Continuity of Schooling: Answers to Queries and Questions received from Schools
A note about this publication

As part of the national emergency measures to contain the spread of Covid-19, it was announced on 12 March that all schools were to close immediately. Since then, schools have been in contact with many sections of the Department of Education and Skills seeking guidance and information on a wide range of issues. In addition, the Department’s inspectors have been in contact by email and phone with schools throughout the country to listen to concerns and offer advice. This publication gathers together the information and advice provided by the Department to schools. It is hoped that schools will find it a useful resource, and it is intended that the publication will be updated from time to time as new guidance is made available.

Contents

Child Protection ................................................................. 3
Continuity of Learning .......................................................... 4
Curriculum and Assessment .................................................... 7
DEIS ............................................................................. 11
Examinations ..................................................................... 13
ICT/ Online Meetings and learning ........................................ 14
Inspection and SSE ............................................................... 16
Parents ............................................................................. 17
Planning ........................................................................... 18
Policy Development ............................................................. 19
Recruitment/PORs ............................................................... 20
School Buildings / Capital Appraisal ....................................... 21
School Management ............................................................. 22
School Management / Section 29 ........................................... 26
Schools reopening ................................................................. 27
SEN .................................................................................. 29
Child Protection

How should schools deal with the Child Protection Oversight Report during this crisis?

For the duration of these emergency measures, the requirement to provide a Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR) will not apply to board meetings held remotely whether by video conference or teleconference. The principal must continue to maintain the relevant data and records for the CPOR which shall be provided at the next face-to-face meeting of the board. The data in that report must reflect cases arising since the previous CPOR was provided to the board.
Continuity of Learning

**What is the advice for principals concerned for the well-being of staff who are overwhelmed by the pressures for live lessons and greater use of technology?**

The Department has issued Guidance on Continuity of Schooling which is available on the Department website at [Guidance on Continuity of Schooling](#). The application of this guidance, taking all relevant local school context factors into account, is a matter for school management. However, the Department is very conscious of the importance of teachers’ wellbeing as they navigate a challenging situation while trying to support their students. Teachers should engage with their colleagues and school management to ensure collegial support during this time. It is essential that teachers develop strategies and access support as necessary to safeguard their own wellbeing. In this regard, teachers’ attention should be brought to the Department’s Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme where relevant. Details are available at the following link: [Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme](#)

**It can be difficult to get the balance right between teacher/parent aspirations for remote learning and not overwhelming students with work. What advice can you give?**

A suite of guidance documents has issued to schools, all of which are available on the Department website. The documents emphasise the importance of schools and parents remaining in contact with a view to maximising the benefits of the educational interventions for students. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has provided advice and resources for keeping children and young people well during Covid-19, which can be found at the following link: [NEPS Covid19 Resources](#)

**Principals are reporting that some sixth class pupils are disengaging from the continuity programmes of learning. Some parents have refused to engage with teachers and have not responded to emails. They give**
assurances to the principal over the phone, but yet there are no improvements in the responses to the teachers. What should the principal do?

Schools are advised to make alternative arrangements for continuity of learning where digital solutions are not available or where a parent asks for some other means of engagement. Schools have been asked to agree the form and scheduling of communication with parents. They are also asked to continue to make efforts to work with students that are not engaging. In the situation where a digital or online approach is problematic / not acceptable to the parent, the school should try to find an alternative way of engaging with the student. In terms of the parent's role, parents / guardians should be made aware that while school buildings are not accessible to students, neither the teachers nor the students are on school holidays. Teaching and learning are continuing, albeit in a remote learning environment. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child attends lessons and engages with the activities that have been provided.

Parents are expected to engage with the school in the interests of their child’s education. If they are not willing to have their child attend school, which during the current crisis means engaging with whatever means the school can put in place for them for remote learning, then they are in breach of their statutory responsibility to support their child’s education. Where students are not engaging despite continued efforts by the school, schools are advised to seek the support of their Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

What if a principal does not want teachers to use online platforms for communication, lessons, etc. as they feel that it would show up other members of staff or the principal has directed teachers to use email only and to send work on a weekly/fortnightly basis?

The DES position is outlined clearly in the Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: For Primary and Post Primary Schools documents. The schools’ organisation and application of the support for continuity of schooling should reflect the guidance provided by the DES and, at all times, should ensure that the care, welfare and effective education of its pupils/students are central to all decisions. As the DES is not involved in school management, this specific issue should be addressed by the school’s board of management.
A number of schools are providing regular phone call support to parents of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and a number of principals reported concern about how some parents and families will cope without this support measure over the period of the summer holidays.

The DES document *Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs* outlines the DES position regarding support for all pupils with SEN. There is no expectation that schools would continue with the general programme of home schooling beyond the confines of the school year. The DES has published details of its summer support programme in place of July provision and further information on this is available at the following link: [Summer Provision](#)

**How frequently should primary teachers be engaging with their pupils? How often should teachers engage with pupils during school closure?**

Where possible, primary teachers should engage with their pupils on a daily basis or at least a number of times each week. This engagement will vary between the work that the teacher will ask pupils to do independently and direct teaching, including a balance of assigned tasks such as written, practical activities and project work. Where suitable facilities are available, consideration should be given to online learning such as virtual classes, videos of lessons, presentations or use of online learning resources by the pupils. Where there is less frequent engagement throughout the week, a clear daily and manageable allocation of work should be provided for pupils. Further guidance is available at the following link: [Guidance on Continuity of Schooling for Primary Schools](#).
Curriculum and Assessment

What is the current position regarding the teaching of the Stay Safe programme to pupils, particularly pupils in 6th class who will be transitioning at the end of the school year?

It is recommended that the Stay Safe programme not be taught remotely at this time, but that it be prioritised instead in term one of 2020/2021. For primary pupils transferring to post-primary school who have not accessed Stay Safe for 5th and 6th class, the relevant post-primary schools should be informed of the remaining areas of learning that have yet to be completed so that these can be prioritised as part of the SPHE programme for first-year students.

What guidance is available to primary teachers regarding the completion of end-of-year reports and the passports for transition to post primary schools?

The recently published document on the DES website entitled Supporting schools in providing end-of-year written reports to parents of children in primary school is available at the following link: Providing end-of-year written reports to parents.

Could post-primary schools be given a one-year extension in relation to the requirement that schools provide 400 timetabled hours of wellbeing from September 2020 onward? A number of schools reported that they were about to conduct curriculum reviews to support this work in spring 2020.

The requirement is that schools work towards providing for 400 hours of wellbeing over a period of three years, from September 2020. This means that students entering first year in September 2020 and subsequent school years will experience/have provided for them a wellbeing programme of 400 hours over the course of their three-year Junior Cycle
programme.
In relation to planning for the curriculum, we know that schools have been very busy planning for teaching and learning and adapting their approaches to working with students in a distance learning environment. One of the central challenges for schools has been supporting the wellbeing of students and staff during the current school closures. It would be very important that wellbeing remain a focus for school communities when they reopen their physical buildings at the start of the next school year. This means that school leaders should continue to organise regular meetings with teaching staff and encourage communications between teachers to maintain staff relations, to support each other and to plan and co-ordinate students' learning.

**Where can schools access guidance on 2nd year classroom based assessments?**

The following link to the NCCA website provides the latest information on revised arrangements for the completion of CBAs for current second-year students; [NCCA Revised Arrangements for Current Second Years](#).

**Junior Cycle Assessment**

*What is the advice for schools, should teachers decide not to include any work submitted/completed for JC assessment after the schools' closure on 12 March?*

Please refer to the guidelines on JC assessment on the DES website available at the following link: [Information on Junior Cycle Assessment](#).

**With regard to the TY programme, can a school relax or apply a waiver to the LC syllabus content stipulation in circulars M31/93 and M47/93?**

No change to the stipulations about the use of Leaving Certificate course content is currently planned.

**What is the current advice regarding the teaching of the RSE programme in schools?**
Schools should decide what aspects of the RSE programme are appropriate for distance learning and prioritise those being omitted for the new school year. In order to address teaching and learning about puberty for 5th and 6th class pupils, schools can refer parents to the RSE tip sheet for parents on the PDST website and to the HSE website where copies of Busy Bodies can be ordered for use at home. While schools may not feel it is possible to deliver this aspect of the curriculum remotely, equipping parents with these resources could be valuable for their children as it can facilitate and support conversations about puberty at home.

**Will the DES require primary schools to submit standardised assessment data for the 2019-20 school year?**

The Department has made the decision to cancel standardised tests in primary schools for the 2019/2020 academic year. There will be no requirement to include standardised test results in end-of-year reports, with the exception of where a child is transitioning to post-primary level. Standardised tests are only one of a number of assessment tools that can be used to inform teaching and learning in primary schools. Further information is available on the Covid-19 page of the Department’s website: [DES Covid-19 Page](#).

**In special schools where students are completing level one or two in the Junior Cycle, will the schools still be issued with Junior Cycle certification from the DES?**

Yes. The Department publication on Assessment and Reporting on Students’ Learning at Junior Cycle (May 2020) covers L1 and L2 learning programmes within the Junior Cycle. It states that the Department will provide a State Certificate of completion of three years of Junior Cycle education in a number of subjects/priority learning units.

**Could the implementation of four newly revised LCA module descriptors and one newly revised LC subject specification (Art) which were due to be implemented from September 2020 onward be postponed to the 2021-2022 school year?** See circular 0061/2019.
The Department is working on the development of contingency plans for the re-opening of schools in September. Arising from this, guidance will issue to schools on the logistical and curricular arrangements to be put in place to facilitate the phased re-opening of schools. This guidance will provide a framework for individual schools to develop plans for the re-opening of school in accordance with their own circumstances, the context and needs of their staff and students, and in compliance with public health guidelines. The Department is aware of the challenges faced by fifth year students at this time. The guidance will include advice to schools on how to provide for the learning needs of all year groups including fifth year students as they continue their studies in September 2020, and guidance will issue to schools in due course.

**LCA-how is the accumulation of credits to be managed, in particular in relation to session 4?**

Detailed and regularly updated guidelines regarding the 2020 assessment arrangements for all Leaving Certificate programmes can be found on the Department website. These include arrangements for the assessment of the Leaving Certificate Applied programme.

**What is the best way to identify and document the gaps in the curriculum in terms of teaching and also in terms of learning during the period of closure?**

Schools should use all existing guidelines on assessment (both subject specific, criterion referenced and norm referenced) in their work to address this query. The NCCA publication on assessment available at [NCCA Assessment Publication](#) should also inform work in this regard. The ‘Return to Schooling Group’ within the Department is considering this issue along with many others, and any additional advice and guidance from this group will be communicated centrally in due course.

**Is it possible, in the absence of official junior cycle examinations, to offer QQI level 3 qualifications to students?**

Courses leading to the QQI level 3 qualifications require considerable planning and lead-in time in addition to the time needed by students to complete the work. This is therefore not a practicable route for current 3rd year students. Schools should bear in mind the range of learning programmes available within the Junior Cycle Framework.
DEIS

How do you support pupils in DEIS schools who have very little access to digital devices or broadband or where there is limited parental support?

The HSCL portion of the DEIS grant is specifically for HSCL related work. There are funds available to schools to purchase devices. An ICT grant and DEIS grant have issued to schools for the purpose of supporting learning. Schools will receive correspondence in relation to the DEIS grant. The ICT circulars are available here:

Circular 0031/2020 - ICT Grant Criteria and Terms
Circular 0032/2020 - Issuing of ICT Grant

Some schools have provided devices to students to address the above-mentioned resource issue. Other schools are being supported by local agencies such as the Youth and Family Support agency to provide devices and data. The key message is that schools should link into existing partnerships to source solutions for such issues.

What guidance will the Department provide on how schools will support pupils who are currently witnessing inappropriate and unstructured home environments on their return to school?

All schools are reminded of their ongoing obligation to ensure that The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (available here) are implemented in the event that there are any child protection concerns. The NEPS advice and resources for keeping children and young people well during Covid-19 are also a very useful resource in this regard. These resources are available at the following link: NEPS Covid-19 Resources

A 'Return to Schooling' group has been set up to consider all issues relating to the safe and effective return to school, currently scheduled for September.
Concern is expressed that the retention of students is going to be a real challenge, particularly in DEIS schools. Many have found jobs in retail and may be reluctant to go back to school. What should schools do?

Retention of students is a central theme of action planning for improvement in DEIS schools. Many of the additional supports to DEIS schools, including those provided through HSCL and SCP, are intended to improve retention. School leaders are advised to ensure that, on return to school, all supports are being used to the fullest extent in dealing with Covid-related issues such as student retention.

Parents have expressed the desire that the provision of school lunches (DEIS schools) be extended into the summer months as a large cohort of parents have suffered job losses. Is this possible?

All queries relating to the extension of the school meals programme should be directed to school.meals@welfare.ie or telephone 071 9138625.

What is being done to support students living in direct provision centres, who lack the physical space to study and have limited access to digital devices and Wi-Fi?

The challenges of striving to continue in education while residing in direct provision are acknowledged and ways of dealing with these challenges are being considered across a number of departments. All Direct Provision centres, including emergency accommodation, are required to have Wi-Fi facilities.
Examinations

Junior Cycle results are used for conditional placements in UK colleges. What arrangements are in place now?

The Department is currently in talks with UK colleges in relation to this issue with a view to progressing the matter.

When will the LCVP exam be scheduled?

Information on Leaving Certificate 2020 is published on the Department website and is regularly updated. Detailed arrangements for the postponed examinations will be communicated to the system in due course, for students who opt to sit the Leaving Certificate examinations at a later stage when it is safe to do so.
ICT/ Online Meetings and learning

Lack of an overarching policy regarding hosting of 'online lessons', the safety of some online platforms and difficulty in engaging in collaborative policy formulation is a source of concern to principals.

Would the Department consider providing a policy template (similar to the one used for the admissions policy) for use of technology to deliver online lessons?

The Department will continue to work with the education partners to provide solutions in areas where digital and remote learning options may not be possible, and work is underway to provide guidance to schools about how best to use digital and other solutions to provide ongoing learning for students at this time.

The Professional Development Service for Teachers has provided information regarding the use of various platforms available for remote learning which will facilitate online lessons and extensive information on conference platforms. Relevant considerations for schools, teachers and parents regarding the safe and ethical use of the internet, platforms and devices at this time can be found on Webwise.

Schools’ Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

Could schools be given text to insert in an updated AUP re loaning of laptops, of dongles, and for teaching via videoconferencing?

Schools are advised to maintain a register of devices, the students/pupils/teachers to whom each has been loaned and a log of confirmation for return of each device. As these devices are property of the school all schools should put in place an agreement of understanding for the loan of a device to a student and it is recommended that an undertaking to return the device to the school, when remote learning is no longer required, is obtained from either from the parent/guardian or the student in the event that the student is 18 or over. Schools can choose if they wish to include this in their AUP. Advice is also given in relation to the AUP regarding remote learning in the Guidance documents developed and published by the
What is the position of holding board of management meetings using online conference platforms? Are there any reasons why this is not acceptable?

The note on Important Information regarding school administration issues during the current public health emergency issued by the DES on the 1 April 2020 advises that solutions will be required for Boards of Management to meet and continue to operate and make important decisions in relation to the functioning of the schools particularly in these challenging times. This note is available at the following link: School Administration during Public Health Emergency

Section 13.3 (g) of the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 – 2023 provides for the use of conference calls to facilitate board meetings.

This is not necessarily restricted to the use of phones. Other on-line media platforms can be considered once the board is satisfied that appropriate security measures are in place to protect confidentiality. Where phones and other online media platforms have been used to host the meeting, this should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. The normal requirements for confidentiality continue to apply.

Section 13.3 (c) of the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 – 2023 sets out the arrangements for meetings to remain quorate for their duration.
Inspection and SSE

If schools proceed to open in September, what will be the expectation in terms of inspection documentation and standards?

The role of the Inspectorate in advising, supporting and evaluating when schooling recommences is set out in Circulars 0040/2020 (primary) and 0041/2020 (post-primary and centres for education) which can be accessed here.

Will schools that were informed of Whole School Evaluations (WSE), Subject Inspections (SI) and Curriculum Evaluation (CE) prior to the school closures be prioritised for evaluation when schools reopen?

All inspection activity which was planned for the period from the commencement of the exceptional school closure to the end of the school year has been cancelled. When planning for the recommencement of inspection, Inspectorate management will agree the range of factors to be taken into consideration when prioritising schools for evaluation. This process of identification will produce a new inspection list.
Parents

Is there a plan to issue guidance to parents regarding expectations of pupils learning at home?

Guidance notes for parents have been published on the Covid-19 page of DES website and are available at the following link: Guidance for Parents of Primary School Pupils.

This guidance note for parents has also been translated into Albanian, Arabic, Farsi, French, Georgian, Kurdish, Pasto, Somali, Spanish and Urdu which are available at the following link: Guidance from Parents – Range of Languages.

Does the DES have advice on school management of the complaints process during this period?

The Department does not have a role in relation to individual complaints at school level. The handling of these is a matter for the board of management of each school in consultation with their management bodies.

When will remote Section 29 hearings start?

What is the backlog?

Remote hearing of Section 29 appeals has commenced, and the backlog is currently being cleared.
Planning

What are the expectations regarding school planning and individual teacher planning during the Covid-19 closure period?

Guidance on teacher planning, assessment and recording is available on the DES website at Guidance on Continuity of Schooling.

Should schools complete the Education Passport for pupils transferring to post–primary?

Schools should use the Education Passport materials developed by the NCCA, including the child and parent forms, as usual this year. The passports should be retained in the primary school until the post-primary school principal or designated person who has responsibility for initiating the pupil information transfer sends a written request for the children’s report cards. Standardised test scores from 2nd class, 4th class and 6th class are usually contained in the report. However, for the 2019/20 school year, standardised test scores for 2nd, 4th and for 5th class, where tests were administered, should be provided. This will provide the post-primary school with useful information about the trend in test performance over a period of time.
Policy Development

Can schools delay the drafting of the new admissions policy as stakeholder engagement is difficult at the current time?

The timeline of 30 April is determined by the Admissions Act and therefore cannot be changed. An advice note on school administration issues (link below) was published on the 1st April and includes guidance on undertaking the consultation required by the Act. The advice note is available at the following link: School Administration during Public Health Emergency

How should a school deal with a potential child protection concern which is encountered/noted during a live online session with pupils?

Schools should at all time act in accordance with the Child Protection Procedures For Primary and Post Primary Schools in the event of encountering any potential child protection issues.

Should schools review their critical incident policies in the context of the challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic?

NEPS, the Department’s National Educational Psychological Service, has developed advice and resources for keeping children and young people well during Covid-19. These resources aim to support children and young people’s learning and wellbeing at this time. NEPS is updating resources and reviewing its approach to supporting schools that experience critical incidents. In addition, NEPS is encouraging all schools to update their own critical incident management plans. NEPS psychologists continue to be available to provide advice and support to school principals, teachers and school communities.
Recruitment/PORs

How should a principal manage necessary recruitment?

School should contact their management bodies for advice and support, particularly in relation to the use of digital technology to facilitate remote interviewing.

Is it possible to extend the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator term beyond five years at the current time?

No; the terms of Circular 0016/2019 still apply. TUSLA Education Support Service is cognisant of the additional supports that will be required due to Covid 19 restrictions, particularly with regard to the handover process and in the approaches that HSCL co-ordinators will need to implement when interacting and communicating with families.

Are there revised procedures to be implemented when appointing a HSCL co-ordinator for September?

Schools should refer to the Information Note: SIU 0001/2020 on Circular 0016/2019 available at the following link: Information Note on Changed Procedures for Home School Community Liaison during Covid-19. It provides updates with regard to the amended advertising procedures for HSCL coordinators.

As teachers are under significant pressure supporting continuity of learning, could the review of posts of responsibility be deferred?

The DES plans to issue amendments to the leadership and management circular 03/2018 which will address this issue.
School Buildings / Capital Appraisal

Can schools complete the Summer Works scheme?
The Summer Works scheme is scheduled to go ahead subject to public health guidelines for the construction industry.

A school which is in temporary accommodation is not in a position to progress procurement yet for a new school building and is anxious about planning for next academic year.

All progress on building matters will be contingent on public health advice to the construction industry.

When can planned Emergency Works take place?
This is determined by the public health guidelines to the construction industry.
School Management

In the case of a teaching principal, is it still possible to get substitute cover for remaining administration days?

Yes, in the event that the school is of the view that a substitute teacher is required to support the planned programme of work for pupils.

Can a school hire a substitute if a teacher goes on sick leave?

Yes. Leave is available to teachers as normal and substitute teachers may still be employed.

In the context of panel rights what implications will current closure have on building up service?

Fixed term and substitute contracts are continuing as normal so any teacher employed in such a contract will continue to build up service.

Can the Department issue advice in relation to calculation of service for the purpose of CID in the context of the current school closure?

Fixed term and substitute contracts are continuing as normal so any teacher employed in such a contract will continue to build up service.

Could some principal release days from 2019/20 be transferred to the next academic year as there will more administration work to do when schools reopen?

Administrative days cannot be transferred from one academic year to another.

Will teachers be permitted to carry extra personal
vacation (EPV) days into the school year 20/21?

Teachers should apply for their EPV leave in the unusual manner. There is no provision to carry EPV days into the new academic year.

Can schools close in June on the date which they had already decided prior to school closures?

School should continue their distance learning programme in accordance with their agreed school calendar.

Are there specific guidelines available for schools regarding requests from parents for children to repeat classes due to the interruption in schooling as a result of the Covid pandemic?

Circular 32/2003 outlines exceptional circumstances in which a primary pupil might be considered for retention in the same grade for two school years. The arrangements outlined in this circular remain in place.

In general, gaps in primary pupils’ and post-primary students’ learning arising solely due to the emergency closure of schools should not result in a pupil/student repeating a year. When pupils/students have started back in school, the principal and teachers can assess their needs and adapt their teaching programme so that any gaps in their learning resulting from the emergency closure of schools can be addressed. For the vast majority of pupils/students, this will ensure progression is as seamless a manner as possible. Outside of this, schools should process requests from parents for primary pupils to repeat a year in the usual manner in accordance with Circular 32/2003. Post-primary schools should process and submit the applications from parents in the usual manner in accordance with Circular M02/95.

What is the DES position regarding requests from parents of pupils to repeat sixth class?

Advice and guidance on supporting transitions is available in the DES Guidance on Continuity of Schooling document available at Guidance on Continuity of Schooling. Specifically, with regard to repeating any school year, circular 32/2003 outlines exceptional
circumstances in which a pupil might be considered for retention in the same grade. The arrangements outlined in this circular remain in place. In general, gaps in pupils’ learning arising solely due to the emergency closure of schools should not result in a pupil repeating a year. When pupils have started back in school, the principal and teachers can assess their needs and adapt their teaching programme so that any gaps in their learning resulting from the emergency closure of schools can be addressed. For the vast majority of pupils, this will ensure progression is as seamless a manner as possible. Outside of this, schools should process requests from parents for pupils to repeat a year in the usual manner in accordance with Circular 32/2003.

A teacher had requested and been granted parental leave in June. The board of management and principal are happy to have this request cancelled. However, we are experiencing difficulties updating this on the OLCS.

The relevant Department section has successfully processed a number of these issues. For any school experiencing similar problems, please go to the Department of Education and Skills website to contact the payroll division and choose the customer service and the tab for Primary and Post Primary as appropriate. This will ensure that the query is routed to the relevant staff member who can address the issue on behalf of the specific school.

When will schools receive a response regarding appeals for staffing?

The next meeting of the Primary Staffing Appeals Board to deal with appeals for the 2020/21 school year will be held in June. The closing date for submission of appeals was Monday 15th June 2020. Appeals must be submitted to Primary Allocations Section, Department of Education and Skills, Athlone, on the standard application form (Appendix F Circular 0018/2020).

If arrangements had been made to employ a substitute teacher to cover principal’s release days prior to school closure, does this arrangement still hold?

Yes: Arrangements for leave and the employment of substitute cover remain unchanged. School are asked to reflect on the extent to which a short-term substitute will be in a position
to engage in the continuity of schooling programme.

**Will the redeployment panel list be sent out as normal?**

The redeployment panel list has been issued.

**How will allocation for Adult Education programmes for 2020/2021 be assigned?**

The arrangement in place is that the current allocation will roll over into next year and schools should proceed on that basis.

**Would it be possible for the pupils to have some time with the previous teacher in September to bring closure before going on to their new class?**

Advice and guidance on supporting within school transitions is available in the DES Guidance on Continuity of Schooling document available at [Guidance on Continuity of Schooling](#).

**Can teachers be given permission to go into schools to prepare for the students returning?**

Guidance on access to schools is now issued on the DES website and is available at [Guidance on Access to Schools](#).
School Management / Section 29

Given all the other issues which schools have to address at present, the considerable additional workload in preparing the Section 29 in the new format is adding to the burden.

Under the Education Act 1998, parents/guardians have a statutory entitlement to take a section 29 appeal. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, it was necessary to amend the procedures for hearing section 29 appeals to ensure that appeals could continue to be dealt in a manner consistent with public health guidance. This was done following consultation with the education partners. The temporary changes are set out in addenda to the procedures which are available at the following link: Addendum to the Procedures for Hearing and Determining Appeals under Section 29

The changes provide for hearings to be conducted by teleconference. This format allows all participants to access the appeal process and thereby ensures appeals taken by parents/guardians can be heard during the current period. Proceeding with appeals now, in accordance with the statutory requirements, also ensures that both parents and schools have clarity in relation to their position in advance of the start of the 2020/21 school year.
Schools reopening

Schools are very concerned about making safe and well-planned arrangements for reopening. Schools have asked questions about logistics, about vulnerable groups and individuals, and about the curriculum and teaching and learning. What advice and guidance can they expect from the Department?

The most up-to-date advice and guidance regarding the reopening of schools is available on the Department’s website at the following link: Framework for Reopening and operating Schools

Should schools purchase services and products which companies claim will make the school safer and resistant to virus contamination?

The advice from the DES is to refrain from buying anything in advance of guidance from the DES which is scheduled to issue following consultation with stakeholders. This guidance will be based on the "National Return to Work Safely Protocol" and experience from other jurisdictions.

Is the Department advising that primary schools keep class teachers with the same class and move up together for the next academic year?

The allocation of teachers is a matter for individual school principals. However, primary teachers within each school should ensure that relevant aspects of monthly progress records and assessment data are shared with colleagues so that all teachers are aware of what areas of the curriculum have been covered. In the interest of continuity, consideration might be given to the current class teacher continuing with their class where possible as they proceed to the next class level. Consideration might also be given to leaving the composition of class groups as they were where resources allow and subject to school policy. Student Support plans, where in place, should also be formally reviewed and information shared as
appropriate with new teachers.

Some sixth class pupils in primary schools have not yet received a place in post-primary schools.

In the event that a pupil does not secure a place in post primary school, the matter should be referred to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla – the Child and Family Agency. If a parent or guardian wishes to appeal a decision of a board of management to refuse enrolment, this can be done through a section 29 appeal which must be lodged within 42 calendar days of the date the board of management communicated its decision. The DES has put special arrangements in place to hear section 29 appeals remotely during the current crisis.

Can schools arrange for parents to come to schools to collect textbooks and is it appropriate for schools to request teachers be in attendance to organise this- is it deemed a necessity in terms of travel restrictions?

The DES has provided advice to teachers regarding access to schools from May 18th. The advice is available on the DES website or at the following link: Guidance on Access to Schools.

Should schools prioritise the aspects of literacy and numeracy which have not been covered when schools re-open?

Circular 0056/2011 available at here currently makes provision for giving significantly enhanced time to literacy and numeracy. In addition to the discrete time devoted to literacy and numeracy, the integrated nature of the primary school curriculum also provides extensive opportunities for the development of these areas in a cross curricular context. In addition to this, a specialist group is examining what, if any, curricular implications arise from the current situation. Updates on the work of this group will issue in due course.
Many principals report that the length of the period of school closure is impacting negatively on pupils’ wellbeing and they are seeking clarity about interventions available to vulnerable children and their families over the summer period.

Details regarding the Summer programme for vulnerable pupils and pupils with special educational needs have been published and are available at the following link: Summer Provision

Is there any provision being made for additional SNAs to be appointed to DEIS schools in September to assist with expected high levels of anxiety/trauma among more vulnerable families?

Schools have been notified of the arrangements for the allocation of SNA support in respect of students in mainstream classes for 2020/21. The arrangements include the following provisions:

• 2019/20 mainstream class SNA allocations will be frozen, from the date of issue of Circular 0030/2020, and will automatically rollover into the 2020/21 school year. This means that no school will receive an allocation less than that which they have on the date of issue of this Circular and existing SNAs currently in standard SNA posts can continue in these posts for the next school year in the normal way.
• Schools may apply to the NCSE for additional posts where they can demonstrate that the current allocation does not meet additional care needs within the mainstream classes in the school. Applications for additional posts arising from significant new or emerging additional care needs, which cannot be catered within existing allocations, will be dealt with by way of an exceptional review process.
• A diagnosis of a disability, or a psychological or other professional report, will not be necessary for this process.
• The role of the SNA to support the care needs of students in mainstream classes, as set out in Circular 0030/2014, remains unchanged.
It is expected that schools will review and reprioritise the deployment of SNAs within mainstream settings and allocate resources to ensure those with the greatest level of need receive the greatest level of support. Providing access to SNA support continues to be based on primary care needs as outlined in DES Circular 0030/2014.

The NCSE will endeavour to respond to all applications for exceptional review received prior to 22nd May 2020 by 30th June 2020 and in that regard, it will prioritise applications from schools with no current SNA allocation and developing schools. Applications for an Exceptional Review received after 22 May 2020 will continue to be processed once all other applications have been completed.

The exceptional review process for mainstream allocations will be available to schools throughout the 2020/21 school year.

**If SNAs have not yet been temporarily assigned can they be asked to undertake school-related tasks such as the preparation of resources and lamination of materials?**

In the period pending the assignment of an individual SNA to the HSE, that SNA is available to support their allocated students through their school. Contemporaneous public health advice provided by the National Public Health Emergency Team and the terms of Circular 0024/2020, which sets out the special arrangements to cater for COVID-19 for SNAs, must of course be complied with in this regard.

**Can the SNAs in special schools and special classes stay with their assigned pupils as part of the temporary assignment scheme?**

Ideally children and families who have been identified as needing supports will be matched to the SNA with whom they are already familiar. It is acknowledged that the availability of SNAs will not always allow this matching. In such cases an SNA may be assigned to an unfamiliar child / family. In all cases the SNA will be supported by a key point of contact in the children’s disability service who is familiar with the needs of the child / family.

Circular 27/2020 available [here](#) outlines the provisions for temporary assignment.
The circular states that all SNAs are to be nominated for temporary assignment and may be called for assignment subject to the terms of Circular 0024/2020. Discussions between the HSE and school management will take place prior to executing the reassignment of individual personnel. Further information is available on the FAQ document on the DES website which is available at the following link:

Temporary Assignment Arrangements

Schools are likely to have increased numbers of pupils experiencing learning difficulties. Can flexibility be extended to the manner in which schools deploy their SEN teaching resources?

The current special education teaching allocation model provides autonomy to schools and places a responsibility on schools to deploy the allocated resources in a manner that maximises support for pupils with the greatest levels of need. Decisions regarding the most appropriate models of support to be used should be made by school management, informed by Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools. These are available at the following link: Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs

Any additional queries should be addressed to temporaryassignment@publicjobs.ie

What is the position regarding SNAs in light of the temporary assignment scheme?

Schools should follow the process outlined in Circular 27/2020 with regard to SNA reassignment. In the event that their SNAs are required for reassignment, the school will be contacted by the HSE to discuss the matter. Further information is available on the FAQ document on the DES website which is available at the following link:

Temporary Assignment Arrangements

Does the Department have guidance on 1:1 SET teaching interventions and social distancing?

The Department has guidance on 1:1 SET teaching interventions and social distancing. Discussions on the implementation of social distancing in schools are ongoing. Further information is available on the DES website which is available at the following link: Social Distancing in Schools

SNAs are to be nominated for temporary assignment and may be called for assignment.
To assist with the development of contingency plans for the re-opening and operation of schools, the Department is engaging with relevant stakeholders and experts from within the education sector and the health sector. This work will be based on the National Return to Work Safely Protocol and will also be informed by guidance and experience from other jurisdictions. Following consultation with the education partners, guidance will issue to schools on the logistical and curricular arrangements to be put in place to facilitate the phased re-opening of schools. This guidance will provide a framework for individual schools to develop plans for the re-opening of school in accordance with their own circumstances and context and the needs of their staff and students. This issue has been brought to the attention of this group.

**How do I request a review of the SET allocation for September?** We have applications for enrolment from a large number of children who have just moved into a recently opened direct provision centre and initial indications are that a number of pupils will require SEN and EAL support.

A process is in place to address circumstances where the school profile significantly changes e.g. a developing school where the net enrolment numbers significantly increased. The criteria for qualification for mainstream school developing school posts are set out in the Primary and Post Primary School Staffing Schedule for the 2020/21 school year. Schools who qualify for additional mainstream developing school posts in accordance with these criteria will also qualify for additional Special Education Teaching Allocations to take account of this developing status.

It is also acknowledged that there are some circumstances, which may arise in schools, which fall outside the allocation process for developing school status. These relate to exceptional or emergency circumstances which could not have been anticipated e.g. where the school profile changes very significantly, or where other exceptional circumstances have arisen in a school and which may require a review of schools capacity to provide additional teaching support for all pupils who need it in the school, or of their utilisation of their allocations.

Schools who wish to apply for a review of their schools allocation on the grounds of exceptional needs arising may apply at the following link: [Review of Special Education Teacher supports where there are Exceptional Circumstances or Needs](#)

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32
Will pupils in special schools and classes be expected to attend school every day when schools return?

To assist with the development of contingency plans for the re-opening and operation of schools, the Department is engaging with relevant stakeholders and experts from within the education sector and the health sector. This work will be based on the National Return to Work Safely Protocol and will also be informed by guidance and experience from other jurisdictions. Following consultation with the education partners, guidance will issue to schools on the logistical and curricular arrangements to be put in place to facilitate the phased re-opening of schools. This guidance will provide a framework for individual schools to develop plans for the re-opening of school in accordance with their own circumstances and context and the needs of their staff and students.

In the meantime, the management and teaching staff of the school should focus between now and the end of the school year on ensuring that their pupils stay connected with others, keep up their interest in their school work and make progress in their learning.