



In-person Supplementary Programme to Support the Education or Care Needs of Pupils with Complex Needs during this period of school closure.

Impact of COVID-19 on the education of pupils with complex needs

The COVID-19 pandemic saw the closure of all schools in March 2020 and again in January 2021 followed by an immediate move to remote teaching and learning for pupils.

While most pupils reportedly adapted reasonably well to remote learning, there is a developing body of evidence which indicates that the absence of school and other supports can have a disproportionately negative impact on the lives and wellbeing of pupils with complex special educational needs and their families.

The loss of the regular school routine, social interaction with friends, access to teachers, Special Needs Assistant (SNAs), therapy interventions and respite type supports presents a risk of regression in the learning, social, emotional development and wellbeing of these pupils. Many families have reported significant challenges caring for their children who have special educational needs in the absence of school supports, structure and routines.

What is currently being provided for pupils with complex needs?

Updated Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs (with separate guidance for mainstream primary/special

schools and for post-primary schools) advises on how schools and teachers can special educational needs during the school closures associated with COVID-19.

The guidance builds on the key messages in a range of guidance materials which were issued to schools and centres for education previously. Specific guidance has been published by the Department to support schools in the context of remote teaching and learning in a COVID-19 context – *Guidance on Remote Learning in a COVID-19 Context: September – December 2020* which was complemented by the Department of Education Circular Letter 0074/2020 in relation to the establishment of Digital Communication, Teaching and Learning Platforms.

The guidance documents state *“Teachers in special schools and special classes should make every effort to maintain regular contact with all of their pupils, and where appropriate, **make provision for one-to-one online supports**”*.

The Department is satisfied that in the case of special classes and special schools, there is scope within a school’s teacher allocation to provide for one to one online learning support for pupils for certain periods each day.

This will also be the case for some pupils with complex needs in mainstream classes.

Importance of Providing In-Person Support

Students with complex needs experience the impact of school closures and the cessation of education supports in a very considerable way.

While schools are making conscientious efforts to provide effective remote learning, including one-to-one remote supports for those with the complex needs, the Department and stakeholders recognise that this cannot realistically replace the benefits of in-school provision. In these circumstances, the Department continues to work with stakeholders to secure an early return to in-school teaching and learning for all these students.

In-person supplementary programme to support remote education

In addition to the remote teaching and learning provided by schools to pupils, there is a widespread concern that the lack of in-person support for learning can cause further regression in pupils with complex needs. Therefore, there is good reason to offer an in-person supplementary programme to those pupils with complex needs who attend primary and special schools and who need an additional level of support during this period of school closure.

It is intended that this programme would be provided by teachers or SNAs on a voluntary but paid basis to enhance the learning experience for these pupils and build on the learning taking place as part of the remote provision by the school.

How will In-Person Support operate?

This supplementary programme of in-person support is intended to enhance the remote learning experience for pupils with complex needs during the school closure period through provision of an additional 5 hours per week of home based in-person tuition or care support.

These hours supplement existing school provision provided remotely, therefore they cannot be delivered during the school day. They can however be delivered outside of the normal school day and/or at weekends.

As this will be a supplementary programme, it is voluntary for teachers and SNAs to participate.

Similar to the Department's home based summer programme, parents must engage a teacher or an SNA directly. Schools are requested to assist in this regard.

Teachers and SNAs will be paid for this additional work through the Department's payroll system upon receipt of the completed claim form from parents.

Eligibility

The following categories of students are eligible:

- All pupils enrolled in special schools and special classes at primary level
- Pupils in mainstream classes in primary schools who are accessing the highest level of the continuum of support (i.e. School Support Plus/for a Few). This will include pupils with Autism, Down syndrome, sensory impairments, and other disabilities who were eligible for the summer programme of 2020.
- Pupils identified by their primary school as requiring the highest level of support at any given time. This will ensure that pupils presenting with exceptional needs due to the current school closure period can participate in the scheme.

Allocation of hours/staffing

The Department's approach is intended to be flexible so as to maximise the number of pupils participating.

An allocation of a 5-hours per week home-based tuition or care support programme will be made available to eligible pupils. This allocation is intended to supplement but not replace the remote teaching provided by the pupil's school.

The four-week programme (20 hours) can commence from 11 February and can be used by families at any time up until the end of April.

Home-based support must be provided on a 1:1 basis.

The Department reiterates the need for compliance with all public health and safety measures for in-home provision.

No travel or other expenses are payable.

Banking of unused hours for delivery during the Easter Break

To give parents every chance to participate in the scheme, the Department will allow parents to arrange for the delivery of any of the unused balance of the 20 hours of support during the Easter break.

All hours must be used by Friday 30 April and completed claim forms must be submitted to the Department by the close of business on Friday 14 May. No claim forms will be accepted after this date.

Role of the school

School Management will be requested to identify eligible children and bring the scheme to the attention of parents of eligible pupils and school staff i.e. teachers and SNAs.

Where parents wish to participate in the scheme, schools will complete Part 1 of the attached form and provide it to parents.

School management will also be requested to make every effort to support parents in securing the services of a teacher or SNA who is known to the school.

School management will be asked to contact their teachers and SNAs in order to ascertain their availability to provide support to pupils with significant needs under the scheme. Principals should then confirm staff availability – check parent requests and match & allocate as appropriate.

School management will be asked to share the relevant online learning plan for each week, student support plan and /or personal pupil care plan with the teacher or SNA providing the supplementary programme.

Role of the Parent

Step 1 – Eligibility/Sourcing a Teacher/SNA

Schools will contact parents of eligible children and provide them with the Grant Claim Form with part 1 completed which will establish eligibility.

Parent will then be required with assistance from the schools to identify and secure the services of a qualified and vetted teacher or SNA. A teacher on the register of the Teaching Council is both qualified and vetted.

Similar to the summer programme, the NCSE also provides information on how to source a teacher or SNA where parents cannot source one through their schools.

<https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Supplementary-Programme-2021.pdf>

Support can also be accessed through the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) at the link: <https://www.educationposts.ie/notice/supprog>

Step 2 – Engagement and Child Protection Procedures

The decision to engage a teacher or SNA and the hours of delivery will be a matter for agreement between the parents and the teacher or SNA. Insurance cover for the in-home provision is a matter for the parent.

It is a condition of the scheme that before support commences parents and teachers or SNAs complete section of the application form that confirms the relevant qualification and child protection requirements.

Step 3 – Submitting claim form for payment

The Timetable of Teaching/Care Support should be completed as provision occurs. When delivery of the programme of tuition or care is complete, parents and the teacher or SNA must complete the Declaration in Section 3 of the form and return it to the Department so that direct payment to the teacher or SNA can be processed.

The Department is finalising the logistical arrangements to support this supplementary programme. Payments will issue as soon as possible once the programme has been completed. Further information will be provided on this issue in due course.

Additional information

Rates of pay for the teacher and SNA

The grant rates per hour for all tuition provided is:

Fully Qualified Primary Teacher	€ 39.09 per hour
Modified Rate	€ 35.14 per hour
SNA rate	€ 16.77 per hour