



To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary Schools, Special Schools and the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards.

Measures to increase the availability of substitutes for primary schools for 2021/2022

The Department of Education has engaged with the education stakeholders on the issues raised about the difficulty accessing substitutes for teacher absences at this time.

It is recognised that there are particular pressures in this area at the moment due to Covid-19 and therefore the following arrangements have been put in place to assist with the availability of substitutes following the midterm break and for the remainder of the 2021/22 school year.

Supply Panels:

The purpose of the supply panel is to meet substitution needs where teachers are absent, particularly for unplanned or short absences. The Primary Schools Substitute Teacher Supply Panels now employ almost 380 teachers and provide substitute cover to over 2,500 primary schools across the country.

A review of the supply panels has taken place and approximately 100 additional teachers are being added to existing/new areas where significant challenges have been demonstrated in sourcing substitution. Engagement will take place with the base schools to make arrangements for the recruitment of additional staff immediately after the mid-term break.

It is recommended that where possible **new** bookings for the Supply Panels after mid-term break should be limited to absences occurring within a maximum of two weeks in advance in order to ensure more flexibility for unplanned absences.

Clusters for Teaching Principal Release days:

Following the welcome announcement in Budget 2022 that Teaching Principal Release days will continue, schools should make arrangements to have these days covered by a regular substitute. It is not envisaged that supply panels are used to cover for teaching principals release days.

It is advised that schools work together to combine their allocation of principal release days into clusters so as to form a full-time fixed-term post to cover each school's principal release days for the 2021/22 school year. Schools are urged to use this opportunity to



appoint teachers in order to ensure cover for these days. The application form for new Principal Release Time Posts is Appendix A of Circular 0019/2020 which is available [here](#).

Job Sharing teachers:

Restrictions for job-sharing teachers, undertaking substitution, have been temporarily suspended which allows these teachers to work additional days if available to cover vacancies in their own and other schools.

For pay purposes, the base school is required to record the substitute days worked on the On Line Claims System (OLCS).

Career Break:

The restriction on a teacher carrying out substitute work whilst on Career Break has already been relaxed for the current school year under Information Note TC 0015/2021. Teachers on career break can carry out substitute work without restriction.

Student teachers:

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been requested to be flexible with the student teachers to facilitate student teachers being available for substitution work.

HEIs have also been requested to communicate with post primary PME students to advise them of the availability of substitution in primary schools.

Communications campaign with all registered teachers:

It is recognised that there are teachers who are registered on the Teaching Council register but who may not currently be actively teaching. The Teaching Council have been asked to undertake a communications campaign to contact the 111,000 teachers on the register to urge them to make themselves available for substitution. Teachers who may be available to undertake substitution work have been asked to register on [SubSeeker.ie](#) so that schools are aware of their availability when seeking to fill substitute vacancies.

The Department will continue to keep this matter under review in collaboration with the education stakeholders.