



31 August 2022

Dear Principal

Welcome back to the new school year.

**The following information may be helpful as this new school year commences.**

### **Information regarding COVID-19**

The Department of Health and the office of the Chief Medical Officer have advised that there are no new requirements in respect of managing COVID-19.

The key messages are as follows:

- **Stay at home if you are unwell.**  
The best way to keep all viruses out of school is to stay at home if you are unwell and until your symptoms have substantially resolved for 48 hours.
- **Maintain a good standard of hand hygiene**
- **Adhere to good respiratory etiquette**
- **Ensure good ventilation arrangements**
- **Continue to maintain good levels of cleaning**

### **COVID-19 Grants**

COVID-19 grants to cover enhanced cleaning and PPE will be paid to schools for Term 1 shortly. The rate of payment in respect of these grants will remain the same as last year. The Cleaning and PPE grants are being combined into one grant to allow for greater flexibility at a school level between cleaning and any PPE requirements. There is no requirement to wear masks but masks should continue to be provided to any staff or students who wish to wear them.

### **Guidance on Ventilation in Schools**

There is no change to the Department's guidance on ventilation that was last updated in 2021. The guidance sets out practical steps to be followed to ensure good ventilation arrangements in our schools. It is important that there is a good balance between managing ventilation arrangements and comfort levels in schools.

As the new school year commences it is good practice to check that the ventilation systems and CO<sub>2</sub> monitors are working correctly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions,



likewise with any air cleaners ensuring adherence to the filter cleaning and maintenance regime recommended by the manufacturer.

## **COVID-19 Response plans**

In accordance with the Transitional Protocol – Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 each workplace should continue to maintain and update their COVID-19 Response Plan to take account of the changed public health advice. The Department is currently revising the template COVID-19 Response plans and these will issue to schools shortly.

## **Information and support regarding pupils/students from Ukraine**

### **POD and PPOD**

Schools are reminded of the importance of keeping the information on POD and PPOD up to date including details on children who have either enrolled in a school or who have left a school. This is particularly important in the context of children from Ukraine who may have recently arrived into or have left your school.

Please note also that the email address used by the Department for school communications is that recorded on POD or PPOD. Please ensure this is up-to-date.

### **Utilising existing school capacity**

Our collective experience in addressing the challenge of providing school places for Ukrainian children has shown that there is generally good capacity across the country, albeit that there are capacity pressures in some local areas. This is particularly evident at primary level, though good capacity was also identified at post-primary level in many areas. Utilising this capacity has ensured that almost 7,300 Ukrainian students have, in the vast majority of cases, been able to access existing accommodation in our schools in the March to June period, which is a very efficient and effective use of resources.

In order to build on this experience for September 2022 and beyond it is important to continue to ensure that existing capacity in a town or area is fully utilised before additional accommodation solutions are deployed for both arriving Ukrainian students and the local typical student intake. This will guide the Planning and Building Unit's approach in considering applications from schools for additional accommodation. This is also particularly relevant for all schools in the context of work commencing shortly on the enrolment process for the 2023/24 school year.

The use of existing capacity in schools is also particularly relevant in the context of facilitating the ongoing and increasing rollout of special education classes in our schools. The Department will support schools that need reconfiguration works to



classrooms to facilitate required classes for children with special educational needs. As part of supporting this process, the Department's Planning and Building Unit has recently put in place streamlined processes, including project manager support and a framework of contractors which will be utilised as appropriate.

### **School Transport Scheme Services**

All Ukrainian children who require school transport will need to submit a new application for the 2022/23 school year. This applies regardless of whether they had access to school transport in the previous school year or not.

Where applications have already been submitted for school transport for 2022/23 school year, please note that these are being processed as they are received. This process will take time, taking account of the increased demand for the service and the significant movement of families. This movement is anticipated to continue into September and enrolment and school transport approvals will need to bear this in mind.

### **Continuing trends in arrivals and movement of families**

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has responsibility for providing emergency accommodation for people arriving from Ukraine. There is likely to continue to be movement of some Ukrainian families from their current accommodation at the end of the summer period, particularly those placed in short-term accommodation (for example student accommodation). This may mean children may move and enrol in a new school in September. Schools are asked to be mindful of the potential for some movement of children and families in these circumstances and the importance of ensuring that details are updated on POD and PPOD. In such circumstances consideration should be given to try minimise the requirement to purchase some school-specific materials.

### **EAL and ESOL process for application, sanction and drawdown**

Schools were previously notified of the arrangements for applying for English as an Additional Language (EAL) supports for the 2022/23 school year. Applications must be made on Form U-EAL 22/23 which is available on this [link](#). EAL resources will be allocated in accordance with table set out in Form U-EAL 22/23.

In instances where post-primary schools are unable to source a teacher to fulfil EAL hours, the school can apply directly to the ESOL co-ordinator in the local ETB and a tutor, if available, will be assigned from the ESOL panel to cover these, or the balance of these, hours. Please note that ESOL supports are available to post-primary schools only.



## **Supporting Wellbeing**

Guidance for schools in relation to supporting the wellbeing of all newly and recently arrived children and young people from Ukraine has been updated by NEPS. This updated version includes strategies and resources to assist school staff in tailoring approaches to support the wellbeing of pupils/students with additional educational needs. This guidance is available [here](#).

## **Class placement advice**

Placing students in the most age-appropriate class, year group and programme is a key priority in supporting wellbeing, identity, belonging, educational progression and outcomes. The Department has developed a detailed information note to offer guidance on class placement and this advice is available [here](#).

As Transition Year is a unique aspect of senior cycle provision, many Ukrainian parents and students are unfamiliar with the programme. To assist their understanding of the programme and senior cycle options an information note on Transition Year is available. This is currently in translation and links will be forwarded when complete.

## **Online resources in Ukrainian – engagement in school**

Schools may receive requests from Ukrainian families to facilitate online access to Ukrainian resources to support the education of Ukrainian children and young people. These include resources and platforms in Ukrainian such as the All Ukrainian Online School.

Such requests for access to online Ukrainian materials should take the following factors into account:

- Student wellbeing
- School capacity
- School timetabling requirements.
- The need (if any) for IT devices
- Availability of learning spaces in which to use devices
- Frequency of desired access to Ukrainian online provision

Schools should engage with Ukrainian students and their parents / guardians in the normal manner to support and guide them in availing of the most suitable options.



## **Supporting Ukrainian students with special educational needs (SEN) – guidance for schools**

The focus for Ukrainian students, including students with special educational needs (SEN), has been on supporting them to be placed early in a school setting and giving them the opportunity to settle in. This has been with the intention of helping them to adapt and adjust to their new environment, new home and new school. This has included the provision of access to practical supports and assistance to settle in and make friends.

For Ukrainian children with SEN enrolling in schools in Ireland, the Department of Education wants to continue to ensure that their placement is in the most inclusive environment that best supports their wellbeing, inclusion and participation in their education. It is envisaged that the majority of Ukrainian children with SEN will continue to enrol in mainstream class settings and will access existing supports in the school.

A guidance note which sets out the basis upon which additional special education teacher (SET) and special needs assistant (SNA) resources, where required, will be allocated is available [here](#). This note also identifies how to support children from Ukraine with SEN who may need to access a special class or special school placement. Schools are encouraged to continue to work with their local special educational needs organiser (SENO) if they have any queries relating to supporting children from Ukraine with SEN.

### **Information on the Regional Education and Language Teams (REALTs)**

The REALT teams act as a liaison between schools, local education support services and national support structures in relation to Ukrainian arrivals as appropriate. You can contact your local REALT team for support if required and the contact details are available [here](#).

These regional teams are hosted and administratively supported within the ETBs and lead a network of other key agencies, including Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), NEPS regional personnel, NCSE regional personnel and Management body local nominees working together with local schools.

### **Department's helpline for Principals**

If your school has other support requirements or queries regarding COVID-19 or the provision of education to pupils/students from Ukraine, the school principal can also contact the Department's helpline for principals by emailing [USupport@education.gov.ie](mailto:USupport@education.gov.ie) or by telephone 057 9324461. The helpline will operate from Monday - Friday 09.00-17.00.

Yours Sincerely

Deirdre Shanley  
Assistant Secretary

