

# Appendix 7

## ACCS Consultative Submissions

### **(i) Submission to the Joint Committee on Education and Skills on the topic of the apparent shortage of qualified substitute teachers throughout the State including issues related to recruitment and retention**

#### **Introduction**

There must be qualified subject teachers in every classroom if students are to receive a quality education. In the first instance schools should be able to advertise vacancies, interview and appoint with confidence in the necessary subject areas. There must also be an expectation that, if a teacher is absent for a period, there will be a substitute teacher available, qualified and capable of replacing that teacher. However, this is far from the current reality in schools.

Post-primary schools have experienced increasing difficulty filling vacant teaching positions, initially in a limited number of subjects but now across a wide range of subject areas. While the situation has been deteriorating over a few years, this year a number of schools have failed to fill contract positions, most especially in the Dublin area. Employment of short-term substitutes is almost impossible in most schools throughout the country. Increasingly students are being taught by teachers unqualified in the subject area or are being just 'supervised' in the absence of a teacher.

This submission sets out to:

- a) Outline annual employment requirement in schools
- b) The findings of the ACCS survey on Teacher Supply
- c) Identify the main issues arising
- d) Make some recommendations for consideration
- e) Comment on the Recommendations of the Technical Working Group Report

#### **Employment requirements of post-primary schools**

Broadly, schools annually employ subject teachers in two capacities;

- a) Contract positions up to 22 hrs for one year (RPT), or permanent (CID), including replacements for teachers on Career Break, Secondment or Job-sharing.
- b) Short-term substitute teachers for a wide range of leave – Sick leave, Maternity leave, Parental leave, Paternity leave, Force Majeure leave, In-service substitution, Department of Education examinations (Language Oral examinations, Practical Exams, Leaving Certificate Applied Assessment), JCT/PDST Associates (20 days per teacher in a school year) and also substitution for attendance at other agency meetings (eg Túsła, HSE etc). Absences associated with such leave run throughout the school year, starting and finishing at various times, sometimes with a multitude of different leave happening at the same time.

Consider, that if a school were only to need one substitute under each of the above headings, a minimum of 12 substitutes would be required in a variety of subjects throughout the school year. Realistically, the demand will be far more than this. However, general substitutes are extremely difficult to source, while subject specific substitution is almost impossible. As a result, the integrity of student tuition time is being seriously undermined.

## 1. Findings of the ACCS survey on Teacher Supply

In September 2017 ACCS conducted a survey of the experiences of Community and Comprehensive schools in recruiting teachers. There was a 70% response from the ninety-six schools. The graphic below shows the responses from this survey.

### Appointments to RPT positions for the 2017/2018 School Year

Noteworthy was that the interview process was still on-going in a number of school at the end of September, beginning of October.

DUBLIN SUBJECT	TIMES POSITION INTERVIEWED			NO. OF CANDIDATES				STATUS OF APPOINTMENT			APPOINTEE WITHDREW
	Once	Twice	3 or more	0	1	<5	>5	Q *	U*	V/O*	
Gaeilge	46%	31%	23%		22%	67%	11%	80%	10%	10%	33%
Maths	60%	40%			25%	60%	15%	35%	25%	40%	75%
Spanish	50%	50%			50%	50%		50%	20%	30%	16%
French	50%	50%			25%	75%		75%		25% (other solutions)	
Home Ec	100%				25%	75%		75%	25%		
Sciences	50%	50%			17%	83%		100%			33%
<b>LEINSTER</b>											
Gaeilge	80%	20%		11%	-	78%	11%	76%	12%	12%	12%
Maths	100%					70%	30%	100%			16%
Spanish		100%		50%		50%		50%		50%	50%
French	75%	25%		25%	25%	50%		50%	25%	25%	25%
Home Ec	67%	33%			33%	67%		83%		17%	
Sciences	80%	20%		20%	20%	60%		83%		17%	
<b>CONNACHT</b>											
Gaeilge	100%					100%		100%			
Maths	100%					100%		100%			
Spanish	no vacancies										
French	100%					100%		100%			
Home Ec	no vacancies										
Sciences	100%					50%	50%	100%			
<b>MUNSTER</b>											
Gaeilge	80%	20%				80%	20%	80%	-	20%	40%
Maths	70%	30%				70%	30%	70%	15%	15%	27%
Spanish	100%				50%	50%		100%			
French	100%				25%	75%		100%			
Home Ec	75%	25%			75%	25%		100%			25%
Sciences	33%	67%			33%	67%		75%	25%	25%	25%
<b>ULSTER</b>											
Gaeilge	67%	17%	16%			80%		66%	10%	24%	20%
Maths	75%	25%				50%	50%	75%		25% (other solutions)	
Spanish	100%					100%		50%		50%	
French	100%				67%	33%		67%		33%	
Home Ec	100%				100%			100%			
Sciences	100%				33%	67%		100%			

\*Q = Qualified appointee

\*U = Unqualified appointee

\*V/O = Vacant or Other solution put in place by the school (e.g. re-arranging timetables etc)

\*Appointee Withdrew after being offered the position – not all schools furnished this information.

The accompanying narrative shows the difficulties experience by many schools when trying to employ teachers this year.

In the first instance schools were asked to outline their experience of recruiting for RPT vacancies for 2017/18 under a range of headings. Secondly, they were asked, under the same headings, to outline their experience of filling Temporary vacancies for 2017/18 and also Temporary/Short-term vacancies during 2016/17.

The survey reflects the subjects that were most problematic. Recruitment for Resource vacancies is not reflected in the survey, even though most schools could not recruit people with a Special Education qualification. So too, the experience was similar albeit to a lesser extent with Career Guidance vacancies. Schools however, put a wide range of solutions in place which are not possible to reflect this in the survey.

In November at the ACCS annual In-school Management Conference for Principals and Deputy Principals which was attended by 98% of ACCS schools, teacher supply was the predominant topic raised by participants. Feedback from almost all schools' is that they are experiencing severe difficulties with recruitment. A number of schools have advertisements running for weeks with no applicants.

\*The observations from school Principals reflecting their experiences of recruitment this year, are attached to this submission as Appendix 1 and 2.

## 2. Main issues arising

### Contract Vacancies (RPT) – i.e. positions for a full school year

- Gaeilge: There are simply not enough applicants to fill vacancies. When the survey was completed in early October up to 20% of vacant RPT positions in Gaeilge were being filled by teachers without a qualification in Gaeilge. Gaeltacht schools and schools teaching through Gaeilge report that they cannot recruit sufficient teachers to teach all subjects through Gaeilge.
- Modern Languages: Schools have indicated that they will consider dropping a language or restricting the number of students given access to studying languages because they cannot recruit teachers of French, Spanish or German in sufficient numbers. Neither of these solutions would be beneficial for students or for broadening our language capacity as a nation.
- STEM subjects: most notably Physics, Chemistry and Maths emerged as a serious problem for several schools. Even where the vacancies were filled, the number of candidates attending for interview was less than 5 in almost all cases, and as few as 1 or 2 in 25% of Dublin schools. This is a very worrying trend if we consider the centrality of these subjects for a wide range of career choices.
- Home Economics: on completion of this survey 25% of RPT positions in the Dublin area were being filled by unqualified teachers. In the Leinster region 17% of vacancies were either vacant or schools were trying to put a variety of solutions in place to ensure that students would be taught. Limiting access to Home Economics is one of the options that schools are actively considering.
- Schools were forced to re-advertise and re-interview throughout the summer either because of insufficient applicants or because the appointed candidates withdrew from positions as they had the choice of several jobs. Especially problematic for schools was losing teachers as they were about to re-open, resulting in students being without a teacher in a specific subject for the first few weeks of term or resulting in major time-table changes which impacted on many other staff and put a huge burden of work on Principals and Deputy Principals.
- Schools in the greater Dublin are experiencing even greater difficulty in appointing and retaining teachers. Cost of living and lifestyle choices result in young graduates being reluctant to work in Dublin and also well-established teachers leaving to take up positions in other parts of the country.

### Short-term vacancies

There are very few substitute teachers available during the school year. However, schools must accommodate the wide range of leave to which teachers have an entitlement; also unexpected sick leave, in-service substitution and SEC/PDST/JCT work throughout the school year. Most often schools are lucky to have someone to supervise the class and unfortunately must acknowledge that finding a subject specific substitute is almost an impossibility. Students and parents are now expressing concern that classes are not being taught.

The recent ACCS survey results, below, indicate the difficulties experienced by schools in recruiting substitute teachers.

Temporary Vacancies 2016/2017 - Main areas of difficulty			
SUBJECT	QUALIFIED	UNQUALIFIED	VACANT
Gaeilge	28%	62%	10%
French	34%	61%	5%
Maths	37%	50%	13%
Spanish	27%	55%	18%
German	20%	70%	10%
Biology	60%	30%	10%
Guidance	33%	34%	33%
Home Economics	33%	52%	14%

Qualified = qualified in subject area

Unqualified = unqualified in subject area

Vacant = unable to get a subject teacher, supervision of class put in place.

- Almost all schools reference serious difficulties in recruiting casual/short term substitutes, especially as the year goes on.
- The majority of schools have had to advertise temporary vacancies a number of times – some with ongoing advertisements and no applicants.
- A number of schools stated that they are heavily dependent on their PME (Professional Masters in Education) students filling temporary and casual vacancies.

Schools are regularly trying to re-organise timetables, being forced to switch teachers from classes they have been teaching long-term and fill gaps with whatever subs are available. This is disruptive to students and teachers alike and puts a severe administration burden on the school.

### **3. Towards solutions – possible actions for consideration**

This is a complex and challenging issue with no instant or single solution. Solutions, once identified will take time to activate, the benefits of which will take a number of years to realise. Therefore, we would suggest both short-term measures, which might alleviate the problem will be necessary while longer term solutions are considered.

Among the issue we believe merit consideration are the following:

- Recognise that a four-year degree programme, followed by a two year PME is acting as a disincentive to entry into the teaching profession. Teaching in Ireland has always been recognised for the high quality of its teachers. These teachers were fully qualified/trained within a maximum of 4yrs and yet delivered the highest standards of education to students. Lengthening degree programmes and initial teacher training may have the unintended consequence of reducing both the quantity and quality of applicants. Teacher training is now competing with other degree programmes, shorter in duration, with highly attractive and wide-ranging employment opportunities.
- We strongly feel that the second year of the PME is unnecessary and needs to be re-considered. However, even in its current format, year two could be recognised as a year where students could be employed on contract and paid for an agreed number of hours; possibly in the region of 10hrs weekly. Not alone would it alleviate some of the teacher supply problem, but also would alleviate some of the financial difficulties the longer training period presents for students.
- Defer the proposed extension of concurrent degree programmes from 4 to 5 yrs in St Angela's and UL from Sept 2018. Given the critical shortage of Home Economics teachers it does not make sense to create a year without graduates and also further disincentive students from choosing to teach due to extended training periods.
- Lift restrictions on retired teachers in the short-term to enable those willing to return to the work force to do so.
- Expand the number of concurrent degree programmes for undergraduates wishing to pursue a career in teaching. Rather than complete a general degree, followed by a PME, undergraduates should have the option of direct entry to a degree programme which includes teaching training. A limited number of such programmes already exist, producing high standard graduates, who along with their degree qualification, have gained invaluable classroom experience over a 3 or 4 year period.
- Commence a programme of up-skilling/re-training teachers currently employed but with subjects for which there may be an over-supply. The model used to upskill Maths teachers through UL could be used as a model to incentivise teachers to teach Gaelge and Modern Languages.
- Certificate level courses in Special Education Needs could be offered at undergraduate level, thereby increasing the number of graduates with a qualification and knowledge in this area.
- Offer optional certificate level modular programme at undergraduate level giving graduates the basic language capacity to teach through the medium of Gaelge. Graduates generally have no exposure to Gaelge after completing Leaving Certificate (many of whom have completed higher level Gaelge at second level) and do not feel competent to apply for positions which require them to teach through the medium of Gaelge. Further supports could also be developed to support those teaching through Gaelge. These might include the production of a wide range of subject specific teaching resources in Gaelge, whereby those not fluent in the language would be better equipped/prepared for the classroom.
- The current perception of teaching as a career is not positive. There is a lack of awareness of the employment opportunities, particularly in the subject areas experiencing shortages. A well-directed public awareness campaign may secure an increase in the numbers applying for teaching as a profession.
- Terms and conditions of employment must be such to compete with careers in other professions. Pay, opportunities for professional development and promotional prospects must be reviewed.

Consideration might be given to identifying particular target groups.

To that end:

- We must recognise that education is now a global employment market and that graduates are increasingly taking up international employment opportunities. Competition from these markets will only increase. Currently, a significant number of Irish graduates are working abroad. A concerted effort could be made to facilitate some of these people to return to teaching in Ireland. Already in the UK private companies are engaged in managing such 'return pathways' for graduates wishing to return to the UK. A similar model, public or private would merit consideration. In doing so, we must consider what would incentivise such graduates to return from countries where pay, conditions and lifestyle are highly attractive.
- Currently in private sector employment there are many people who, given the opportunity, would consider transferring to the teaching profession if the opportunity to do so existed. Teaching, as a lifestyle choice may be a very attractive alternative for a cohort of highly professional, hardworking graduates, seeking a different and in some cases a more 'family friendly' working environment. This would require an investment in 'fast track' conversion courses of a short duration, either grant supported, or tax relief supported to encourage and enable this transition. How often do we hear people say that they regretted not entering the teaching profession but now feel there is 'no way in' other than starting from scratch again?
- Many immigrants to Ireland are qualified teachers but would say that they experience a lot of difficulty when trying to register in Ireland. This issue needs to be addressed so that unnecessary barriers, administrative and financial, are removed.

#### **4. Comments on Recommendations in the Report 'Striking the Balance – Teacher Supply in Ireland: Technical Working Group Report'**

##### **Recommendation 1 – Establishment of a Standing Group**

ACCS would strongly support the recommendation to establish a Standing Group. There is an urgent need for one body to work with all the stakeholders to identify teacher supply needs and co-ordinate provision to ensure that there is stability in teacher supply going forward. The current problem is both complex and challenging, with no single or instant solution but one body needs to have on-going oversight of the issue over a number of years whereby existing and emerging needs can be identified and managed. A process has to be put in place to annually identify and address teacher supply needs. A Standing Group, as recommended, would have the capacity to gather up-to-date data, identify emerging needs and make provision for future supply needs in co-operation with all ITE providers.

##### **Recommendation 2 – Specific issues in Irish medium schools, in Gaeltacht schools and in Special Schools**

As identified earlier in this submission, the issues related to teaching Gaeilge and through Gaeilge need urgent addressing in a co-ordinated and effective manner. We would support this recommendation.

##### **Recommendations 3 and 5 – Data and Resources**

Up-to-date data is central to considering a plan of action and we would support a process that allows annual collection of data. A process is needed to identify on an on-going basis such factors as potential growth/decline in schools, numbers eligible for retirement from the profession, emerging needs etc. The format for collection of data needs to be mindful not to put a big burden on schools. This work cannot be done in an ad-hoc fashion and therefore needs to be adequately resourced. The suggested five-year period would be sensible as it would allow a Working Group time to properly identify the issues and put a meaningful plan of action in place.

##### **Recommendation 6 – Collaboration**

The balance between under and over supply in subject areas must be addressed. It serves neither graduates nor schools. Stability of supply can only be achieved if there is co-operation between all providers and if the process is independently monitored. Obviously there are a great deal of sensitivities to be considered here. An independent process is required to oversee and co-ordinate teacher supply.

## 5. Conclusion

The Technical Working Group report was completed in December 2015 and recognised the need for immediate actions to be undertaken in the area of Teacher Supply. Since then the situation has seriously deteriorated to the point where schools cannot provide uninterrupted student tuition. Now, there is urgent need to put in place a range of short-term measures to alleviate the problem while more medium to long-term processes are being developed. The immediate establishment of the recommended Standing Group could facilitate the commencement of this process.

Perhaps the current ‘problem’ might have its benefits. Perhaps it gives us the opportunity to ‘re-imagine’ teaching in all its facets. For decades we could possibly assume that the teaching profession would automatically attract high-calibre under-graduates, largely entering training immediately post Leaving Certificate and who, when qualified, would take up long-term positions in Irish schools. Today and into the future teaching must compete in a much broader career market, both nationally and internationally. Consideration may have to be given to the promotion of teaching as a profession, the expansion of training programmes to facilitate entry into teaching at different life stages, upskilling and conversion programmes to meet emerging needs, supporting on-going professional development, promotional opportunities and future pay and conditions.

ACCS welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this discussion and looks forwards to ongoing participation into the future.

### Appendix 1:

#### Observations from Principals re recruitment for RPT positions 2017/2018 school year.

- 1 We have appointed teachers without the required language skills to teach through Gaeilge, which puts a big burden on them.
- 2 Because we are a small school we are only able to offer smaller hours contracts, making positions very undesirable and difficult to fill.
- 3 This is a crisis.
- 4 By the time you find out from redeployment that your vacancies are not going to be taken you are too late to catch teachers going on holiday. If you keep your interviews until August the quality teachers are already taken.
- 5 Generally we have been able to get teachers except at very short notice when a number of teachers are absent together.
- 6 Irish is by far the scarcest. How we managed this year, I had to take a teacher out of the Autism programme. She is very good with the autistic kids and I wanted to leave her there but had no option.
- 7 German is very difficult. We will end up dropping German if one of our teachers leaves.
- 8 Recruitment process not finished yet.
- 9 Currently a teacher of Mathematics has just taken up position in rural Ireland. Position advertised twice – no suitable applicants.
- 10 Spanish timetable due to secondment is still under process.
- 11 Filled Full Time position in Maths with small amount of Business in June. Teacher started in August but offered alternative position in 1st week of September. Have filled position but significant amending of timetable was needed.
- 12 Fíor dhearcracht múinteorí le cruinneas agus líofacht sa Ghaeilge a fháil.
- 13 We took on a teacher of Home Economics in an RPT position because we knew we wouldn’t fill the Carers Leave without doing so. We had no teacher for 3 months.
- 14 Filled a position with the help of a 4th year student teacher and an existing teacher by taking business hours away from her.
- 15 Fortunate that we haven’t had too much trouble with recruitment. In the past we’ve had difficulty finding substitutes during the year. Good Irish teachers hard to find.
- 16 Recruitment process is not finished yet this year. It has become increasingly difficult to recruit RPT teachers and near impossible to recruit substitutes. Very few Gaeilge, French, German and Construction teachers available. A recent ad for a German teacher yielded no applicants -about to appoint unqualified but MFL forum found applicant.
- 17 The situation with French is very serious for our school. Few if any applicants. Tried PME’s and retirees as well.
- 18 Difficulty appointing candidate with Gaeilge to teach French.

- 19 Advertised Irish and French for fear of ‘poaching’ of existing teachers but got no applications. Have Career Guidance Maternity vacant after advertising, appointing and losing teacher 3 times.
- 20 I made a decision that I could not offer Modern Foreign Languages to all first years this year due to the inability to find qualified teachers last year and we convinced a German teacher not to apply for a career break this year as it would most likely be refused.
- 21 Currently I have no Woodwork teacher and no applicants. I had 2 resignations from 2 teachers who took jobs in Wicklow and Meath rather than stay in Dublin.
- 22 My Chaplain resigned and took a job in Cavan and RE teacher resigned and took job in Wexford. (Dublin school)
- 23 The selection committee has expressed concern in relation to the standard of applicant and many candidates would in previous years have been deemed not suitable for appointment.
- 24 Currently very fortunate to have secured the services of a teacher of Religion/Gaeilge – had 2 applicants, one who would not commit and the other was offered post in another school but opted to accept our school. Our previous ads for Gaeilge yielded no applicants.
- 25 This year we are having more difficulty with the number and quality of graduates. So much so I have preferred to take a qualified Metalwork who has some Maths experience In the UK, rather than a poorly referenced Maths teacher. I also re-shuffled timetables as to ensure this teacher was not involved in exam years – this was onerous.
- 26 A very real concern is not just teacher supply, but teacher qualify. When you have teachers signing contracts and then accepting positions in other schools you have to re-advertise. You end up having to compromise on teacher quality when interviewing late in August/early September, which is not good enough for our students.
- 27 This year 17/18, we have experienced a high decline in number of applications. T4 subject advertisements did not attract any recently qualified applicants. In Gaeilge, a total lack of suitably qualified applicants to advertisements placed in August for RPT positions. Two advertisements for Learning Support/Resource in Aug /Sept attracted a total of 3 applicants. Short term and sick leave subs have been impossible to source.
- 28 Supply of language teachers in 2016/17 caused major problems. French position advertised 3 times. One candidate applied and then turned down the position. Position only filled after a teacher on career break from another school resigned her position there to take up the post as it was nearer to home. German maternity leave last year was filled by an unqualified German.
- 29 Gaeilge – unqualified graduate teaching 22hrs arising due to resignation – no responses to adverts since late August. Physics – had to offer RPT hours to secure a teacher to cover maternity leave – 1 qualified applicant available – re-arrangement of timetable.
- 30 Guidance Counsellor – unable to fill.
- 31 Maths – no responses to advertisements since late August.
- 32 Modern Languages and Gaeilge are almost impossible to find. Home Ec is extremely difficult. For the first time Art has proved a problem while there is an oversupply in Business. We are one of 4 post-primary schools in a remote rural area and all 4 are experiencing serious problems for regular substitutes and casual absences. With DES In-Service, Orals, Practicals, LCA etc no pupil is receiving 167 teaching days instruction. Maternity Leave became a crisis as teachers not hanging about for a job that starts mid-year. The JCT in-service has compounded the problem.
- 33 When we could not fill the Physics job (22 hrs RPT) at the end of August we had to pull the timetable apart to move classes onto other Physics teacher. Result: daily timetable changed for the first 2 weeks.
- 34 Quality of teachers that presented for interview in many positions was below average.
- 35 Very few teachers of pure Maths, many with Maths as a secondary subject and may express reservations of delivering Higher Level Maths to Leaving Cert.
- 36 Recruited a teacher on Career Break to fill some of the Home Economics hours and gave the remainder to a Religion teacher.
- 37 I advertised French as the possibility/probability of a retirement in this area is real. No applications. The previous year I had to employ an unqualified French teacher.
- 38 Gaeilge – unqualified graduate teaching 22hrs arising due to resignation. No responses to re-advertisement since late August. Also unable to fill a position for a Guidance Counsellor.
- 39 Currently a teacher of Mathematics has taken up a position in rural area. Position has been advertised – no suitable applicant. (Dublin school)
- 40 There is clearly a great shortage of teaching personnel in Gaeilge, Maths and Spanish from our experience. We have never before been in the position of having to re-advertise and interview for the teaching posts three times. Although the candidates initially accepted the offer, they invariably secured more hours in another school to allow them to pay for the cost of living in Dublin.

## **Staffing Difficulties 2017-18 Rural Community School (Munster)**

### **Religion – Job-share position**

- Advertised during the summer.
- Very small number of candidates.
- Very poor quality of candidate.
- Offered position to one candidate, he accepted, two weeks later was offered a position closer to home.
- Re-advertised.
- Five applications, three attended for interview, one offered the position.
- Lasted until mid-term, offered position closer to home.
- Have now decided to split the position between two internal teachers on part-time hours.

### **French & Spanish - Parental Leave**

- Application for eight weeks of parental leave.
- Advertised both French and Spanish separately.
- Two applications for French, neither showed for interview.
- Three applications for Spanish, one showed for interview, unqualified for our sector.
- Teacher put on notice that the leave would be cancelled as we could not get replacements.
- Two days prior to start of year heard through the grapevine of an available French teacher.
- Interviewed him and offered him the position and offered the Spanish element to the unqualified teacher.
- The teacher was given the go ahead for the leave.
- Three weeks later the French teacher left to take up a position closer to home.
- Re-arranged the timetable of an internal teacher with limited senior cycle experience of teaching French to cover the French. This then required two substitutes to cover her timetable.

### **Physical Education - Maternity Leave**

- Advertised the position.
- Eleven applications, nine showed for interview. Eight were panelled.
- Position offered to first on list, accepted, two weeks later took up employment closer to home.
- Worked down through the panelled list.
- Applicant number eight finally took up the position.

### **Gaeilge– Job-Share**

- Advertised position. Three applicants showed for interview.
- One deemed suitable.
- Offered the position, accepted, one week later accepted position with a greater number of hours.
- Re-advertised position.
- Two applicants showed for interview.
- Position offered and accepted by one of these.

### **Gaeilge - Sick Leave**

- Teacher required emergency surgery the week before school began, was out until the end of October.
- Advertised the position, no replies.
- Rang other schools and Colleges.
- Unearthed a teacher, offered her the position.
- Three weeks later she left to take up a longer term position in the ETB.
- Re-arranged the timetables of four internal teachers to cover the Gaeilge with a lot of knock on effects.

### **French - Maternity Leave**

- Teacher just left on maternity leave at mid-term.
- Advertised the position. No replies.
- Re-arranged the timetables of three internal teachers with knock on effects.
- The teacher returning from parental leave was given all French classes with the Spanish substitute teacher remaining on to cover her Spanish classes.

### **Ag-Science – Sick Leave**

- Teacher on sick leave for the last five weeks.
- Advertised for a replacement.
- Two Ag-science replies, one showed for interview.

- He is already teaching in a grind school and cannot cover all the classes.
- Offered him the position.
- Re-arranged the timetable of another ag-science teacher to cover the remaining classes.

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Observations from Principals re short term vacancies – leave, sickness etc.**

- 1 When staff worked for SEC 16/17 we couldn't find teachers of the required subject.
- 2 On occasions we had to use S&S for certified leave due to lack of Subs.
- 3 In rural Ireland it is impossible to find a sub and the opt out from S&S is having a detrimental effect on our school.
- 4 We advertised for Maths Maternity – got left down at last minute -advertised again. Got a teacher who started but driving an hour and doesn't want to continue in winter. Have advertised again and have NO REPLIES.
- 5 Very difficult to get casual subs. S &S gets used up very fast.
- 6 Have 2 Maternity leaves coming up in Nov (History)and Dec (Irish). Dreading it.
- 7 I have juggled my time table to try to cover essential classes (eg LC French)because of difficulty getting Maternity leave sub. Anticipate having to do this again when maternity leaves come up again.
- 8 No qualified replacements – filled through S&S except Science.
- 9 For Maternity leave Home Economics we have advertised 4 times starting in June. The latest ad has yielded no applicants. One teacher came for one day before being offered a better position. At present have employed a teacher who can only do 3 days a week. Using Art and RE teacher to plug the gaps.
- 10 Irish Maternity Leaves 15/16 and 16/17 – no candidates applied and had to reorganise the Irish Dept and luckily had a PME student with Irish.
- 11 We have no suitable or qualified subs on our books and currently covering with PME students.
- 12 We took on a teacher of Home Economics in an RPT position because we knew we wouldn't fill the Carers Leave without doing so. We had no teacher for 3 months.
- 13 The greatest difficulty is finding suitably qualified cover which arises when the absence is due to illness and the period of cover required is unknown.
- 14 It's getting more difficult to get substitute teachers for certified leave. It is impossible to get a substitute teacher to match the teaching subjects of the teacher on certified leave. If a teacher is on sick leave for more than a week parents are complaining because the classes not being taught. Modern languages, Home Economics, Physics and Irish teachers are in very short supply.
- 15 We're lucky to get someone to supervise the class, never mind someone with the subjects to teach the class.
- 16 Currently have no qualified applicant for a 6 week parental leave in Gaeilge and Home Economics. I have just received an application for paternity leave in Construction in November.
- 17 The manner in which qualified substitutes have been unavailable has led to parental queries etc particularly where Leaving Cert students are without a qualified teacher.
- 18 Advertised for general subs in September – 3 replies, only 2 suitable to employ.
- 19 Maths/Science Maternity leave – filled the position and teacher secured RPT contract elsewhere. Have advertised constantly since August – no responses at all. We have amended the timetable.
- 20 Science/Biology - Maternity Leave – 5 called to interview, 4 interviewed. Position offered to 3 candidates who all secured RPT elsewhere – 4th choice candidate took position.
- 21 French/Gaeilge sick leave covered reluctantly by a retired teacher.
- 22 I have juggled my timetable to try and cover essential classes – eg. Leaving Cert French – because of the difficulty getting Maternity Leave substitute. Recruitment process not yet finished.
- 23 I have advertised two maternity leaves (English and Religion) in the past month. I have received 4 applications – 2 of the applicants are from Northern Ireland and not registered with the Teaching Council.
- 24 The few subs that we had at the beginning of the year have all secured employment in recent weeks; left with one sub. Would be in dire straits only for the PME teachers. It is now a case of getting anyone to sit with a class, and the thought of getting a subject specific sub is away down the list of priorities.
- 25 Originally our school operated a rostering system with up to 15 qualified teachers across a broad subject spectrum available for substitution. In the past number of years it has become increasing difficult and frustrating to operate any type of roster. Numerous phone calls are made every morning in the search for a suitable teacher. At times it's on a favour basis which is unsustainable for all concerned.
- 26 Any kind of sub was a treasure. We couldn't find any subs from November. Shuffling around the timetable was a disaster.

## Appendix 7

### (ii) General Scheme of an Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill 2016

ACCS welcomes the spirit of the Charter for Parent and Student. The Charter brings clarity to the expectations of the educational provision provided in schools. However, in placing such a Charter on a legislative footing it is necessary to be aware of the responsibility placed on each individual school Board of Management in developing their Charter. It is also important to ensure that the procedures that flow from such a Charter are not cumbersome and must be possible to complete in a timely and cost effective manner for all parties involved.

We would remark that in our schools there are systems in place that work very effectively to ensure that students and parents have their grievances / complaints addressed promptly and fairly.

The current code of practice in our sector for dealing with complaints is an agreed code between the following partners:

- The Parents Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools (PACCS)
- The two teacher unions: ASTI and TUI
- The Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)

Our experience to date with a national system developed (that superseded a sectoral system) to deal with Section 24.3 of the Education Act 1998 (Procedures for Suspension and Dismissal of Teachers) has been problematical.

- Time: Competence / Conduct issues that proceed through the stages of the procedure to the end will take from in excess of one year to in excess of two years to complete.
- Cost: Inevitably, legal costs are incurred by schools in the later stages of the procedure.
- There are several stages to progress through in order to reach a satisfactory outcome.

The Guidelines to be developed need to be fit for purpose and school boards will need adequate resources of time and finance to develop and implement the procedures.

The vast majority of schools operate in a very caring and inclusive environment within current structures.

Comments:

#### **Head 3:**

*2 (v) Consulting students and parents regularly in relation to school costs and working to avoid costs acting as a barrier to participation;*

- In the Community & Comprehensive Sector there are no fees and costs will never be a barrier to participation.
- We are unsure what is envisaged in this 'consultation'.
- The majority of Community and Comprehensive Schools operate book rental schemes and/or free book schemes to ensure the cost of texts are not a burden on families.
- The most recent survey of parents carried out at the request of the Minister of the Day showed the vast majority of students and parents were happy with uniform arrangements in our schools. They were seen as cost effective.
- Schools have been starved of finance over the past seven years. There has been an 11% cut in funding from the DES. Any legislation needs to be cognisant of the fact that schools are not in the business of wasting money and urgently need an increase in Capitation Funding to retain essential services.

*2 (x) Operating quality assurance;*

We request further clarification on this statement. Is this based on School Self-Evaluation / External Inspectorate Evaluation or is there a role envisaged for QQI here?

We believe that the role and responsibility of the parent needs further clarification in the Charter.

We would recommend the following paragraph to be inserted as follows:

*2 (xv) Parents will co-operate with the Parent and Student Charter and recognise their responsibilities to be active and involved in their child's education.*

**Head 4:**

*12 (i) how boards may respect student voice having regard to the age and experience of the students.*

We support real engagement between the Student Council and the Board of Management. This engagement is already happening in many schools with the Board receiving regular reports from the Student Council or indeed the Board meeting with the Student Council.

Our experience is that an active Student Council can be a powerful positive influence on the culture and student experience in a school. We encourage and commend the excellent work of these councils.

School boards have onerous governance responsibilities. It is not appropriate that minors be involved in making decisions regarding employment, discipline, finance.

**Head 6:**

We have experience of the intervention of the Ombudsman for Children in decisions of boards. Any investigations, findings and recommendations of the Ombudsman are, to our knowledge, very seriously considered by our boards and our schools accept the recommendations and advice given.

We expect that the Minister would rarely be required to give a direction in writing to the board in relation to matters conveyed to the Minister by the Ombudsman for Children.

**Head 7:**

*Re the deletion of Section 9 (2) of the Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002.*

Since Section 28 will be enacted on foot of this Bill, it appears that, for the first time, the paragraph 9 (2) makes sense. By deleting it could it be interpreted that the Ombudsman could become involved in an issue prior to the school having finalised procedures under Section 28?

## Appendix 7

### **(iii) Education (Amendment) Bill 2015 The creation of the role of Ombudsman for Education**

The need to establish a specific Ombudsman for Education would appear to be questionable when its purpose is considered against what is already in place. There are already multiple agencies who hear appeals / conduct investigations against the decisions of Boards of Management:

Section 29 appeals heard on behalf of the Secretary General of the DES against suspensions, expulsions, non-admittance;

The Ombudsman for Children will investigate administrative actions of a school, whether a board is following its policies, whether these policies are fair and whether the decisions made by the board have a negative / adverse effect on the child;

The Teaching Council can investigate issues of professional conduct / competence of teachers;

An Appeal procedure has been Incorporated into the New Model for Allocation of Support to Children with Special Educational Needs;

The DES Inspectorate will inspect schools around teaching & learning and the efficacy of school management;  
Tusla can investigate child protection issues;

There are very few issues and decisions made by Boards of Management that cannot be challenged through an appeal system.

To now consider placing another mechanism (Ombudsman for Education) into the mix could very well serve to confuse the system for parents, students and schools. Also, at a time when there are so many competing demands on the education budget, the establishment of a new office, with all its related costs, would seem unnecessary. As well as the costs related to the office itself, schools would require substantial extra resources and supports. Schools do not have capacity to extend their existing resources any further.

Perhaps now is the time to examine if there are any 'gaps' in the existing mechanisms where the decision of a board of management can go unchallenged rather than add another layer to what is already a very complex, time consuming, costly system of appeals / investigations. We would recommend the establishment of a working group/forum of all partners to determine existing 'gaps' and to consider a mechanism to deal with them within existing structures.

#### **Performance of functions:**

*Section 64 (2): have regard to the best interests of the child concerned*

While this is an important consideration, within a school setting the best interests of other children in the grouping/ class must also be considered.

#### **Function to promote rights and welfare of children:**

Section 65 (1) – (6):

There are several other agencies/ public bodies/departments already in existence who have responsibility for these functions:

The Department of Education & Skills

Túsla

Ombudsman for Children

#### **Appeals**

Section 66

This Bill proposes that the Ombudsman for Education '*may direct any person that appropriate remedial action shall, where necessary, be taken as a consequence of an appeal to the Ombudsman for Education and the Ombudsman may specify the appropriate remedial action*'.

There are already multiple agencies who hear appeals / conduct investigations against the decisions of Boards of Management.

## Appendix 7

### (iv) Tuairisc ar Oideachas Gaeltachta 2018 Ag Caomhnú na Gaeltachta

Ó foilsíodh an t-Acht Oideachais 1998 tá dualgaisí reachtúla ar scoileanna Gaeltachta an Ghaeilge agus pobail Gaeltachta a chaomhnú.

D'fhoilsigh an Rialtas straitéis fiche bliain don Ghaeilge i 2010 ach is beag a tharla sna blianta beaga ina dhiaidh sin. Ó 2016 ar aghaidh tháinig feabhas agus tá obair thabachtach ar siúl sna Gaeltachtaí ó shin. Bunaíodh coistí áitiúla chun pleananna teanga a fhorbairt. Tá a bhformhór sin dreachtaithe anois agus tá maoiniú (teoranta) dhá chur ar fail le iad a chur i gcríoch.

Foilsíodh an Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta I nDeire Fomhair 2016. Tá sé soiléar gur cuireadh go leor iarracht agus oibre isteach son bpolasaí seo. Léirigh sé staid na Gaeilge i Scoileanna Gaeltachta agus na mór dhubhláin atá le sárú.

Chun a bheith aitheanta mar scoil Ghaeltachta do réir an pholasaí bhí ar chuile scoil lonnaithe son nGaeltachtacht suim a léiriú a bheith páirteach son scéim roimh Samhraidh 2017.

I rith an téarma Mean Fomhair – Nollaig 2017 thug cigirí ón Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna cuairt ar na scoileanna chun eolas a bhailiú agus chun tuairimí a mhalartú.

Bhí ar chuile scoil iarratas oifigiúil a dheanamh ar a bheith aitheanta mar scoil Ghaeltachta roimh an 31/01/2018. Is é sprioc an Pholasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta go mbeidh oideachas ar ard chaighdeán trí mhean na Gaeilge ar fáil do na daoine óga uilig atá ina gcónaí son nGaeltacht.

Seo a leanas na tacaíochtaí a bhéas ar fail do réir an pholasaí:

1. Struchtúr an tsoláthair oideachais a láidriú
2. Feabhas a chur ar cháilíocht an teagaisc trí Ghaeilge
3. Cumas ceannairí scoile agus bainistíocht scoile a fhorbairt
4. Feabhas a chur ar an geucaclam don Ghaeilge
5. Feabhas a chur ar acmhainní agus tacaí teanga
6. Soláthar oideachais sna luathbhlianta a láidriú
7. Feasacht a fhorbairt, cumarsáid a dhéanamh le tuismitheoirí, agus tacú leo.

Chun an polasaí a chuir i gcríoch tá Aonad nua Gaeltachta bunaithe son Roinn Oideachais agus scileanna. Is cigirí ón áonad seo mar aon le COGG a bhéas ag tabhairt tacaíocht do scoileanna agus a chinnteós go bhfuil scoileanna ag leannacht a bplean oibre.

Bunaíodh Coiste Comhairleach um Polasaí Oideachas Gaeltachta chun tacú le agus comhairle a thabhairt don Aonad Gaeltachta. Tá ionadaithe ó na páirtithe Oideachais go léir ar an gcoiste seo.

Deir an sean fhocal gur tús maith leath na h-oibre, sílim go bhfuil tús maith curtha leis an obair chun an Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta a chur i bhfeidhm.

*An t-Úas. Tomás Ó Nídh.*