

The Dáil Éireann notes that:

- schools have been closed for over 130 days and the new school year is due to start in just over four weeks;
- the closure of school buildings brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic has had a very negative impact on the education of a generation of Irish children, despite the considerable efforts of parents, teachers and school staff;
- this negative impact has been felt particularly severely by vulnerable students, including children with special educational needs, children and young adults who have limited access to technology or high quality wi-fi, and young people at risk of becoming detached from education;
- delivery of July or Summer Provision for children with special educational needs has fallen far short of government announcements which callously raised the expectations of parents of children with special educational needs only to dash them and;
- the experience of parents trying to combine home schooling with working from home has been demanding and exhausting, and that the burden of has been particularly heavily felt by women.

The Dáil Éireann agrees that:

- achieving a safe and full return to school has been made particularly challenging in this State due to having among the highest-class sizes in the EU, and due to successive governments, who have underfunded and understaffed education;
- the shared objective of all involved in education is a full and safe return to schools in line with public health advice, and that this can only be delivered by way of significant and large scale investment in hygiene & PPE, staffing, funding for schools and significantly increased capacity
- parents already must spend far too much each year on the return to school, and that in the context of high unemployment and uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, any additional costs must be met by the government and not passed on to parents.

And that Dáil Éireann therefore calls on the government to:

- To immediately begin the process of drastically reducing class sizes, with the objective of achieving a pupil teacher ratio in line with the EU average of 20:1 within the lifetime of the government, and ensure that class sizes of 30 and above are abolished and never return
- Develop a dedicated strategy to prioritise those who have lost out most, including additional support for Special Education, Special Education Teachers, SNAs, as well as investment in Home School Community Liaison, Guidance Counsellors and School Completion
- The development of a well-being strategy for students, and staff, in response to the challenges of the pandemic by the National Educational Psychology Service