



FAIR FUNDING

FOR OUR SCHOOLS

The current
levels are **not**
sustainable.

Dear parent,

We wish to remind you ahead of the local and European elections that funding for schools in the fee-charging sector remains a pressing issue. Many schools are struggling, and some politicians want to cut our funding further.

At this time of year, when canvassers are coming to your door, please take the time to brief yourself on the issues affecting our school community – and where possible, please remind your politicians that the issue is important to you.

Thank you.



How you help

Our schools **CONTRIBUTE**

By saving the taxpayer money and creating employment

1 Remember, you save the taxpayer money

There are some who like to tell parents that by sending their child to a fee-charging school, they are being subsidised by society. **Remember – that is not true.**

As parents, you pay in most cases for lighting, and heating, and insurance, and maintenance in your child's school – all costs that the state would bear in another school.

Last year, the Department of Education conceded that it would incur costs if fee-charging schools were to cease to operate – but yet some politicians remain committed to the idea that our schools should be cut until they are no longer viable. This policy hurts you, it hurts our children, and it costs the state money.

2 There's a shortage of places in free education

The Department of Education and Skills themselves calculate that they will need around 30,000 extra school places in the coming years.

Every time a fee-charging school fails to survive, that number goes up, as pupils need to find another school – further increasing the cost to the taxpayer.

Keeping our schools open and properly funded is essential not only to save the taxpayer the money you contribute via fees, but also to keep significant pressure off the free education sector.

The political parties and candidates who attack fee-charging education are risking further crisis in the education sector at large. Remind them of that.

3 Our schools are employers too

A survey last year shows that the current reduced funding for our sector has placed almost 2,000 jobs nationally at risk – as funding for teachers goes down, less money is left to employ the support staff who are vital to our schools. Unless the cuts are reversed, jobs for vital staff such as secretaries, cleaners, and other support staff will continue to be at sustained risk.

Fee-Charging schools currently have a pupil-teacher ratio of 23/1 – but this does not mean 23 students per class. The PTR determines the **overall number** of teachers in a school, and as this drops, so do the number of subjects available. The only option left is to either increase fees, or cut non-teaching staff to make up for it.



Why we need fair funding

Small schools are suffering

Many of our fee-charging schools are small schools that serve a specific religious or cultural community. At the current funding level, many of these schools are suffering cuts and pressures that are simply unsustainable.

This is discriminatory and must stop.

The number of teachers allocated to us affects crucial issues like subject choice, class sizes and extra-curricular activities.

At 23/1, and after years of cutbacks, all our schools are suffering.

Our children are equal

All of our children should be treated equally.
And they should be funded equally.

Some politicians suggest that our children should be stripped of funding because we send them to fee-charging schools. This is a surprisingly popular view in certain parties.

But our children are equal, and we already save the state money. We want every child funded equally, and the state to make that commitment. Please raise this with your politicians.

What do we want? 21 to one

Our schools suffered cutbacks with the allocation of teachers being increased from 19 to 1 to 23 to 1. This is a cut of over TWENTY PER CENT in funding to the fee-charging sector.

This cut is not sustainable for fee charging schools in the long term. Some politicians would like to cut us further – but we need to go back to 21/1 at minimum to be sustainable.

Cuts in front line education do not increase opportunity or equality, despite what some politicians try to say. Targeting fee-charging schools does not improve the quality of education for anybody in any school in the country – and pursuing an ideology that does not improve education for all is foolhardy in the extreme. We want fairness for our schools, and for our children to be treated equally. Returning to the 21/1 funding level is a necessary first step in that process.

How can we HELP

Your school would never endorse or support a political party or candidate.

However, we need to persuade all politicians of our cause. And we need the help of all parents.

TALK TO POLITICIANS

With local elections coming up, we have a unique opportunity to talk to politicians on the doorsteps. We need you to remind them that fee charging schools are still suffering.

Some tips:

- *Be polite, and be bold. Remember, when you send your child to our schools, you are saving the taxpayer money. The Department of Education accepts this. So why would politicians want to cut your child's funding?*
- *Don't be ashamed: Some people feel it's morally wrong, or something to be embarrassed about, that you send your child to a fee-charging school – but it's not. Other parents choose grinds. Or music lessons. Or the Gaeltacht. They are not attacked for spending money on their child's future, so why should you be?*
- *Ask specific questions: Will their party, or they as an independent, rule out any further cuts to fee charging schools? Will they support a return to 21/1?*
- *Tell them it's **important**: Remember, many people have concerns about specific issues, but those issues are not always what they vote on. Always tell a politician how important the issue is to you, so he knows it may sway your vote.*

Thank you

We know as parents that you care about your children's futures – and so do we. We've sent you this document because as a group of fee-charging schools, we're concerned about the future, and we're asking you for your help. We need our politicians to know that our schools are under threat, and to commit to action. Please take the time when they come to your door to mention this to them.



**JMB AMCSS
SECRETARIAT**

This document is published by the Fee Charging Schools Sub-Committee of the Joint Managerial Body ©2014.