



## Circular 0025/2025

### Information in relation to Standardised Testing and Other Matters – Academic Year 2024/25 and Subsequent Years

To: Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teaching Staff of Primary and Special Schools and Chief Executives of ETBs.

This circular

- Sets out important information regarding Standardised Testing returns for the 2024/2025 academic year.
- Provides updates on other matters relevant to primary and special schools.

### Contents

1. Standardised testing in primary schools – returns for 2024/25 .....	2
When to carry out the tests .....	2
The need for assessment .....	2
Approved Tests .....	3
Exemptions from Standardised Testing .....	3
Return of data to the Department of Education .....	4
Reporting and using the results to improve pupil learning .....	4
2. National and International Testing .....	5
3. Special Education .....	6
4. Transitions .....	6
5. Primary Curriculum Developments .....	7
6. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Toolkit .....	9
7. Professional learning for teachers to support their work in assessment .....	9
8. Ireland’s Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033: Every Learner from Birth to Young Adulthood .....	10
9. Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018 - 2025 .....	10
10. Public Libraries Support for Schools .....	11
11. Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy services for parents and guardians .....	13



## 1. Standardised testing in primary schools – returns for 2024/25

Thank you for continuing to provide standardised test results to the Department of Education through the Esinet online system. We appreciate the work of school staff in making this happen.

### When to carry out the tests

Please carry out the tests at 2nd, 4th and 6th class level during May or early June 2025, following the instructions as detailed in circulars [0056/2011](#) and [0018/2012](#).

Upload the aggregate results to the [Esinet portal](#) by **Wednesday, 18th June 2025**.

### The need for assessment

Assessment plays a key role in effective learning and teaching. This includes regularly checking pupils' work and periodically sharing the results with both pupils and their parents or guardians.

All types of assessment, including standardised tests, help teachers improve learning and teaching. They ensure that literacy and numeracy programmes are tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils and class groups.

The results of standardised tests can help schools to:

- Track progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Identify areas that need improvement.
- Support teachers in providing learning experiences that meet pupils' needs.

The results of a single standardised test should not be used on their own, to predict future achievement and as the only evidence for deciding on interventions or learning plan targets.

Information from ability tests, teacher observations, parental reports, and pupils' views are also important for a full assessment.

A standardised testing information leaflet provides more advice on using test results:

- As part of a broad assessment approach.
- How to use the data.
- How to communicate test results sensitively.

**The administration of standardised tests to whole classes is not appropriate at infant class level.** Standardised tests, if used before the end of first class, should be done in small groups only. See [here](#) for more information.

### Assessment Guidelines

The [Assessment Guidelines for Schools](#) provide:

- Information on different assessment methods.
- Advice on developing, implementing, and reviewing assessment policies.



- Guidance on legal requirements for sharing information about pupils' progress and achievement.

[Circular 56/2011](#) also provides information on assessing children's literacy and numeracy achievement.

### Funding

Your school will shortly receive funding for 2024/25 standardised testing. The following funding will be provided:

- **€6.00** per pupil in English medium schools.
- **€7.50** per pupil in Irish medium schools.

These funds should be used to buy test instruments and materials such as teachers' manuals, scoring services or test-related software.

### Approved Tests

- The Educational Research Centre (ERC) provides standardised tests in paper and online formats:
  - ERC Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (English).
  - ERC Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test (in English and Irish).
  - Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna Gaeltachta agus Lán-Ghaeilge (ar fáil i bpáipéar amháin).
  - Triail Mhatamatice Dhroim Conrach (Ar líne).

Information on these and other tests is available at <https://www.tests.erc.ie/>.

- Online and paper tests can be ordered on ERC DOTS (*Drumcondra Online Testing System*) <https://schooladmin.erc.ie>.
- Online test queries, contact **dots@erc.ie**.
- Paper-based test queries, contact **tests@erc.ie**.
- Mary Immaculate College offers paper-based tests:
  - MICRA-T (Mary Immaculate College Reading Attainment Tests).
  - SIGMA-T (Standardised Irish Graded Mathematics Attainment Tests) tests.

Order from [www.cjfallon.ie](http://www.cjfallon.ie)

Any remaining funds, after covering test costs, may be used to buy additional tests to better understand pupils' needs.

### Exemptions from Standardised Testing

As many children as possible should be included in the standardised testing. Circular 56/2011, states that principals may exempt pupils from standardised testing if:



- They have a learning or physical disability that prevents them from doing the test.
- They are migrant pupils whose level of English makes the test unsuitable.

You may allow testing with special accommodations if needed. You should:

- Note the accommodation next to the pupil's result.
- Interpret the result carefully, since the test was taken outside standard conditions.
- For pupils in 2nd, 4th, or 6th class, mark them as exempt on Esinet returns (do not include their result).

In the case of migrant pupils:

- Some may be ready for standardised tests within their first year in Ireland.
- Others will need more time if their progress in English language development is slower or if their education has been disrupted by accommodation issues, lack of school places, or other wellbeing factors.

More information is available at <https://www.tests.erc.ie/test-administration-faqs-general>.

### **Return of data to the Department of Education**

Standardised test results should be uploaded onto the [Esinet portal](#) **on or before Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025**.

To enter and approve the data, please:

- Log on to the Esinet portal.
- Click on 'School Data Collection', and then 'Literacy and Numeracy'.
- Read the instructions before clicking 'Continue'.

All schools, including special and infant schools without a second class, should read and follow the [step-by-step guide](#) for uploading returns.

### **Reporting and using the results to improve pupil learning**

Schools must meet the reporting obligations set out in Part 7 of Circular [0056/2011](#).

These include:

- **Reporting to parents/guardians:**
  - Schools must give parents/guardians a written report explaining the results. This should be sent early enough before the summer break to give parents/guardians time to meet with the teachers and/or the principal if needed.
  - All schools must use a standard report template to report on pupils' progress and achievement.
  - Reporting templates include options for pupils receiving additional support.



- The creator tool and templates are available [here](#). Information for parents/guardians on understanding standardised test scores can be found [here](#).
- A video for parents/guardians explaining standardised test results as part of the end-of-year report is available [here](#).
- **Reporting, analysing and using assessment information at school level;** Schools must also report information from standardised tests to their board of management.

## 2. National and International Testing

Circular [0056/2011](#) asks schools to make every effort to take part in large-scale assessments run by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) for the Department of Education. The Department and ERC appreciates schools' ongoing participation in these studies.

- **Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2026**

PIRLS takes place every five years. It assesses the reading achievement of Fourth class pupils in primary school. Findings from the study provide important information on Ireland's reading achievement in an international context. The 2026 cycle of PIRLS will mark Ireland's transition to a digital-based assessment.

**Field trial March - April 2025**

40 randomly selected primary schools will take part in a field trial.

**Main study March - April 2026**

About 200 primary schools will be randomly selected to participate in the main study.

If your school is selected and you have questions, please contact [PIRLS.Ireland@erc.ie](mailto:PIRLS.Ireland@erc.ie).

- **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2025**

PISA assesses the skills of 15 and 16 year old students in three domains: Science, Mathematics and reading literacy.

In PISA 2025, the main focus will be on science. There will also be an additional section called 'Learning in the Digital World.' This will assess students' ability to self-regulate their learning and solve problems using digital tools.

**Main Study March - April 2025**

Between 3rd March and 11th April 2025, 172 schools in Ireland will take part in the PISA main study.



If your school has been selected to take part and you have questions, please contact the PISA team at [PISA.Ireland@erc.ie](mailto:PISA.Ireland@erc.ie).

- **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2027**  
TIMSS is a major international study that takes place every four years. It assesses the mathematics and science achievement of Fourth Class pupils in primary school and Second Year students in post-primary school. It also collects supporting contextual information.

Findings from TIMSS provide important information on Ireland's mathematics and science achievement in an international context. The findings from the most recent cycle, TIMSS 2023, can be found at [www.erc.ie/TIMSS](http://www.erc.ie/TIMSS).

#### **Field trial in March/April 2026**

Approximately 40 primary schools and 35 post-primary schools across Ireland will be randomly selected to participate in the field trial. If your school is selected and you have any questions, please contact [TIMSS.Ireland@erc.ie](mailto:TIMSS.Ireland@erc.ie).

### **3. Special Education**

The Special Education Teaching (SET) allocation model started in 2017, and schools' educational profiles were updated in 2024.

Each school has a unique educational profile based on three pillars; Enrolment Allocation, Educational Teaching Needs Profile and Educational Disadvantage.

The Educational Teaching Needs profile is calculated based on educational outcome data collected and held within schools and submitted to the Department of Education. The profiles are directly correlated to, and focused on, pupils with the greatest level of need in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

The data to support this pillar comes from the standardised test results submitted by schools for English and Mathematics which are used to create the individual school profiles. In the case of Irish Medium schools, it is the mean of the standardised tests results of both English and Irish, in addition to mathematics.

For more details regarding the Special Education Teacher Allocation model, please see Circular [0005/2025](#).

### **4. Transitions**

#### **Early learning and care settings to primary school**

The NCCA Mo Scéal reporting templates help young children transition from early learning and care settings to primary school. These templates improve the sharing of information about children's learning and development between state-funded early



learning and care settings and primary schools. Along with the support materials, they are useful resources for both settings to work together, making the transition into primary school as positive and effective as possible.

A [Guide for Gaeltacht Primary Schools: Strengthening Links between Primary Schools and Early Learning and Care \(ELC\) Settings](#) has been developed to help schools create collaborative links with their local naíonraí. This will support the transition of children to primary school and the promotion of the Irish language.

### **Primary school to post-primary school**

Helping sixth class pupils transition to post-primary school needs good communication, teamwork, and planning. Primary and post-primary schools should work with each other as well as with pupils and their families. Sharing information about pupils' learning is an important part of this process. This can happen through local transition programmes, open days/nights (including online), meetings between teachers and families and transferring key information to the post-primary schools.

The NEPS Continuum of Support and the Home School Liaison Officers in DEIS schools can also support the transition of pupils.

### **Education Passport**

Schools **must** use the [Education Passport](#) materials to support the reporting and transfer of pupil information at the end of sixth class. Schools should ensure that an Education Passport for each pupil is sent to the relevant post-primary school after enrolment is confirmed and ideally, by the end of June. For children in need of additional supports, sharing information may need to start earlier.

For pupils needing additional support, the [NEPS Student Transfer Form](#) should be used. The completed form should be signed by parents/guardians before sending to the relevant post-primary school. Ensuring children with special educational needs (SEN) transition successfully can involve meetings between teachers and families, as well as transferring important information to their new post-primary schools.

## **5. Primary Curriculum Developments**

### **The redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum**

Building on the publication of the [Primary Curriculum Framework](#) in 2023, the redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum is well advanced. It is expected that the specifications for the five curriculum areas will be published in September 2025.

The five curriculum areas, draft of which can be found [here](#), are:

- Arts Education
- Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the Primary Language Curriculum
- Social and Environmental Education (SEE)
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education



- Wellbeing.

### **Primary Mathematics Curriculum (PMC) and Toolkit**

The PMC, published in September 2023, provides an inclusive and child-centered approach to learning, teaching and assessment focusing on creativity, playful approaches and problem-solving. It is supported by an online [Primary Mathematics Toolkit](#). The toolkit includes Mathematical Concepts, Progression Continua, Support Materials for teachers and parents, and Examples of Children's Learning. Recently, additional supports have been added to the Primary Mathematics Toolkit.

The [primary mathematics curriculum hub](#) has a range of resources including an eLearning module on [Preparation for Teaching and Learning and the PMC](#).

### **Supporting Parents with the new mathematics curriculum**

To help children learn at home, supports such as tip sheets, book suggestions, activity ideas, and videos have been developed for parents. These can be found [here](#). Schools are encouraged to share this information with parents to support children's learning.

### **Supports for teachers in primary and special schools**

Oide<sup>1</sup> and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) will continue to provide a range of supports to principals and teachers to help them implement the PMC during the 2025/2026 school year.

### **Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (PLC/CTB)**

The PLC/CTB will include Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) for Stages 3 and 4 (3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Class) from September 2025. A new version of the PLC/CTB, reflecting this change, will be made available to schools.

A range of supports are available for the Language 1 and Language 2 of schools through the online [Primary Language Toolkit/Uirlisí Úsáide Teanga na Bunscoile](#). The toolkit continues to be updated with videos and examples of children's learning and support materials for teachers. This will include resources for MFL.

### **Supporting parents/guardians to help their children learn Irish**

A suite of tip sheets, [Gaeilge sa Bhaile](#), have been published to help parents/guardians support their children learn Irish. These include:

- [An Ghaeilge Mórthimpeall Orm / Irish All Around Me.](#)
- [Mol an Óige agus Tíocfaidh Sí! / Praise, Praise, Praise!](#)
- [Ag Labhairt is ag Léamh as Gaeilge / Speaking and Reading in Irish.](#)
- [Spreagadh agus Spraio sa Bhaile / Fun at Home.](#)

---

<sup>1</sup> As of September 2023 the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), Centre for Schools Leadership (CSL), National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT) and Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) merged into one support service called Oide.





### **Ongoing support for schools for the PLC/CTB**

Oide and NCSE will continue to support schools in implementing the PLC/CTB. Cohort 4 schools in the sustained support programme will receive ongoing help, focusing on curriculum implementation and promoting plurilingual approaches. This will include up to four face-to-face visits and two online sessions.

Oide resources to support the PLC/CTB can be found [here](#). Additional resources, including [eBulletins](#) and [webinars](#), are also available. Teachers can attend a face-to-face, EPV-approved summer course, Bringing the Primary Language Curriculum to Life in My Classroom, taking place this summer.

The Oide Primary Languages and Literacy Teams created and ran a new evening face-to-face PLE in 2024/25. This focused on the link between Preparation for Teaching and Learning and the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile.

You can access the NCCA primary language toolkit [here](#).

### **6. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Toolkit**

The toolkit provides a single access point for materials developed by Irish state agencies and organisations with expertise in SPHE/RSE. It is organised by class level and linked directly to the SPHE curriculum ensuring age-appropriate material is available for all primary schools.

The SPHE/RSE resource portal and toolkit will continue to be added to over time and can be accessed here: <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/primary/curriculum-areas/social-personal-and-health-education/sphe-rse-toolkit>.

An updated Senior Cycle specification was approved and published in September 2024. Schools have until September 2027 to introduce the specification for students entering fifth year of the Leaving Certificate Established programme, which allows time for planning and preparation.

As part of the redevelopment of the primary curriculum a new Wellbeing curriculum, to include SPHE and PE, will be published in September 2025. Oide offer a primary school RSE EPV approved summer course which will be available this summer.

### **7. Professional learning for teachers to support their work in assessment**

Oide provides professional learning experiences (PLEs) for teachers and school leaders on learning, teaching, assessment and reporting at primary level. The vision of the Primary Curriculum Framework is reflected in all PLE's designed and facilitated by Oide.



When designing and facilitating PLE's, Oide incorporates both summative and formative assessment. They also provide resources [Scoilnet](#) and the [Primary Maths Curriculum Hub](#). Professional learning leaders (PLLs) can also work with teachers and school leaders to explore how standardised test results, and other assessment data, can inform future learning and teaching during workshops and visits to schools.

Professional learning leaders (PLLs) can support teachers and school leaders in using standardised test results and other assessment data to inform future learning and teaching. More information on PLE provision provided by Oide can be found at [www.oide.ie](http://www.oide.ie)

## **8. Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033: Every Learner from Birth to Young Adulthood**

The strategy, launched in May 2024, was developed by the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth.

The strategy builds on the achievements of the 2011 literacy and numeracy strategy and will be supported by two implementation plans.

The first 5-year plan, published with the strategy, includes 107 actions and 18 sub-actions. These actions are grouped into 5 pillars:

- **Pillar 1:** Help parents and communities support learners' literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy.
- **Pillar 2:** Support the professional development of early years educators, childminders, and teachers.
- **Pillar 3:** Support leadership in early learning, care, and the school system.
- **Pillar 4:** Improve the learner experience through curriculum, teaching, and assessment.
- **Pillar 5:** Support diverse learners to reach their potential.

The strategy's success will be measured regularly. Benchmarks will track progress and highlight areas for improvement throughout its duration.

## **9. Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018 - 2025**

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice was published in 2018 and refreshed in 2019. It aims to make the promotion of wellbeing central to the ethos of every school and centre for education in Ireland. By 2025, every school is required to use the School Self-Evaluation (SSE) process to begin a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle. The policy can be accessed [here](#).

Short videos showing best practice in wellbeing promotion and reflections from teachers and pupils about their experience of using SSE to undertake a wellbeing promotion review and development cycle can be accessed [here](#).



### **Teacher Professional learning (TPL) for wellbeing**

The national rollout of the TPL began in March 2022. Schools are encouraged to access this TPL, delivered by Oide, to help begin their wellbeing promotion review and development cycle. More information available [here](#).

The Department's wellbeing office has produced a [Wellbeing TPL directory](#). It provides an overview of TPL opportunities provided by the Department of Education, its agencies, support services and other Government Departments and their agencies. It also includes information on how to access these supports.

### **Wellbeing Resources and Supports**

NEPS have developed advice and resources to support the wellbeing of everyone in the school community which is available [here](#). New wellbeing resources in relation to stress and anxiety; self-harm and school reluctance are also available [here](#).

A [Catalogue of Wellbeing Resources](#) for schools lists some of the documents and resources provided by the Department of Education, its agencies, support services, other Government Departments and their agencies and by the Health Service Executive (HSE) to assist the promotion of wellbeing in schools.

## **10. Public Libraries Support for Schools**

Membership of the public library is free. There are no fines for overdue books, and no replacement charges for lost or damaged children's books.

Public libraries deliver services under the annual Right to Read Programme to support reading and literacy. Depending on local needs and capacity they may take a hybrid approach to delivering the services in libraries and online.

The national public library strategy, *The Library is the Place 2023-2027* commits to build on the current library services for primary and post-primary schools. It will also explore the potential for an expanded programme of library supports, delivered in alignment with the Department of Education's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033.

The public library provides access to a wide range of resources, facilities and activities. These support primary schools in developing children's literacy, numeracy, creativity and communication skills. Existing partnerships between schools and libraries benefit the schools, the children and families. A partner library branch has been identified for every primary school based on catchment area. This information is available on the [public libraries' website](#).

Each partner library branch will provide the services outlined below and will liaise directly with each primary school during the school year. In some cases, services may be provided by a mobile library, school library van, or the library headquarters, as determined locally. Under this collaborative approach, each library service will contact



the school principal throughout the year to provide information about available library services and resources.

The range of library services offered to primary schools includes:

- Arranging class visits to libraries.
- Providing each teacher with a teacher's card to borrow items for their class.
- Delivering presentations on library services for each school, at a time agreed with the school. These presentations can be held at the school for teachers, pupils and/or parents/guardians. Schools may group together for the presentation. Online presentations may also be available.
- Providing [reading and curriculum support materials](#), including:
  - A Resource Guide for Schools to help develop and expand reading and literacy collections.
  - Videos with ideas for schools and teachers on creating a reading space and a reading school.
  - Online learning resources, including access to over 300 Irish and international newspapers, 250 magazine titles, a large selection of e-books and e-audio books, over 400 online learning courses and 110 language courses.
  - eSources and reference materials to support school projects.
- Offering a reading space for children and access to electronic resources in each partner library.
- Providing reference resources and research assistance for school project work
- Providing parents/guardians with information about library resources and activities that support their children's literacy and numeracy.
- Giving access to historical material about the local area, including maps, photographs, documents and collections relating to 1916 and later commemorations.
- Providing ongoing library programmes and initiatives throughout the year, including:
  - **Ireland Reads**, a national reading day in February.
  - **Spring into Storytime**, which offers storytime and reading activities in branches and online during April/May.
  - **My Little Library Bag** for school which provides free books to encourage library membership for children aged 4 to 6 starting school.
  - **Summer Stars** reading programme during the summer for all children who register at their library.
  - **Children's Book Festival**, held in October in libraries and online, celebrating children's books and family reading.
  - **Family Time at Your Library**, which offers fun events in local libraries and online in December.

For more details, visit [www.librariesireland.ie](http://www.librariesireland.ie).



## 11. Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy services for parents and guardians

[Adult Literacy for Life \(ALL\)](#) is a 10-year strategy. It aims to ensure that every adult has the literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needed to fully engage in society.

In Ireland, one in six adults has unmet literacy needs. This can affect family life and parents and guardians' confidence and ability to for example engage with schools, read a bedtime story, help with homework, or even fill out a school form. The ALL strategy prioritises family and intergenerational learning. Family learning programmes and activities often provide a safe and supportive way for adults to engage with their own learning and to support their children's education.

Education and Training Boards (ETBs) deliver family learning programs across the country. They also offer courses to improve adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills. Many ETBs work with schools and other organisations to create tailored learning opportunities for parents, guardians, and families. For more information, contact your local ETB Adult Literacy Service, your Regional Literacy Coordinator, or the Adult Literacy for Life National Programme Office. Visit [www.adultliteracyforlife.ie](http://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie) or email [allinnovation@solas.ie](mailto:allinnovation@solas.ie).

[The National Adult Literacy Agency \(NALA\)](#) also offers help and advice for parents and guardians who have difficulty reading, writing, spelling or doing mathematics. NALA has a phone and online learning service [www.learnwithnala.ie](http://www.learnwithnala.ie) where adults can learn by themselves or with the support of a tutor on the phone. Learn with NALA has [professional development courses](#) that may be of interest to teachers and school staff to raise awareness of literacy needs and literacy friendly approaches.

For further information call 1 800 20 20 65 or email [info@nala.ie](mailto:info@nala.ie)

All ETB and NALA services are free. Please share these links and details with your school community.

*Evelyn O'Connor*

Evelyn O'Connor  
Principal Officer  
Curriculum & Assessment Policy Unit  
25 March 2025