

IPPN's Statement on Teacher Supply (Aug 2023)

IPPN is acutely aware of and concerned about the challenges schools are facing with regard to recruiting their full complement of teachers for the new school year. As you know, over the last number of years, IPPN has consistently highlighted the issues school leaders have faced in securing substitute cover for teacher absence and we have sought and secured measures that would alleviate those issues. This year however, the issue of teacher supply seems to be reaching crisis level, especially in urban areas.

Schools have been engaged in recruitment campaigns since May and throughout the summer months in an effort to fill their teaching posts, with large numbers of schools reporting that they still have unfilled posts. The shortfall in the number of teachers will compromise the ability of schools to meet the needs of all pupils, as school leaders will be forced to ensure that they have teachers for all mainstream classes, meaning they will have a reduced cohort of Special Education Teachers, if any, to work with children with additional needs.

While it is common for schools to still be recruiting at this time of year, the numbers of unfilled posts, particularly in specific areas of the country, are significantly higher than they were this time last year. This is despite the much-earlier release of teacher allocation information to schools this year.

For example in Dublin last week, there were 154 mainstream class teacher positions advertised on Educationposts.ie. The posts were either permanent or fixed-term (full-year positions) and yet they remain unfilled the week before schools are due to open. On the equivalent date last year there were only 38 such posts advertised on the site. That is more than a fourfold increase on last year and it means that just under 4,000 pupils in Dublin alone will potentially have no teacher standing in front of them next week or whose class will have to be taught by a Special Education teacher (where one exists or can be redeployed) until such time that the permanent/fixed term teacher has been appointed.

As part of the Teacher Supply Forum, IPPN has collaborated with the Department of Education, the Teaching Council, the other education stakeholders and the teacher training colleges to introduce measures and ease restrictions that would impact positively on teacher supply and substitute availability, but there is a range of factors that is contributing to and exacerbating the current difficulties.

IPPN has developed a working paper on the issue of teacher supply [which can be accessed here](#).

In the working paper, we identified 20 contributory factors to or causes of the current situation, including:

- the unattractiveness of short-term or part-time positions
- the attractiveness of positions abroad
- the reduction in pupil teacher ratios meaning that more teachers are required,
- lack of flexibility and mobility in the sector and obviously
- the cost of housing, particularly in urban areas.

It is abundantly clear that the issue requires immediate, shorter-term solutions to manage the situation that currently presents but it also requires a number of medium and longer-term solutions to break this cycle of teacher under-supply.

Things that could be done that would have an immediate impact include:

- allowing schools to create full-time posts for TP release time, SET, EAL posts
- allowing schools to create full-time fixed-term posts from maternity/paternity, parental and parents' leave posts
- encouraging foreign-qualified NQTs to apply for longer-term substitute positions e.g. cluster posts for TP release time
- extending arrangements to allow teachers qualified abroad to register with the Teaching Council and for NQTs to complete induction through Droichead
- introducing a 'budgeted substitute hours' system to group unused substitute hours together into full-time posts.

Medium to longer-term solutions include:

- attracting Irish-qualified teachers to return to fill Irish teaching posts by facilitating entitlement to increments and payment of pension contributions
- establishing Irish teaching jobs fairs in the UK, Netherlands, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Australia and New Zealand (and other jurisdictions with strong English-language skills such as Nordic countries)
- further increasing capacity for HEI teacher education courses at under- and post-graduate levels
- facilitating the development of subsidised high-quality housing for young professionals in the public sector such as newly-qualified teachers, nurses, doctors, gardaí in urban areas

All the education stakeholders acknowledge that the issue of teacher supply is both serious and complex, that it cannot be resolved locally by school leaders and Boards of Management and that it will require multi-agency and multi-department intervention at government level.

IPPN will continue to collaborate with the education partners and other relevant agencies and departments to ensure progress on this issue, both in terms of managing the circumstances that present currently, as well as working to better ensure that we always have a requisite supply of highly trained competent teachers available to meet the needs of the children in our schools.