

Dear Parent/Guardian

18th November 2008

As principal of Newpark Comprehensive School, I would like to draw your attention to the likely effect in this school of some of the education cutbacks proposed in the budget.

- **The pupil teacher ratio in non fee-paying schools is increased from 18:1 to 19:1.**

In terms of the staffing schedule in this school it is likely that we will lose at least 2.5 teachers or the equivalent of reducing the weekly timetable by 84 periods of 40 minutes per week. This will impact seriously on the curriculum offered to students in the following ways:

1. Senior cycle with small numbers may not be offered.
2. Classes divided in higher and ordinary level in some subjects may need to be amalgamated into the one class.
3. The provision of stand alone foundation level classes in certain subjects will not be possible.
4. The range of subjects in Transition year will be curtailed.

- **Substitution cover for absences arising from uncertified sick leave as well as absences for official school business is abolished from January 2009.**

This will mean that the following activities may be seriously affected:

1. Curricular field trips in Leaving Certificate Geography, Art and Biology as replacement cover may not be available.
2. Difficulties with subject inspections and whole school evaluations as cover will not be permitted when inspectors are meeting teachers.
3. Difficulties with sports events and extra curricular activities where teachers accompanying outings cannot be covered. So for example the 2nd year Aran trip is put in jeopardy by this decision.

- **School book grants are abolished except in DEIS schools.**

At present about 80 students receive assistance towards the cost of books. This group includes those who are on medical cards and also those who find themselves in financial difficulty through changed circumstances. The cost of books is substantial especially in First and Fifth year. This is an extra burden on families who are already finding it difficult. The government must be aware that there are disadvantaged students in all schools and that many parents will now struggle to provide their son/daughter with the books and equipment to make the most of their time in school.

- **Programme grants for the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme and the Transition Year Programme are abolished.**

The school will lose approximately €18000 in funding towards transition year and the Leaving Certificate Applied programmes which provide great educational benefit in a positive and holistic way. The lack of funding will seriously diminish the effectiveness of the programmes

- **Increased charges will be in place for School Transport from July 2009. The previous rate of €168 for a junior student and €234 for a snior student (payable per term) has been increased to a single annual payment of €300.**

The increase in expense for parents is most unwelcome and in addition the charge has to be paid in one go.

- **Examination fees payable to the State Examinations Commission will increase by 8%.**

This will be an additional burden on parents not holding a medical card.

On behalf of Newpark Comprehensive School I am writing to draw the attention of parents and guardians to the practical effects of these proposed changes.

Yours sincerely

Derek Lowry
Principal