

## **KEY LABOUR PROPOSALS FOR EDUCATION**

Labour will allocate a minimum additional amount of €140 million to Education in 2021 for new policy measures above existing levels of public spending adjusted for demographics, prioritising the following:

- **make primary education genuinely free-of-charge**, including free schoolbooks (€20m in first year), a uniform grant and healthy school meals.
- **end the two-tier pay system for teachers and school secretaries and end pay inequality for new entrants through the next public sector pay deal from 2021.**
- **continue to expand the provision of Special Needs Assistants** in schools.
- **reduce primary class sizes to the EU average by 2025** on a cost-neutral basis and provide for additional funding after Census 2021 if required.
- **reduce DEIS class sizes** in proportion to reductions in regular class sizes and substantially increase capitation. Doubling DEIS capitation would cost €23m.
- **progressively and sustainably reduce the cost of secondary and third level education.**
  - As a first step we would seek to reduce the student registration fee by €500 in the 2021 Budget to €2,500. This would cost approximately €13m in the first year and the full year cost would be €40m.
  - Expand the non-adjacent rate of the SUSI grant to 24km, up from 45km. Costing approximately €9m in first year, €26m in a full year.
  - Increase the annual level of SUSI grants to reflect increased living costs at a minimum increase to the rate of inflation. A 10% increase would be €6m in first year, €18m in a full year.
- **support the development of Technological Universities and deliver the long-awaited Technological University of the South-East.**
- **develop an implementation strategy to increase university funding.**
- **roll out a capital investment scheme to provide all schools and colleges with solar panels and retrofitting of the school building stock.**

## **MANIFESTO COMMITMENTS**

**Labour's vision:** Under Labour, the Department of Education and Skills will make primary education genuinely free of charge, and will set out a strategy so that cost never stops a person fulfilling their potential through lifelong education. The Department will identify how to progressively and sustainably reduce third level fees.

### **PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**Labour will end the two-tier pay system for teachers and school secretaries.**

**Labour will reduce primary class sizes to the EU average by 2025 on a cost-neutral basis.** This is possible because a reducing population of children is lowering the demand for primary school places, creating the opportunity to move towards European norms on smaller class sizes. These are especially beneficial for children with special needs or who do not have English as a first language.

**Labour will strengthen supports for schoolchildren to learn European languages,** including opportunities for teachers to work abroad for a term to improve their own foreign language competence. The skill of languages is essential for Ireland as part of the EU and the world market.

**Labour will examine the introduction of local flexibility for school starting times** to better align the schedules of parents and students while also reducing the numbers commuting at peak-times

**Labour will require all schools to develop and enforce a policy on smartphone use by pupils.**

**Labour will require education on sex and relationships in all schools to be objective and inclusive.**

### **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

**Labour will continue to implement the programme for changing patronage of primary schools,** to provide parental choice and to recognise the growing diversity in the population.

**Labour will ban state-funded schools from selling land or other school properties without the permission of the Minister.**

**Labour will progressively remove state subsidies from the 7% of secondary schools that are private fee-paying.** At present, access to highly competitive university education is dominated by students from private schools who have an unfair advantage of having additional resources from fees combined with teachers whose salaries are paid by society as a whole. Labour wants all schools to foster excellence and to provide genuine equality of opportunity to access university courses, further education and apprenticeships.

**Labour will reduce DEIS class sizes in proportion to reductions in regular class sizes, and increase capitation to DEIS schools.**

**Labour will continue to expand the provision of Special Needs Assistants in schools.** We will set continuously higher targets for school improvements in literacy and numeracy. These basic skills are the foundation for social inclusion and access to later opportunities, and Labour will push for every child to have a sufficient level of literacy and numeracy, regardless of their background.

**Labour will conduct a review, and implement its findings, to ensure that the teaching of history in secondary education is adequate,** including the option of restoring history as a mandatory subject.

**Labour will require all schools to ensure children receive a minimum number of hours of physical activity every week.** This will reduce obesity and improve physical and mental health. Physical activity can include formal PE but also initiatives like “Daily Mile” walks and runs, bike-to-school schemes and walking buses.

### **REDUCING THE COST OF EDUCATION**

**Labour will progressively and sustainably reduce the cost of secondary and third level education.** Everyone should have the opportunity to learn and to develop, at any age and regardless of their background. Core education from pre-primary through to third level should be genuinely free of charge, and lifelong education should always be affordable.

**Labour will also expand the non-adjacent rate of the SUSI grant to 24km, up from 45km.**

### **HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Labour will support the development of Technological Universities and deliver the long-awaited Technological University of the South- East.** We will build on our work with stakeholders in the north-east to support DKIT to develop Technological University status with partner institutes.

**Labour will develop an implementation strategy to increase university funding,** for both teaching and research, building on the recommendations of the Cassells report. Third level research is part of the engine of long-term economic growth and it is essential for Ireland’s future prosperity. Labour will investigate drawing on the National Training Fund and other sources of funding to find a sustainable way to end the current crisis of funding at third level, and to reduce casualisation of staff in this sector. This implementation strategy will include a review of the third-level grant system, including its assessment process, to ensure grants are better targeted at those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.