



CSSC finance survey findings

In light of recent cuts to the education budget, CSSC asked controlled schools about the current funding pressures they are facing due to a reduction in funding.

The survey took place at the end of October 2017. 98 member schools (17.5%) responded and the findings are outlined below.

If you have any queries with regard this paper, please contact:

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What steps, to date, has your school had to take to keep within your allocated budget?

The qualitative responses to this question can be grouped under four main headings:



Staff

- Identify potential redundancies
- Not replacing staff who retire/leave (teachers, secretarial, admin, classroom assistants, lunchtime supervisors and vice principals)
- No use of substitutes
- Vice Principal/Principal covering classes when teachers are off
- “running on skeleton staff”
- Reducing classroom assistant hours.



Teaching and learning

- Reduction in curricular offer
- Reduction in extracurricular activities
- Increased class sizes
- Less school trips
- Reduced visits to other schools (e.g. shared education activities)
- Reduction in competition entries.



Cuts to resources

- Basic school maintenance not completed; health and safety work only.
- Cuts to teaching and learning resources (e.g. books, classroom spend, ICT, equipment)
- No unnecessary spending – essential only.



Income generation/fundraising activities

- Increased reliance in school fund
- Increase in attempts to generate school funds
- Parents asked for contributions (stationery etc.)
- Increased reliance on PTA fundraising
- School fundraising activities
- Income generation (e.g. hiring out rooms).
- Cannot access savings

What steps will you be taking to alleviate the financial pressure caused by the recent reduction in funding to schools?

We asked principals what future steps they anticipated taking to alleviate the financial pressure caused by the recent reduction in funding.

Many principals commented that it simply was not possible to cut anymore without impacting on core activities and hence the quality of the teaching and learning provided:

“We have trimmed all the fat off the bones of the school. We are financially efficient and our PTR is as increased as possible. It is difficult to see how any further savings can be effected without reducing the curricular offer or axing core activities”.

“We are at 'rock bottom' in all areas of the budget - no room to make further cuts!”

“We are all at the point that there is no more cutting to be done, without affecting service delivery on terms or choice and substance.”

“Difficult to see where further cuts can be made if the curriculum is to be covered and pupils adequately resourced”.

Many made comments about the impact of curtailing the curricular offer and indeed other programmes and initiatives the school offers. In particular SEN provision and the classroom assistants who provide this support were mentioned as one of the activities to be cut back as a result of budget restrictions. This is potentially damaging for children with special needs and learning difficulties:

“The SEN staff will have to go and we have almost 100 pupils on our SEN register requiring support...These pupils who are the most vulnerable will not have their needs met”.

Shared education programmes, counselling services, IT provision, languages and music classes were also mentioned amongst the programmes schools had cut.

In some cases principals commented that they simply could not cut anymore, even if they exceeded their budgetary spend, due to the significant negative impact it would have on the education offered by the school:

“The quality of education provided for the children must remain the same regardless of the reduction in the budget”.

“We cannot take any further steps without seriously compromising the education and welfare of the children”.

“The only thing we could possibly do is remove the SEN provision but that won't even come close to sorting the problem so why on earth would we do that? We'll still be in financial trouble AND we'll have no SEN support. To make any further teaching redundancies would force the Board of Governors to breach health and safety legislation”.

Some principals commented on the knock-on impact on their own and their staff's mental health and wellbeing:

"I find myself spending a considerable degree of time supporting staff emotionally as the negativity in general terms within education at present is having a significant negative impact on all of us".

"I (the principal) may be teaching 3 days next year - this is only going to put more pressure on me and a strain on my mental health and wellbeing, not to mention the stresses of possible redundancies".