

Thank you for your correspondence regarding class size in DEIS schools.

As Minister for Education and Skills I am committed to tackling educational disadvantage and DEIS is the Government's main policy initiative to achieve this.

One of the key supports provided is a reduced class size in Urban Band 1 DEIS schools. The programme also provides, amongst other supports, Home School Community Liaison Coordinators, DEIS grants, enhanced book grants, curriculum supports, priority access to Continuing Professional Development and the School Excellence Fund for DEIS.

Evidence from the various evaluations of the DEIS programme demonstrate that it is having a positive effect on tackling educational disadvantage and is succeeding in improving educational outcomes. My Department will spend in the region of €125 million in 2019 on the DEIS programme.

As you may be aware, the DEIS Plan acknowledges the allocation of teaching resources to DEIS primary schools with the highest concentrations of children at risk of educational disadvantage has served to improve learning outcomes. It also commits to the evaluation of the level of teaching resources for schools participating in DEIS to be undertaken to inform future policy in this area.

In order to facilitate this a Class Size Working Group was established comprising representatives from the Education Partners, the Educational Research Centre and the relevant Units within my own Department. This group met on a number of occasions to consider the optimum class size in the context of improved learning outcomes of those most at risk of educational disadvantage. The work of this group also involved the review of the available research and evidence on the effect of class size reduction as a method for tackling educational disadvantage.

A report on the work of this group is currently being finalised, and will take into consideration the feedback and observations of the working group members.

I have discussed the progress to date on this report with officials within my Department and it is intended that this Report will be finalised in the coming weeks and its findings will play a central role in future policy direction the Government will take in this area.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Joe McHugh, T.D.,
Minister for Education and Skills