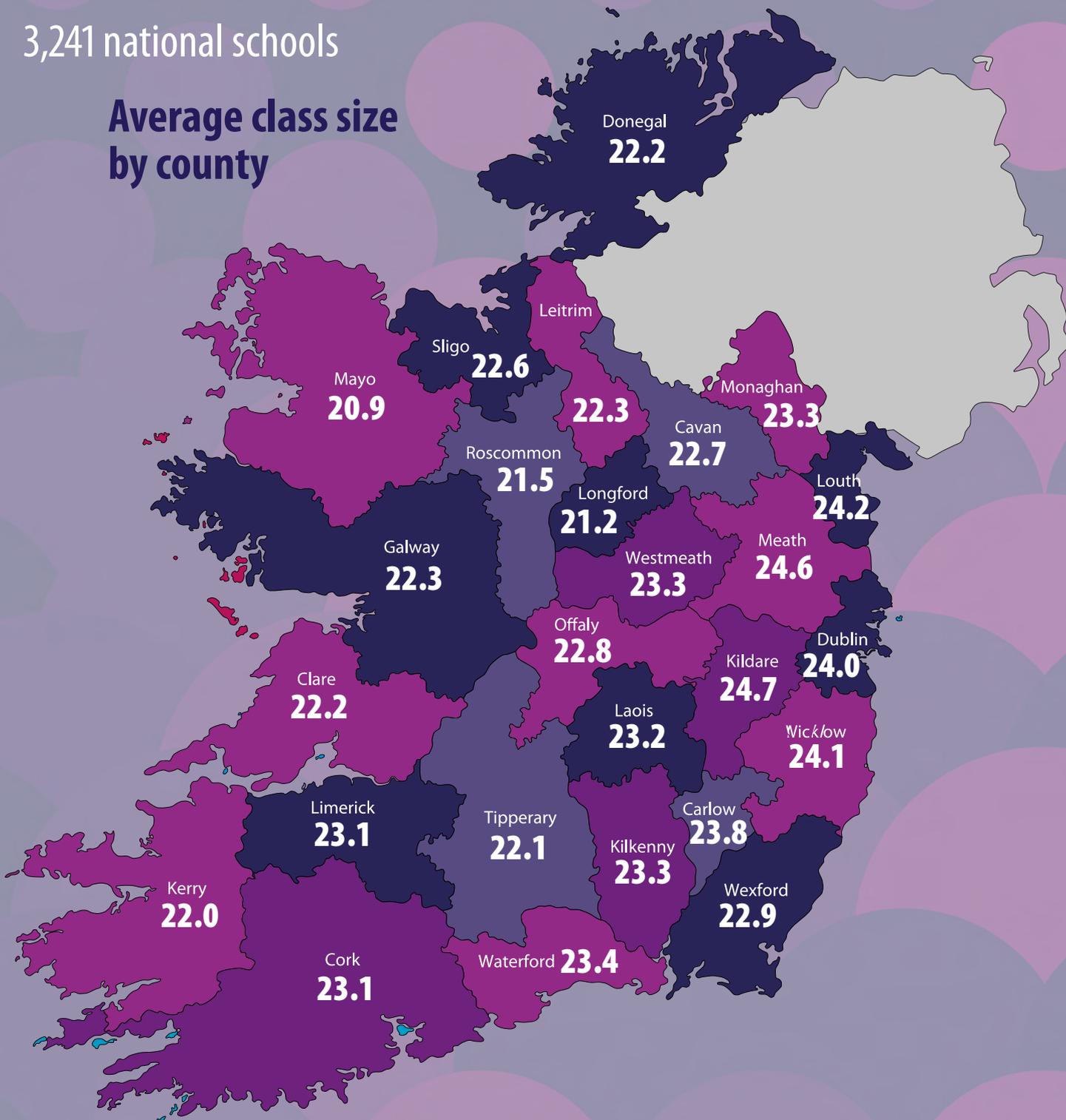
Key Statistics

561,411 primary school pupils

38,604 teaching staff

3,241 national schools

Average class size by county



Investment is key

Budget 2023 must deliver for primary and special education

As we emerge from a devastating and harsh pandemic, we are very mindful of the disruption to learning and of the conclusions reached by the Department of Education's Chief Inspector in his report published in March this year.

'[In] Recognising loss of learning, COVID-19 has undeniably impacted the education system in significant ways and this impact will have medium and long-term consequences for the development of the education system. The closure of schools and settings, and the disruption to learning that children and young people experienced, have had, for many of them, a considerable and immediately negative impact on their learning and progress in several areas of the curriculum. Engagement by inspectors with schools and ELC settings has identified concerns across a range of issues caused not only by closures of schools and settings but also by broken attendance at ELC settings and schools, the absences from work of early years educators and teachers due to COVID illnesses and restrictions and interruption in access to therapeutic health services and interventions for young people. The cumulative effect of these conditions has affected many aspects of children's and young people's development. There is evidence, for example, that children's early linguistic development, students' social and emotional skills and students' wellbeing have been adversely affected, as well as the normal progression and maturing that we expect to see in students' ability and motivation to engage in learning.

Students at most risk of educational disadvantage have been disproportionately affected. It is possible, for example, that in the next few years we may see a slowing or even a reversal of the progress that we have made in Ireland in improving the learning outcomes of pupils in DEIS schools vis-à-vis pupils in other schools. It is possible, too, we will see a similar effect for pupils with special educational needs and those who require therapeutic supports. These sorts of effects are likely to persist for at least a proportion of pupils/students for some time.'

As we seek to recover and rebuild, teachers will be central to the effort – playing a key role in supporting every single pupil. But they must be supported by an ambitious level of investment if we are to build back a better and fairer education system. Budget 2023 must invest heavily in our pupils, our teachers, and our schools.

Inequalities and underfunding in our education system can no longer be tolerated. We must build on what works best and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

We submit our detailed and costed pre-budget submission, which seeks a modest but proportionate increase in funding of €72 million per annum or €24 million in 2023, to take a step in the right direction and support primary and special education.



John Driscoll

John Driscoll
INTO President

John Boyle

John Boyle
INTO General Secretary



INTO is seeking the following investment from Budget 2023

Reduce class sizes

Reduce class sizes by two pupils in Budget 2023 in all schools, including DEIS schools



Cost: €30m

Fund our schools

Increase the capitation grant by 20%



Cost: €20m

Support school leadership

Restore middle management teams to pre-austerity levels, providing for 300 Assistant Principal 1 and 1,500 Assistant Principal 2 posts



Cost: €11m

Invest in mental health supports for pupils

Provision of a school grant of €20 per pupil to finance school based mental health supports, such as on-site counselling services



Cost: €11m

#1 Reduce class sizes



In the last two years, INTO has secured a one-point reduction in class sizes in both Budget 2021 and Budget 2022. Class sizes in Ireland have reduced to an average of 23.3 pupils (DE Statistical Bulletin, December 2021). Despite this recent success, Irish primary class sizes remain well above the EU average of 20 (Education at a Glance, OECD 2021).

During the pandemic, the issue of supersized classes (classes with 30 or more pupils) rose to national attention. Ireland was the only country that had to contend with social distancing in classes with such a high number of pupils.

Evidence continues to find that children from disadvantaged backgrounds do better in smaller classes. Leading academic studies regularly identify a correlation between smaller classes and better student outcomes, with pupils from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds performing better in smaller classes. The latest OECD 'Education at a Glance' report sets out in no uncertain terms a negative correlation between larger classes and mean performance in reading, with a clear view as to the benefits of smaller classes for schools in disadvantaged communities.

The Report of the Chief Inspector 2016-2020 stated

'High average class size presented significant challenges for schools as they prepared to reopen during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was particularly evident as schools worked to implement protocols on physical distancing for learners. In order to alleviate the burden on schools, funding was made available for 1,000 additional teachers in post-primary schools to help reduce class sizes and to provide primary schools with substitute staff.'

The complexity of the contemporary classroom is such that, with larger class sizes, teachers find it challenging to meet the broad spectrum of needs children now present with. When class numbers are more reasonable, modern teaching methods work more effectively, and teachers can spend the time needed with children.

In Budget 2023, the union is campaigning for a two-point reduction in a single year, as a central feature of post-pandemic recovery planning for primary education.



Reduce class sizes by two pupils in Budget 2023 in all schools, including DEIS schools

Based on previous Parliamentary Questions (PQs), we estimate the cost of reducing class sizes by two pupils in a single year to be roughly €30 million per annum or €10 million from September to December 2023.

#2 Tackle chronic underfunding of primary schools



Prior to the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis, schools were already struggling to meet basic expenditure. A pre-pandemic survey from the CPSMA found that schools fundraised to the tune of €46 million per year to keep their doors open.

Irish primary schools receive significantly less funding than second and third level institutions. Primary schools receive a capitation grant of €1 per pupil per school day to cover running costs. Second-level schools receive almost double that amount. The standard capitation grant per primary pupil has dropped from €200 in 2010 to €183 at present, in contrast to the current figure of €316 at post-primary level.

This funding disparity is grossly unfair. The challenges are even greater for primary schools in disadvantaged areas where fundraising to meet funding shortfalls is more difficult.

OECD analysis continues to highlight that Ireland spends on average 20% less per student at primary than other developed countries. (Education at a Glance 2021, OECD)

In Budget 2023, the INTO is calling for a significant increase in the school capitation grant to help schools struggling with increased costs and to reduce the burden on parents who continue to have to financially support their school.



Increase the capitation grant by 20% in Budget 2023

Based on costings provided by the Department of Education, the estimated annual cost of providing for a 20% increase in the capitation grant for primary and special schools would total €20 million. The estimated cost from September to December 2023 would be €6.9 million.

#3 School leadership teams



Restore Assistant Principal posts

In 2009, a moratorium on promotion in schools was imposed. As a result, primary and special schools lost over 4,500 assistant principal positions, limiting their ability to meet the growing challenges of curricular and regulatory change. In addition, there were fewer opportunities for career progression for teachers within our education system.

These assistant principal posts were positive steps on the career ladder for teachers. Assistant Principals work in teams in collaboration with the Principal and/or Deputy Principal and have shared responsibility for areas including learning and teaching, leading school development (including curriculum development), pupil support including wellbeing, special education, planning for DEIS and inclusion of vulnerable

pupils, as well as supporting teachers during the induction phase of their career. In return they are paid a responsibility allowance (currently €4,007 for an AP2 and €9,058 for an AP1 per annum).

The moratorium on these assistant principal posts left schools without supports in a range of curricular, pastoral, and administrative areas.

In 2017, 1,300 of these posts were restored. Earlier this year, the union used the sectoral bargaining process in the current public service agreement to restore a further 1,450 posts.

In Budget 2023, the INTO is seeking the full restoration of the balance of these posts (300 AP1's and 1500 AP2's).



Restore the number of assistant principal posts to pre-recession levels

Costing: We estimate the cost to be about €11 million per annum or €3.7 million from September to December 2023.



#4 Increased funding for children's mental health services

The number of pupils at primary level seeking behavioural and emotional interventions has increased and referrals to CAMHS and other services have risen by 40% as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

At INTO Congress 2022, delegates condemned the lengthy waiting lists for specialist mental health treatment services for children, recognising that the experience of mental ill-health and poor emotional wellbeing can have a significant adverse impact on a child's development. Delegates deplored the continuing lack of access for primary school children to mental health services at community and school level and acknowledged the challenges encountered by children with

an autism diagnosis in trying to access appropriate mental health services.

The resolution adopted at Congress calls for adequate funding and age-appropriate supports to be provided for children presenting with mental health issues, including an increase in NEPS services and the reinstatement and expansion of the in-school and Early Years Therapy Support Demonstration Project. Furthermore, members called for a national framework to be put in place to inform the development of counselling services for primary school children and the introduction of on-site school counselling in primary schools in line with international best practice.



Initial grant of €20 per pupil for school based mental health supports, such as on-site counselling services

Costing Estimated: €11 million per annum or €3.7 million from September to December 2023.

Notes

Notes



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