



**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 full return to school**

### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this circular is to provide details of the operational supports that will be made available to primary schools to fully and safely reopen in a sustainable way, while minimising risk associated with COVID-19.

This circular should be read in conjunction with the Department's document '[The Roadmap for the full Return to School](#)' and associated guidance in relation to logistical, curricular and wellbeing arrangements that have been put in place following consultation with the Education Partners and are underpinned by the Return to Work Safely protocol and public health advice for the safe reopening of schools.

The following range of COVID-19 operational supports give effect to this guidance in line with public health advice and provide for hand sanitisation, enhanced cleaning, teachers/SNA substitution, and management supports.

The key public health measures 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.

**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.**

All grants payments will start in advance of the school year commencing to allow for funds to be made available for schools. Certain grants will be paid in full in mid-August to allow for reopening and others are paid by instalments during the school year (e.g. grant payments based on each school term).

Schools are required to appropriately record costs paid from all grants received. There will be a requirement to report on certain grants paid by instalments to assess the level of grant funding utilised that can be taken into account in subsequent grant payments.

## 2 A new Minor Works Grant to Primary School to Support Full Implementation of COVID-19 Response Plans

The 'Roadmap for the full Return to School' outlines the potential range of measures necessary to reconfigure schools in a way that enables the implementation of the Roadmap, public health advice and COVID-19 Response Plans for Schools. These measures necessary to enable the full return to school may include, but are not limited to, reconfiguration of classroom space, re-purposing rooms to provide additional space, adapting storage facilities, purchasing furniture, altering desk layouts, adapting toilet areas, short term rental of additional space etc. Given that each school setting is different, individual schools are best placed to decide on the appropriate re-configuration measures for their school necessary to facilitate school re-opening.

To support schools in this work, a once-off minor works grant will issue to primary schools by mid-August, which will amount to a doubling of the minor grant paid to schools, calculated as follows:

- (a) **As per Circular 0062/2013, a €5,500 basic grant plus €18.50 per mainstream pupil and €74 per special needs pupil on the rolls on the 30th September of the year prior to the issue of the grant. (The €74 rate applies to a special needs pupil attending a special school or attending a special class attached to a mainstream school)**
- (b) An enhanced minor works grant, which matches (a)

The table below provides an illustrative example of the value of the minor works grant for primary schools of various sizes.

School Size	Current Minor Works Grant	Enhanced Covid -19 element	Total Minor Works Grant
60	€6,610	€6,610	<b>€13,220</b>
100	€7,350	€7,350	<b>€14,700</b>
200	€9,200	€9,200	<b>€18,400</b>
300	€11,050	€11,050	<b>€22,100</b>
400	€12,900	€12,900	<b>€25,800</b>
500	€14,750	€14,750	<b>€29,500</b>

Calculations in this table based on number of mainstream pupils only;

The principles outlined in *Circular 0062/2013 relating to the Grant Scheme for Minor Works to National School Properties*, should also be applied by schools in utilising this Grant, with schools having the necessary flexibility to implement necessary reconfiguration measures in their school in

line with the 'Roadmap for the full Return to School', public health advice on the reopening of schools and their COVID-19 Response Plan.

In limited circumstances, the Department will consider applications from schools where the extent of necessary re-configuration works to enable full reopening is such that additional funding may be necessary. This will be considered on a case by case basis by the Department and contact should be made with the Department at [reopeningschools@education.gov.ie](mailto:reopeningschools@education.gov.ie).

### 3. Employing an aide to help with school reopening logistics

Schools may employ an aide(s) to assist with the physical and logistical arrangements necessary for school reopening including physical reconfiguration measures in schools setting up hand sanitising stations, signage, training, engaging with parents and staff etc.

The daily rate payable is €143.32. The table below sets out the number of days funding which is being provided by the Department based on school size.

Enrolment Range		No. of Days
From	To	
<300		2
301	600	5
>600		10
All Special Schools		10

### 4. The funding will be provided in the form of a grant payment and will issue to schools in mid-August. **COVID-19 Capitation Grant**

Schools will receive a COVID-19 Capitation grant to provide for enhanced cleaning and the purchase of necessary supplies of hand sanitiser and PPE for use in the school and classroom.

#### 4.1 Cleaning supports

Funding to support additional cleaning costs will be provided as outlined in the tables below in line with recognised pupil enrolment on 30 September 2019. The grant paid to schools with an enrolment of equal to or less than 60 pupils is based on a minimum enrolment of 60 pupils. Enhanced rates are payable in respect of students attending special schools and special classes attached to mainstream schools to assist with the extra costs associated with the cleaning of classrooms with a small number of students, operating specialist provision. The funding will be provided in the form of a grant paid in instalments, the first of which will issue in mid-August to cover the period to December 2020.

<b>COVID-19 Capitation Grant for Cleaning Costs– rate per pupil</b>	
Mainstream	€63
Special Class	€77

<b>Example of Covid-19 Capitation Grant for Cleaning Costs</b>	
<b>Pupil Enrolment</b>	<b>Value of Grant</b>
Up to 60	€3,780
100	€6,300
200	€12,600
400	€25,200
600	€37,800

Special Schools will received an enhanced COVID-19 grant in line with the number of teachers allocated as per table below.

<b>Special Schools</b>	
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	<b>Enhanced funding</b>
1	€4,620
2	€4,774
3	€7,392
4	€10,010
5	€12,628
6	€15,169
7	€17,556
8	€19,866
9	€20,944
10	€23,485
11	€26,026
12	€28,567
13	€31,108
14	€33,649
15	€36,190
16	€38,731

#### **4.2 Purchase of hand sanitiser and PPE**

A drawdown framework has been established to enable schools to purchase necessary supplies of hand-sanitisers and PPE requirements. The procurement process for this framework is well advanced and it is intended that these materials will be available in early August.

The COVID-19 capitation grant will also be the mechanism through which further additional funding will be provided to cater for school costs related to hand hygiene measures and PPE requirements. The funding will be paid in instalments the first of which will issue in mid-August to cover the period to December 2020.

## 5. Increased Management Supports

### 5.1 Principal Release days:

The number of additional release days that teaching principals may take have been increased to allow all teaching principals one release day per week in respect of the 2020/21 school year. The allocation set out in the following table is in addition to the number of days release time outlined in Circular 0019/2020:

Size of School*	Additional release days
Principal + 5/6	6
Principal +3/4	12
Principal + 0/1/2	18

\*refers to mainstream class posts

### 5.2 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 release days in respect of the 2020/21 school year as follows:

Size of School*	Number of release days
< Principal + 9	5
Principal + 9 – Principal + 16	10
Principal + 17 – Principal + 24	12
Principal + 25 – Principal + 32	14
>Principal + 33	16
All Special Schools > P+4	16

\*refers to mainstream class posts

### 5.3 Extension of Teacher Supply Panels

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 is being extended on a nationwide basis and details of the location of the panels are illustrated in Appendix 1. Arrangements for establishing panels will commence immediately.

Teacher Supply panels 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 Circular 0059/2019.

#### **5.4 Sequencing of access to substitution**

Section 4.1, Chapter 2 of Circular 0044/2019 sets out the sequence of recruitment for vacancies of less than 24 weeks.

Sequence for covering **all teacher** absences:

1. Supply panel if the school is part of a supply panel cluster arrangement,
2. School's own panel of regular substitutes,
3. National substitute service,
4. If no substitute is available from above options then a school may
  - For teachers in mainstream classes, schools use other non-mainstream teachers to cover the absence. A substitute may be employed on a subsequent date when one is available. On that day, the mainstream classroom teacher will undertake non mainstream teaching and the substitute will teach the mainstream class.
  - For non-mainstream teachers a substitute may be employed on a subsequent date when one is available. Special Needs Class teachers cannot be used in this way.
5. Administrative Principal if applicable
6. Local arrangements that facilitate the pupils to be supervised in a manner that does not involve them being split between existing classes in classrooms

#### **6. SNA Substitution**

SNA absences will be fully covered to ensure that those pupils with special educational needs can fully access education

#### **7. Developing Schools**

Schools that are currently in the developing stage, i.e. schools that opened since September 2013, will have the additional supports calculated based on the projected enrolment for September 2020.

#### **8. Department Helpline for schools**

For further queries in relation to this circular, please contact the Department's Helpline **057 9324461**.

The Helpline is open from 9.15am to 5.00pm daily.

Queries can also be sent by email to [reopeningschools@education.gov.ie](mailto:reopeningschools@education.gov.ie)

**Paraic Joyce**  
**Principal Officer**  
**School Governance and Teacher Allocation Section**

**July 2020**

Supply Panel Locations

Countv	Town
Carlow	Carlow
Cavan	Cavan
Clare	Ennis
Clare	Kilrush
Cork	Cobh
Cork	Mitchelstown
Cork	Mallow
Cork	Ballincollig
Cork	Cork City North *
Cork	Cork city Centre
Donegal	Letterkenny
Donegal	Donegal
Donegal	Buncrana
Dublin	Terenure *
Dublin	Dublin city centre
Dublin	Ballyfermot
Dublin	Artane *
Dublin	Ballinteer
Galway	Athenry *
Galway	Galway City
Galway	Tuam
Kerry	Tralee
Kerry	Killarney
Kildare	Maynooth
Kildare	Athy
Kildare	Leixlip *
Kildare	Kildare Town
Kilkenny	Kilkenny City
Laois	Portarlinton
Laois	Portlaoise
Leitrim	Carrick On Shannon
Limerick	Castletroy
Limerick	Newcastlewest
Longfor	Longford
Louth	Dundalk
Louth	Drogheda
Mayo	Claremorris
Mayo	Castlebar
Mayo	Ballina
Meath	Ashbourne
Meath	Navan *
Monagh	Monaghan
Offaly	Tullamore
Offaly	Edenderry
Roscom	Roscommon
Sligo	Sligo
Tipperar	Nenagh
Tipperar	Thurles
Tipperar	Clonmel
Waterto	Waterford
Waterto	Dungarvan
Westme	Athlone
Westme	Mullingar
Wexford	Wexford
Wexford	Enniscorthy
Wicklow	Arklow
Wicklow	Bray
Wicklow	Blessington

\* Pilot Supply Panels

