Main Features of Budget 2021: Education

Department of Education
14 October 2020
## Budget 2021 in numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>€8.9 billion</strong></td>
<td>2021 Budget of the Department of Education – continuing investment in our education system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,065</td>
<td>Additional teachers in the education system in 2021 over 2020, including over 400 special education needs teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18,000+</td>
<td>Special needs assistants in the education system in 2021, an increase of almost 1,000 on 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>The number of school places which will be provided by 200 large scale and additional accommodation school projects currently at construction stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>€226 million</strong></td>
<td>Funding provided specifically to support schools in their response to Covid-19 in the period January to July/August 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>€740 million</strong></td>
<td>Providing additional capacity to the school system to manage in the Covid environment and to cater for increased demographics with 23,000 extra pupil places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>€80 million</strong></td>
<td>Additional capital investment in schools in 2020 in addition to the July Covid Stimulus. The additional €80m in 2020 will allow for the ICT grant and also the minor works grant at primary level that would be due to be paid in 2021 to be paid in late 2020. The payment of these grants in 2020 will in turn facilitate an increased rollout of building projects in 2021.</td>
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</tbody>
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1 As with other Covid-19 related spending, funding for the academic year 2021/2022 will be reviewed in line with the latest public health advice available. In this regard, a central contingency reserve is being allocated in the 2021 Budget by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which includes funds earmarked for schools for the remainder of 2021 that is, August/September to December 2021.
Budgetary overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gross Allocations Budget 2021</th>
<th>Gross Allocations 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Allocations</td>
<td>2021 Covid Allocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross current</td>
<td>€8,122m</td>
<td>€232m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expenditure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross capital</td>
<td>€740m</td>
<td>€0m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expenditure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total gross</td>
<td>€8,862m</td>
<td>€232m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allocation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* €75m of this relates to Minor Works Grants funding that was paid as part of the July Stimulus Package.

Also, the 2020 allocation figures include an additional €80m capital expenditure. This amount has been agreed but has not yet been included in this Department’s Vote allocation figures within the 2021 Budget/Expenditure Report. The additional €80m in 2020 will allow for the ICT grant and also the minor works grant at primary level that would be due to be paid in 2021 to be paid in late 2020. The payment of these grants in 2020 will in turn facilitate an increased rollout of building projects in 2021.

Investment in a progressive and equitable education system

Budget 2021 aims to continue delivering a progressive and equitable education system that has the power to transform lives. It also aims to commence the delivery of the commitments set out in the *Programme for Government – Our Shared Future* in the areas of special education and social inclusion and reducing pupil teacher ratios in primary schools. Funding is included to support schools as they continue to provide educational services to our students in the face of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis including additional capital payments to be made in 2020.

The 2021 gross expenditure allocation for the Department of Education will be almost €8.9 billion, €410 million (5%) above the Department’s equivalent 2020 allocation in the *Revised Estimates Volume*[^2] Around €1.2 billion extra will be allocated to education at school level in 2021 compared to 2018 (see chart below). A supplementary chart below also highlights the additional Covid allocations by current and capital expenditure.

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[^2]: As adjusted to reflect the establishment of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the inclusion of €226 million in Covid-related funding agreed for 2021.
Schools and Special Education

Teacher numbers and demographics
The total number of teaching posts will rise by 1,065 by the end of 2021. Of these posts, a net 268 will derive from forecast demographics. 403 additional teachers will be working with children with special needs while another 394 will be new teaching posts to be created at primary level to reduce the pupil teacher ratio and class size – see below. This includes a new measure to assist schools to retain teachers while dealing with Covid-19 requirements.

Staffing schedules in primary schools
As part of continuing measures to sustain and strengthen primary schools and in accordance with a commitment in the Programme for Government to make further progress in reducing pupil teacher ratios, the staffing schedule in all primary schools will be improved by one point from September 2021 (estimated at 307 teaching posts). The effect of this change will be to
allow primary schools operating the standard staffing schedule to reduce the general average class size from 26:1 to 25:1, a historically low level.

A further 87 teaching posts will be retained at primary level due to a three-point reduction in the level of enrolments required to retain an existing teacher.

**Continuation of Covid-19 related funding for the remainder of 2020/21 school year**

As part of the *Roadmap for the Reopening of Schools* funding of €226 million is being provided to schools to meet costs relating to Covid-19. This allocation represents the balance of the €437 million package approved by Government last July and will be used to sustain school reopening, the replacement of teachers and non-teaching staff unable to attend for work due to Covid-19, additional release days for principals and deputy principals, and enhanced cleaning regimes and PPE equipment. Funding is also included for the continuation of additional educational psychological services to provide for wellbeing supports for students and additional Covid-19 supports for the transport of pupils on the school transport scheme for the current school year 2020/2021. This funding excludes the additional costs to the scheme, that are being incurred in the implementation of current public health recommendations for reduced capacity on school transport for post-primary students. Provision of this funding on a cost-recovery basis has been agreed by Government in recent weeks.

An additional capital allocation of €80 million has now been allocated for 2020 to this Department as part of the Covid response (see Capital Investment below).

As with other Covid-19 related spending, funding for the academic year 2021/2022 will be reviewed in line with the latest public health advice available. In this regard, a central contingency reserve is being allocated in the 2021 Budget by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, which includes funds earmarked for schools for the remainder of 2021 that is, August/September to December 2021.

**Special Education**

Budget 2021 includes a number of measures in support of special education. This area continues to be a priority for investment, and in 2021 in some €2 billion in funding will be provided, representing over one-fifth of the Department’s entire current budget.

Almost 1,000 additional special needs assistants (SNAs) will be allocated, bringing the total numbers to over 18,000 in 2021. This will support the roll out of the new School Inclusion Model, including a new allocation methodology for mainstream schools in the 2020/21 school year, which will ensure students with additional needs get the right supports at the right time, as well as supporting the new special class places.

An additional 145 special education teacher posts will be provided for while 235 new teachers will be recruited to work in special classes in our schools, with another 23 teachers hired for special schools.
This investment in additional teaching posts will ensure more than 1,200 new places in special classes.

Additional funding is also being provided to support the roll-out of the School Inclusion Model with further pilots being established in two extra Community Healthcare Organisation areas, as well as the current pilot area of Kildare, west Wicklow and west Dublin, as part of the expansion of the new model.

Some 80 therapists (speech and language therapists and occupational therapists) and 30 educational psychologists will be recruited to support the expansion of the new model.

The new school inclusion model is designed to provide a broader and better tailored suite of both health therapeutic (speech and language, occupational, psychological) and education supports to meet the needs of students with special and additional care needs.

Extending the project to two other Community Healthcare Organisation areas is an important continuation of this reform measure which seeks to expand on the nature and types of supports which can be offered to schools including therapy services.

**Social Inclusion**
Further supports are being provided as part of the DEIS programme to those schools catering for the highest concentrations of educational disadvantage. This will be supported by additional funding of €2 million in 2021 and €5 million in a full year and will include a 1 point reduction to the Senior Schools Urban Band 1 staffing schedule.

**Gaeltacht placement and Gaeltacht schools**
An additional €2m in funding is being provided in 2021 to pay Gaeltacht placement grants for two cohorts of students due to no placements occurring in 2020 as a result of Covid-19.

An additional €1m is also being provided for the continued implementation of the Gaeltacht education policy.

**Creativity and Arts in Education**
Additional funding of €3.5million is being provided by this Department to continue investment in the Creative Ireland and Music Generation programmes. This will bring the overall funding in this area to over €9 million in 2021.

**Pay and Pensions in the school sector**

**Public Service Stability Agreement and other pay agreements**
Arising out of the Public Service Stability Agreement, €102 million in expenditure funding has been allocated to provide for amendments to pay and pension rates for teaching and other staff in our schools.
On 1 October 2020 annualised salaries increased by 2 per cent while certain allowances were restored. The full year costs of these agreed increases are provided for in the Budget allocation.

**Payroll and pensions funding generally**

Budget 2021 includes allocations amounting to €185 million to meet ongoing pay and related requirements, including the extra school staff recruited in response to demographic changes with growing numbers of children and students attending our schools. This allocation also reflects the costs associated with the new posts referred to above (teachers, SNAs, psychologists and therapists).

An additional allocation of €58 million is being provided to meet growing superannuation requirements.

**Capital investment**

**Project Ireland 2040**

Project Ireland 2040 provides for an €8.8 billion investment in the education sector over the period 2018 to 2027. This level of funding allows investment in modern, state of the art facilities in our schools and will have a transformative impact on the education system.

**2021 Capital allocation**

The 2021 capital allocation for the Department is €740 million. Since 2016 in excess of €3 billion has been invested in the school building programme.

**Investing in schools**

The planned investment will include a capital allocation for new and more energy-efficient school buildings.

This funding will sustain the rollout of projects including some 145 projects under the large scale and additional accommodation schemes that are due to commence construction activity before July 2021.

These projects will add significant additional capacity to the school system to manage in the Covid environment and to cater for increased demographics.
This funding will also meet costs associated with some 200 school building projects currently on-site, many of which will be completed in 2021, which will deliver approximately 23,000 pupil places (additional and replacement).

An additional capital allocation of €80 million is being provided for 2020 as part of the Covid response. This further investment is in addition to the €75 million allocation announced as part of the July stimulus. The additional €80m in 2020 will allow for the ICT grant and also the minor works grant at primary level that would be due to be paid in 2021 to be paid in late 2020. This earlier payment of these grants will give schools a better lead in period for planning and operating in a Covid environment. The payment of these grants in 2020 will in turn facilitate an increased rollout of building projects in 2021.

The early payment of the ICT grant funding in 2020 is particularly important in the context of supporting schools during COVID-19. The funding can be prioritised to ensure all schools are in a position to support remote learning should it be necessary for a class or group to isolate for a limited period. The early payment of the Minor Works Grant will facilitate advance planning and commencement of early preparatory works for the coming school year.