



Minister Helen McEntee,
Department of Education and Youth,
Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1.

22nd September 2025

Dear Minister McEntee,

We are writing as a group of organisations representing primary and special school management, staff, parents, and children to update you on an urgent situation in our schools.

All of our organisations welcomed the increase in the basic capitation rate for primary schools from €200 to €224 in the 2025 budget, and the introduction of free schoolbooks and meals despite the additional strain on leadership and management capacity these schemes placed on schools. These are important measures towards ensuring a quality education for all children.

We know that you understand how important it is that schools are adequately funded to meet their day to day running costs, and we welcome that this is a commitment in the programme for Government. We also welcome your commitment to a new DEIS plus scheme targeting schools who serve the most acutely disadvantaged communities in Ireland.

Unfortunately, school costs have risen significantly in recent years, and despite the increase in capitation from September, most primary schools have returned again this school year to an increasingly challenging situation, as they try to budget for energy, insurance, materials, ICT, staff training, cleaning, maintenance, water and other costs that have risen sharply in recent years.

A detailed analysis of 2018/19 and 2023/24 primary school accounts (707 school sample) commissioned by CPSMA showed:

- Expenditure on heating is up 83% over the period and water / refuse costs up 51%. Utility costs now consume 6.1% of expenditure compared to 3.3% in 2019.
- Other areas which show significant increases are accounting and auditing expenses (up 58%) and school management information systems (up 199%).
- The average primary school is now €17,000 in deficit on capitation-related income and expenditure.

During the last school year, requests for support from schools facing financial difficulties continued, despite cost-of-living measures delivered. This year balancing the books looks almost impossible for most schools at the current level of basic capitation.

That is why our organisations have come together to outline the urgent need for:

- An immediate increase in the basic capitation rate to at least €299 per pupil
- A substantial increase across all other categories of pupil capitation, minor works, ICT and ancillary grant rates
- A detailed analysis of the actual running costs of certain categories of school that are facing additional cost challenges: e.g. developing schools in temporary accommodation, schools with special classes and special schools.

We know that you are aware of the challenges facing schools, and most of us have already communicated these challenges to you and your officials in meetings and in our pre-budget submissions. But the ongoing reality we are seeing from schools and families has caused us to reiterate our serious concerns.

Like you, we are committed to free primary and special education for all children. We know that you understand that when schools are not adequately funded, this impacts directly on children and families – and especially on those in disadvantaged communities with less capacity for fundraising. Substantially increasing these annual grants would demonstrate clearly that the Government is serious about fully funding education, and committed to ensuring that hard-pressed families no longer find themselves being asked to prop up the education system through voluntary contributions or fundraising.

We **urgently request** you and your cabinet colleagues to make adequate provision for primary and special school funding in Budget 2025, so that all children can experience quality primary education on an equal footing.

Yours sincerely,

Caoimhín Ó hEaghra, An Foras Pátrúnachta

Ken Fennelly, Church of Ireland Board of Education

Seamus Mulconry, CPSMA

Emer Nowlan, Educate Together

Paddy Lavelle, ETBI

Andy Pike Fórsa

John Boyle, INTO

Páirc Clerkin, IPPN

Asiya Altawash, Muslim Primary Board of Education

Eileen O'Rourke, NABMSE

Niamh Dalziel St. Vincent De Paul