



Circular 0050/2021

**To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary Schools, Special Schools and the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards
COVID-19 operational supports for the 2021/22 school year.**

COVID-19 Operational Supports for primary schools for 2021/2022

1. Introduction

The purpose of this circular is to provide details of the operational supports that are available to primary schools to operate safely while minimising risk associated with COVID-19 for the 2021/22 school year. This circular supersedes and replaces circular 0045/2020.

This circular should be read in conjunction with the school's COVID-19 Response Plan and the Department's guidance in relation to logistical, curricular and wellbeing arrangements that have been put in place following consultation with the Education Partners. The guidance to schools is underpinned by the Work Safely protocol and public health advice for the safe operation of schools.

There is no change to the key infection prevention and control measures that are focused on keeping COVID-19 out of schools and reducing the risk of spread of infection in schools through use of appropriate hygiene and physical distancing measures.

The following range of COVID-19 operational supports continue to provide for hand sanitisation, enhanced cleaning, teachers/SNA substitution, and management supports.

It is important to note that the COVID-19 operational supports outlined in this circular are specifically provided to support schools in minimising the risk of spread of infection of COVID-19.

2. PPE and Enhanced Cleaning supports

The multi-supplier agreement that was established for the 2020/21 school year will remain in place for the 2021/22 school year to enable schools to purchase necessary supplies of hand-sanitisers and PPE requirements. Link [here](#).



As required, the COVID-19 capitation grant will continue to be the mechanism through which funding will be provided to cater for school costs related to hand hygiene measures, PPE requirements and enhanced cleaning supports. Information has issued to schools for term 1 and further information will issue to schools in advance of future payments of capitation.

Grant payments will be calculated using the same per capita rates as applied for the 2020/21 school year and will be based on recognised enrolments for September 2020.

3. CO₂ Monitors

In May, 2021 the Department updated its guidance for schools (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ad236-guidance-on-ventilation-in-schools/>) on practical steps for the deployment of good ventilation practices in schools following recommendations by an expert group that focused on the role of ventilation in managing COVID-19.

The guidance outlines the role that Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitors can play a part in providing a useful general indication that areas/rooms may not be adequately ventilated and can enable occupants to become familiar with the impact of activities, outdoor weather and window openings on levels of good ventilation. An update has issued to all schools on the rollout of portable CO₂ monitors. Additional information on monitor allocation can be found on the Department's website <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ad236-guidance-on-ventilation-in-schools/>

4. Increased Management Supports

4.1 Principal Release days:

The number of release days for teaching principals was increased to allow all teaching principals one release day per week in respect of the 2020/21 school year. This temporary allocation will remain in place for the 2021/22 school year and is set out in the following table in addition to the number of days release time in circular 0019/2020:



Size of school	Circular 19/2020 allocation of release days for 2021/22	Temporary allocation of additional release days for 2021/22	Total allocation of release days for 2021/22
Principal +5/6	31	6	37
Principal +3/4	25	12	37
Principal +0/1/2	19	18	37
Schools with Special Classes (regardless of size of school or number of special classes)			Additional 4 days

4.2 Deputy Principals Release Days where schools have an Admin Principal:

In schools where the Principal is an Admin Principal, the Deputy Principal will be able to avail of temporary release days in respect of the 2021/22 school year as follows:

Size of School (mainstream class posts)	Number of release days
Principal + 8 or less	5
Principal + 9 to Principal + 16	10
Principal + 17 to Principal + 24	12
Principal + 25 to Principal + 32	14
Principal + 33 or more	16
All Special Schools	16

5. Extension of Teacher Supply Panels

Supply panels are one of a number of sources for accessing substitutes. The purpose of supply panels is to support schools to manage sick leave and other absences by having a supply of teachers to meet substitution needs when required.

The Supply Panel Scheme has been extended on a nationwide basis and will operate in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in Circular 0059/2019 which introduced the Supply Panel Pilot Scheme in September 2019. The arrangements for teacher appointments, employment provisions, operation of the panel and record keeping are all outlined in Circular 0059/2019. The sequence of accessing substitution is outlined below in section 6.



6. Sequencing of access to substitution for primary teachers

The Department recognises that schools will continue to require additional substitute cover in the 2021/22 school year for primary teachers to assist in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, The Department has published Information Note TC 0018/2021 for primary teachers to assist schools. Link [here](#).

- Queries in relation to leave entitlements:
teachersna@education.gov.ie
- Queries in relation to the operation of the substitution arrangements:
Primtch_payroll@education.gov.ie

Section 4 of Circular 0044/2019 sets out the sequence of recruitment for vacancies of less than 24 weeks. Link [here](#).

Due to the successful roll out of the vaccination programme teacher absences due to Covid-19 should be reduced this year therefore the need to resort to using non-mainstream class teachers as a measure of last resort which was in place last year should no longer be necessary. The disruption to teaching and learning provided by non-classroom teachers should be avoided.

Schools should have plans in place to access substitutes in the sequence outlined below.

Sequence for covering **all teacher** absences:

- Supply panel if the school is part of a supply panel cluster arrangement,
- School's own panel of regular substitutes,
- National substitute service,
- Administrative Principal if applicable
- Local arrangements that facilitate the pupils to be supervised in a manner that does not involve them being split between existing classes in classrooms

By no longer using non-mainstream teachers to provide substitute cover schools will no longer need to 'bank hours'.

7. SNA Substitution

The Department also recognises that schools will continue to require additional substitute cover in the 2021/22 school year for SNAs to assist in dealing with



the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, The Department has published Information Note TC 0019/2021 for SNAs to assist schools. Link [here](#).

- Queries in relation to leave entitlements:
teachersna@education.gov.ie
- Queries in relation to the operation of the substitution arrangements:
NTSPayroll@education.gov.ie

8. Developing Schools

Schools that are currently in the developing stage, i.e. schools that opened since September 2014, will have the additional supports calculated based on the projected enrolment for September 2021.

9. Department Helpline for school principals

For further queries in relation to this circular, please contact the Department's Helpline **057 9324461**. The Helpline is open from 9am to 5.00pm daily. Queries can also be sent by email to covid19_alert@education.gov.ie

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