
Free Primary School Books Scheme

Quick Reference Guide for Schools

1. Second hand books

Schools can purchase second-hand books under this scheme. This is a matter for the school management in each school when budgeting each year in order to achieve best value for money.

2. Swimming lessons and other school based activity

The primary schoolbook funding is ring-fenced for schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and related classroom resources. The cost of swimming lessons or any other similar school-based activity is not considered a legitimate expense under the free primary schoolbooks scheme.

3. Movement of a pupil to a new school during the school year

If a pupil moves school during the school year, the schoolbooks are returned to the first school. The new school will then provide the pupil with a complete set of schoolbooks, including workbooks, copybooks and any related classroom resources that were provided for other pupils at the start of the school year.

4. Voluntary contributions from parents

Section 64 of the Education (Admissions to schools) Act 2018, which was commenced in 2018 explicitly prohibits the charging of admission and enrolment fees for admission to or for continued enrolment in a school, with some exceptions such as boarding or fee-charging schools.

The manner in which any voluntary contributions are sought and collected is a matter for school management, however their collection should be such as not to create a situation where either parents or pupils could reasonably infer that the contributions take on a compulsory character.

This funding is being provided to schools to provide schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks. Parents must not be asked to purchase schoolbooks, workbooks or copybooks or to make a contribution to the school towards the cost of schoolbooks, workbooks or copybooks.

5. Developing schools

The Department recognises a specific number of schools as developing schools. These are schools which have newly opened since September 2016 and which have significantly increased their enrolment size each year.

Example - a school has developing school status and had enrolment of 220 in September 2022. The projected enrolment for September 2023 is 258.

The schoolbook grant will be calculated/paid based on the projected enrolment of 258.

However, if the validated enrolment on 30 September 2023 is less than the projected enrolment of 258 the school is liable to refund any excess schoolbook grant to the Department.

6. Maintenance of school books loaned to pupils under this scheme

The maintenance and upkeep of supplies is a matter for each school. In the interests of prolonging the lifespan of books many schools prefer to cover and label them before distribution. Some book shops offer this service. Some schools seek assistance from parents. A school should devise a mechanism for keeping track of books that best suits their needs.

7. Surplus Funding

In the first instance, the grant must be used to eliminate the cost of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks for parents. Thereafter the grant should be used to eliminate costs of related classroom resources such as pens and pencils. Any surplus grant can be used to purchase shared/library books, audio books or other material to enhance literacy (in English, Irish or other languages) and numeracy resources in the school. Alternatively the surplus can be carried forward to the next school year. Schools should consider the need to replace or purchase new books in the following year when deciding how to use any surplus grant.

8. Purchase of shared books and audio and other literacy and numeracy resources for the school.

Schools must meet the costs of all schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and related classroom resources before considering purchasing shared books, audio books or other material to enhance the literacy and numeracy resources in the school. In other words, schools must ensure that all costs of schoolbooks and related resources are eliminated for parents before shared books for use in a school's library can be purchased.

9. Requesting tenders when purchasing new books or other resources with the book grant.

Schools have obligations to the National Procurement Guidelines and the legislation which governs public procurement in Ireland when sourcing goods and services and should familiarise themselves with the guidelines at [gov.ie - Public procurement guidelines for goods and services \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie) before undertaking to purchase goods.

10. Special schools or special classes where learning supports are required in addition to or as an alternative to textbooks and workbooks.

The main aim of the free primary schoolbook scheme is to eliminate the costs of providing schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks to parents., When this has been realised by special schools and for special classes in mainstream primary schools, any surplus book grant funding may be used to provide related classroom resources. Special schools and primary schools operating special classes are best placed to identify related classroom resources required for their individual setting and to meet the learning needs of their children and young people.

11. Schoolbooks Grant - parents who do not wish to avail of the free book scheme

The main aim of the new scheme is to eliminate costs to parents of providing schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks. In the unlikely event that a parent indicates that they do not wish to receive free schoolbooks under this scheme, the parent must be provided with the relevant class booklist(s) and they can make their own arrangements to source the necessary schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and any other resources provided by the school under the scheme. In such instances the school is not obliged to refund the parent the cost of such purchases as the parent has clearly expressed their wish not to participate in the scheme.

12. Policy on workbook usage and replacement

It is a matter for each school to determine its position on the usage of workbooks. A school may already have a mechanism in place which reduces the use of or allows for the re-use of workbooks.

13. Using the grant for online resources

In the first instance the grant must be used to eliminate the cost of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks to parents. As such, any online resources acquired must primarily be to fulfil that aim. The Department provides open access to digital resources through Scoilnet.ie, through which all primary and post-primary learners can access an array of resources including Britannica School. Schools can also use ICT grant funding received under the Digital Strategy for Schools for online resources and learning tools.

14. Protection of Copyright

It is mandatory for any educational establishment, including primary and post primary schools, to have a licence in order to copy and reuse content from a variety of copyright-protected works. This licence is provided by the Irish Copyright Licensing Authority (ICLA).

From the start of the 2022/2023 school year payment of the annual copyright licencing fees to ICLA for all recognised primary and post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme is being made centrally by the Department of Education.

Information, to include a School Licence User Guide and how to make the most of your ICLA School Licence can be accessed on the ICLA website
<https://www.icla.ie/licences/primary-and-post-primary-schools-licences>