



15 December 2022

Dear Principal

As we approach the end of this first term I am sure you are looking forward to a well-deserved break over the Christmas and New Year period.

This letter highlights a number of important updates as we continue as a school community to support the arrival of children and young people from Ukraine and other countries who are seeking international protection.

Many schools have enrolled and welcomed children and young people from Ukraine and from other countries in recent months. To date (December 2022) over 13,000 children have been enrolled in our schools - approximately 8,500 at primary and 4,800 at post-primary. This is a very significant achievement on the part of the schools and their communities. The Department wishes to thank the entire school community for the warm welcome which you have extended to children and young people and their families in these difficult circumstances.

Key point summary:

- 1. School communities around the country have enrolled over 13,000 children and young people in schools since the outbreak of the war in February.*
- 2. It is likely that some families will continue to be moved to new accommodation in the coming months.*
- 3. The goal of the education response is to ensure inclusion of all children and young people enrolled in schools.*
- 4. It is vital to the effectiveness of the education response that all schools update POD and PPOD as soon as children have enrolled in a school or who have left a school.*
- 5. Where schools are experiencing significant capacity pressures in enrolling Ukrainian children and young people, they should contact their local REALT (Regional Education and Language Team).*
- 6. A new capacity survey issued to all post-primary schools on Monday 12 December.*
- 7. The REALT role has been extended to include non-Ukrainian arrivals, ensuring one clear and comprehensive system for identification of school places and assistance with supports which will streamline the process for children and young people, their families and schools.*
- 8. Schools are reminded of the processes which apply for additional EAL (English as an Additional Language) resources as well as SEN (Special Educational Needs) supports.*

9. *New guidance is available to schools in relation to supporting Ukrainian children and young people who wish to access the online curriculum in Ukraine.*
10. *NEPS (National Education Psychology Service) have updated their guidance in relation to wellbeing for Ukrainian students.*

As the war continues in Ukraine, it is expected that people will continue to arrive over the coming months. The profile of the people arriving from Ukraine continues to be mainly women and children, with children and young people of school-going age making up approximately 28% of all arrivals. The swift response and welcome from school communities are a critical part of the national response to supporting Ukrainian people in Ireland.

The Department has also been advised by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), which has responsibility for providing emergency accommodation for people arriving from Ukraine or those seeking international protection, that from time to time, it is likely that some families will be moved from their current accommodation due to the short-term and temporary nature of their placement. Schools are advised that some families may be required to move location to access other accommodation.

In order to continue to help to plan and support schools with additional pupils and students it is really important that POD and PPOD are updated to include details on children who have either enrolled in a school or who have left a school.

School Capacity

It is acknowledged that many schools have already demonstrated flexibility and employed innovative solutions to accommodate additional numbers during the school year. Where schools are coming under pressure in terms of available capacity, members of the Regional Education and Language Teams (REALT) can work with individual schools on a case by case basis to explore the possible options. Regional representatives from the school management bodies and from the Inspectorate are most likely to be of assistance in this work. These teams are facilitated by a REALT co-ordinator. Contact e-mail and phone numbers are available on gov.ie - Information for schools – Ukraine (www.gov.ie) Through this work, the intention is to continue to support schools to include and welcome these students to the greatest extent practicable.

As part of this work, the Department's Planning and Building Unit can provide support and assistance to schools in relation to any necessary works to facilitate reconfiguration of existing accommodation to create additional capacity. Grant funding is also available, as required, for furniture and equipment. Applications for reconfiguration works can be sent to ASAapplications@education.gov.ie and for furniture and equipment to furnitureequipment@education.gov.ie .

Where additional capacity is needed, after maximising all available capacity in an area, this will be primarily dealt with by way of modular accommodation solutions for September 2023

that will also deal with wider needs in terms of mainstream demographics and provision for students with special educational needs.

Post-Primary Schools Capacity Survey

A new capacity survey issued to all post-primary schools on Monday 12 December 2022 to determine current capacity and a survey of primary schools is planned for the new year. The last such surveys had response rates of 100% each. Your co-operation with this survey at what we know is a busy time is very much appreciated.

REALTs

As part of measures to support families fleeing the war in Ukraine the Department of Education established Regional Education and Language Teams (REALT). The primary role of the REALT is to assist children and young people in finding school places and to support schools in the area to meet the needs of these children and young people as they emerge, to advise and support the Department in developing new capacity where required, and to co-ordinate the provision of education services to children and families across their defined area. These teams ensure that clear, accessible information flows are in place between schools, local education support services and national support structures in relation to arrivals from Ukraine.

The REALT role has been extended to include non-Ukrainian arrivals, ensuring one clear and comprehensive system for identification of school places and assistance with supports which will streamline the process for children and young people, their families and schools. It should be noted that the REALT coordinator provides only operational support and the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) continues to have responsibility for the child to ensure access to education in line with the provisions of the EU Directive.

Additional supports for English language and special education needs

The focus for all new arrivals in our schools at this time, including students with special educational needs (SEN), has been on supporting them to be placed early in a school setting and giving them the opportunity to settle in. This is with the intention of helping them to adapt and adjust to their new environment, new home and new school. This has included the provision of access to practical supports and assistance to settle in and make friends.

Schools were previously notified of the arrangements for applying for English as an Additional Language (EAL) supports for the 2022/23 school year. Applications must be made on Form NE-EAL 22/23 which is available on this [link](#).

EAL resources will be allocated in accordance with table set out in Form NE-EAL 22/23. In instances where post-primary schools are unable to source a teacher to fulfil EAL hours, the school can apply directly to the ESOL co-ordinator in the local ETB and a tutor, if

available, will be assigned from the ESOL panel to cover these, or the balance of these, hours. Please note that ESOL supports are available to post-primary schools only. For children with SEN enrolling in schools in Ireland, the Department of Education wants to continue to ensure that their placement is in the most inclusive environment that best supports their wellbeing, inclusion and participation in their education. It is envisaged that the majority of children who arrive with SEN will continue to enrol in mainstream class settings and will access existing supports in the school.

A guidance note which sets out the basis upon which additional special education teacher (SET) and special needs assistant (SNA) resources, where required, will be allocated, is available [here](#). This note also identifies how to support children with SEN who may need to access a special class or special school placement. Schools are encouraged to continue to work with their local special educational needs organiser.

Post-Primary Schools - Supporting children who wish to continue online engagement

While children and young people have been enrolling in schools we are aware that the Ukrainian Ministry of Education has encouraged students, where possible, to link back with their old school and has provided an online platform for students to engage with the curriculum. The Ukrainian curriculum is being delivered either through distance learning offered by a school in Ukraine or via the All-Ukrainian Online School through a dedicated website. The key priority area for many Ukrainian students is continuity in their learning of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian history. Older students may also be preparing for university entry examinations next summer.

In some instances, facilitation of access to both the Irish curriculum and the Ukrainian online curriculum can be challenging for schools to arrange. Schools are also aware that some of the students in senior cycle may be engaging with the online Ukrainian curriculum before and after school. Schools are encouraged to discuss this with the students and their parents to ensure this additional engagement is not putting undue pressure on the students, or adversely affecting integration and inclusion, as they endeavour to balance their online engagement with the Ukrainian curriculum with attendance and engagement in school.

A short guidance document has been prepared to support schools to manage requests from families for children and young people from Ukraine enrolled in school who wish to engage online with the Ukrainian curriculum can be found [here](#).

Where parents express a preference not to enrol their children in a school with the intention of them engaging exclusively with the online and distance learning offerings from Ukraine parents must apply to the Child and Family Agency TUSLA to have their child placed on the register of children educated outside of a recognised schools. Details of the application

process can be found at <https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/alternative-education-assessment-and-registration-service/>

Wellbeing/Trauma/behaviour resources

Guidance for schools in relation to supporting the wellbeing of all newly and recently arrived children and young people from Ukraine has been updated by NEPS. This updated version includes strategies and resources to assist school staff in tailoring approaches to support the wellbeing of pupils/students with additional educational needs. This guidance is available [here](#).

If your school has other support requirements or queries as the school principal you can also contact the Department's helpline for principals by emailing XXXX@education.gov.ie or by telephone 057 XXXXXXXX.

On behalf of the Department of Education I want to take this opportunity to wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas season with your families.

Yours sincerely

Deirdre Shanley
Assistant Secretary