**Rollout of Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) at primary level from September 2017**

The FSSU was set up in 2006 to provide a support mechanism for all voluntary secondary schools in relation to financial governance matters.

The expansion of the FSSU to include primary level was referenced in the *Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015-2019* and is included in the Department of Education & Skills Action Plan for 2017.

5 key points to note:

1. The Department will publish a Circular in September 2017 which will outline the arrangements for the roll out and operation of the FSSU service.
2. The FSSU will be an important source of advice and support for primary schools on financial governance matters - primarily provided via on-line and telephone support. In this regard it is envisaged that from September 2017 onwards the FSSU will develop templates for use internally by schools for monitoring monthly income, expenditure, budget management, cash flow etc. The use of the FSSU internal templates will be optional for schools who may if they so wish, continue to use the IPPN Airgead Bunscoile/Financial Template, CPSMA Accounts templates etc. for their internal use.
3. The FSSU will also be focussed on facilitating the phased introduction of a standardised national template for school accounts at primary level. The national template will be the standardised way for accountants/auditors to prepare school accounts in accordance with the requirements of Section 18 of the Education Act 1998. The following is the envisaged timeline for same:

* **2017/18 school year**: FSSU to focus on provision of advice and support as part of preparations for the phased introduction of the standardised national template for school accounts.
* **2018/19 school year**: This will be the first year for school accounts to be prepared using the standardised national template. This will be the required format for schools to fulfil obligations under Section 18 of the Education Act 1998.
* **End February 2020** (6 months after end of 2018/19 school year): This will be the latest date for school accounts for the 2018/19 school year to be submitted to the FSSU.

1. The standardised national template for school accounts will be consistent with the format of the FSSU internal templates referred to at 2 above. Therefore, use of the internal FSSU templates may result in lower accountancy fees for certifying or auditing school accounts (as required under Section 18 of the Education Act 1998) as the information presented to an Accountant will be in a format that will facilitate relevant data for the school accounts to be extracted more readily.
2. This update should be brought to the attention of School Principals and Boards of Management.