



Newsletter

No. 59 April 2020

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A note from the General Secretary

Dear Principals and Chairpersons

I hope you and your families are keeping safe and well. I think that facing back into the unknown may be almost more difficult this term, when you have already worked so hard to come to terms with the challenges of these unprecedented school closures and are familiar with the difficulties involved.

CPSMA is very aware that the sheer volume of emails received by school principals, before Easter, in relation to Covid-19 has been overwhelming and at times confusing.

This Newsletter will cover the main issues which have been arising for schools and will contain links to the relevant documentation and circulars, which we hope will be of assistance to you.

Our role is to support your school and your school management at this time. We are available to talk to you on our advice line at **01-629 2462** Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you need a call back at a later time, please mention this to Ciara or Lorna. You can also email us on info@cpsma.ie and one of our advisers will call you back.

If there is any other way in which we can be of assistance to you, please contact us and we will do our best to help. Thank you so much for your dedication to our schools.

Seamus Mulcahey



Taking care of yourself

It has never been more important to take care of ourselves, but it can be difficult to actually do this amidst work commitments, health concerns, family responsibilities and travel restrictions. We have included some of the suggestions, which we have received from our members. Hopefully there will be something here that assists you too.

1. Accept that this is not “working from home “as it should be. These are very challenging times and many of you are trying to work in difficult circumstances, with either children at home or family to look after.
2. Take a walk once a day in the neighbourhood. Seeing other people, albeit at a safe distance, helps remind us that we are not alone in this situation.
3. Make an effort to sleep at regular times, despite the temptation to stay up later.
4. Taking some form of exercise every day has tremendous benefits, mentally and physically.
5. Set limits to the times that you tune into news updates.
6. Some evenings, immerse yourself in a good book or film, or tune into one of the of the free concerts currently on offer.
7. Be sure to engage regularly with your friends or colleagues, by phone or conference call. Frequent contact with your own support network is essential to your wellbeing.

If you are finding it hard to cope with the current situation, or if life is very difficult for any reason, [Inspire Workplaces](#) have a dedicated phone line which can be accessed on **1800 411 057**. They will provide you with confidential free telephone counselling and advice. So be sure to call them if you need to, or pass on this number on to a staff member who may require this assistance. They also have [self help resources](#) which are very helpful and which can be accessed without having to engage with one of Inspire team.



You can also ring us at CPSMA on **01-629 2462** or email us at info@cpsma.ie and we will support you in whatever way we can.



Distance Learning

General

Distance Learning is the subject of much debate at present, in the context of the education being provided by schools to their students, who are at home due the current health crisis. Less attention is being paid to the fact that the educators are also at home for the same reasons.

Survey and Report

In the early days of this pandemic, school principals were asked to complete a detailed questionnaire about their school and how it was managing during the school closure, in relation to a number of factors, but principally in relation to distance learning practices. The resulting report from Maynooth University entitled [Covid-19-Practice in Primary Schools in Ireland Report](#) dated 1st April 2020, highlighted the intense pressures on schools, the high level of teachers' concern for their pupils and the remarkable manner in which schools started to work with their pupils almost overnight. There were also requests for guidance from the Department of Education and Skills.



Guidance

The Department subsequently published its [Guidance on the Continuity of Schooling for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#). The document provides assistance to schools, particularly in the form of links to a wide range of resources, prepared by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), together with advice and guidance on the various digital platforms, that are available for schools to use to support distance learning. This advice from PDST contains a brief description of each such platform, together with a quick guide for teachers to get started and is available [here](#).

[CPSMA](#) has also created a page of weblinks for schools to support distance learning. The page is categorised by curricular area and relevant class level, where appropriate, and includes a number of home activities for pupils. We have listed primary book publishers who have made e-books and other online resources available, free of charge, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Above all, it is important to ensure that there is regular communication between parents and schools. There are many challenges in doing so, during this period, but it can take many forms. Some schools with a small number of pupils are posting suggested work home. Schools can also

use texting services for this purpose or set up email communication between parents and teachers to help clarify questions and queries. Many schools are using online platforms or apps as previously outlined by PDST. Phone calls may also be useful to communicate with families identified as having particular needs during the Covid-19 period.

Communication does not necessarily have to be formal at all times. Parents may also have the opportunity to send photos of completed tasks, samples of artwork, baking successes or other skills learned during this period to the teacher. What is important is that schools put a system in place which addresses the following issues:

- the format which communication of school work to parents will take
- the intervals at which school work will be presented (weekly/fortnightly etc.)
- the requirement to have a consistency of approach by teachers across all class levels in each school
- an avenue for parents to communicate their questions and queries
- the person to which such communication will be directed (class teacher/SEN teacher/school management)

In the [Covid-19-Practice in Primary Schools in Ireland Report](#), it was clear that schools were reluctant to add to the stresses of parents by overloading them with work or website references. Schools should be as specific as possible in relation to the websites they are recommending, giving parents details of the sections of the website they recommend in relation to certain topics. This will avoid overwhelming parents and will help them zone in quickly on what will help their child.

It is important to note that each school will have differing requirements when it comes to the provision of education in these unprecedented circumstances. If your school is unsure or deciding how best to ensure the continuity of education for your pupils, please contact us on 01-629 2462 or email us on info@cpsma.ie and we will be happy to talk to you and assist you determine the best options for your particular school community.

DEIS schools/Children with special educational needs

Schools recognise that there are particular challenges facing children in DEIS schools and children with special educational needs in these times. Specific guidance is being prepared to assist schools by the Department of Education and Skills. CPSMA submissions in relation to this guidance can be found [here](#) (SEN) and [here](#) (DEIS).

[NCSE](#) has advice on its website for children with special educational needs.

[NEPS](#) has advice on its website in relation to the well-being of children which may be useful for schools.

Remote Learning from Apple, Cisco and IBM

The Department of Education and Skills has been running a pilot with CISCO, Apple and IBM to help schools deliver distance learning in an interactive, controlled and secure fashion. If you are interested, please register for a webinar briefing [here](#).



Admission Policies

Many schools are only now getting a chance to consider their draft admission policies. CPSMA has issued a template Admission Policy and Annual Admission Notice to your Patron's office. Most Patron offices have contacted their schools directly with templates for use by the schools in their Dioceses. If you haven't received a communication, you should contact the Patron's office or the Diocesan Education Officer directly and request the relevant documentation.

The Department of Education and Skills wishes to ensure that schools will have their new admission policies and admission notices ready for the **2021/22 school year** applications. This does **not** affect applications for the 2020/21 school year. The dates set out in [Circular 0007/2020](#) are still applicable. The key dates set out in the [FAQs](#) referred to in Section 4 of Circular 0007/2020, are as follows:

30th April 2020 – Draft admission policy to be submitted to Patron.

15th September 2020 – This is the date by which the admission policy must be fully approved by the Patron and returned to the Board of Management.

1st October 2020 – This is the first day that a school can accept applications for the 2021/2022 school year.

N.B. A school must publish its Annual Admission Notice at least one week before accepting applications.

So, what do schools need to do now?

1. **Check that your school has received template documentation from your Patron's office.** If not, make contact and request the documentation.
2. **Review the templates.** If you wish to discuss any aspects of the documentation, please contact your Diocesan Education Office or CPSMA.
3. **Consult with parents, patrons and staff.** School websites, other on-line platforms, posts and texts to alert individuals to the consultation process, or a combination of options, can be used in relation to the requirement to consult. You may wish to put the draft policy on the school website and text parents advising them that it is there and welcoming any comments.
4. **Review with your board.** Again, practically speaking, the document can be sent to board members by email and can be reviewed by them. If a board meeting is required, please see our [updated Guidance on remote board of management meetings](#).
5. **Send draft policy to your Patrons office for review before 30th April 2020.**
6. **The Patron then has until September 2020 to review the policy and return it fully approved to your board.**
7. **1st October 2020 is the first date that your school can accept applications for the 2021/2022 school year.**
8. **A school must publish its Annual Admission Notice at least one week before accepting applications for admission.**

Please contact us on 01-629 2462 or email us on info@cpsma.ie if we can be of any assistance in relation to admission policies.



Guidelines on making school buildings available to State bodies during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Buildings Unit of the Department of Education and Skills has issued a document entitled [Guidelines on making school buildings available to State bodies during the Covid-19 pandemic](#).

The main points to note are as follows:

1. Any request for the use of any part of a school building or carpark **must** be referred to the owner of the building, which for Catholic schools is the Patron or religious trust. It is **not** a matter for the board to decide upon itself.
2. It will usually be the HSE or the Gardai who will be requesting the use of school premises and they should be in a position to confirm in writing that the General State Claims Indemnity will cover their activities from an insurance perspective. Any other state agency should also be requested to provide confirmation in writing from the State Claims Agency, that the General State Claims Indemnity covers its activities in your school.
3. Allianz have confirmed that they will continue to cover the property owners' responsibilities. If your school is not covered by Allianz, your Patron will need to clarify the position with the school insurers.
4. An agreement will be required between the Patron and the relevant state agency, covering all of the items outlined in **Section 9** of the Building Unit Guidelines. These include ensuring that the costs of heat, lighting, and broadband are covered by the agency and providing for cleaning of the school before it re-commences. There must also be agreement that the arrangement will not prejudice the return to school of the pupils, once schools re-open.
5. The board **cannot** sign this agreement on behalf of the Patron.
6. Appendix A to the Guidelines must be signed by a nominee of the Patron and returned to schoolproperty@education.gov.ie in the event of the school being used by a State body during the Covid-19 pandemic. This document should **not** be signed and returned until the agreement between the Patron and the relevant state agency has been signed by both parties.

Communication from Allianz

Allianz has written to all its schools giving details of the relevant contact person in each area. If you have any concerns regarding your school building, please make contact with your [local representative](#) as soon as possible.

[Allianz FAQs](#) are contained on their website under the Schools section and specifically the Covid-19 section.

Payment of Ancillary Staff

The Department of Education and Skills has confirmed to CPSMA that payment of grants in respect of ancillary staff will continue to be paid. Guidance is due to issue from the Department shortly.



Provision of School Meals

The Department of Social Inclusion responded to the concerns of some school principals that school meals were still required by the pupils in their schools. They advised that meals, where necessary, were to continue to be provided with immediate effect. This was a mammoth task for school principals to undertake at such short notice. Thanks to you, many families in need received their food boxes over Easter and many more are in line to receive them in the coming weeks.

However many principals have reported serious problems with An Post deliveries and we have contacted the Department of Social Inclusion on your behalf to seek assistance in this regard. The Department are hoping to organise a booking system for deliveries with An Post but have also asked schools to consider other local methods of deliveries such as the Community Champions. Communications in relation to school meals can be accessed [here](#).

Staffing arrangements for 20/21 School Year

Staffing arrangements for 2020/21 school year

The Department are working to ensure that in so far as possible, everything will be in place for the next school year in terms of staffing. To assist them in this regard, please return forms required by [Circular 0018/2020](#) to the Department of Education as soon as possible. These include:

1. Main Redeployment Panel Application forms,
2. CID Declaration forms,
3. Staffing Appeal forms,
4. Notification of vacancies to the relevant Panel Operator.

Staff Planning Form

Schools should ensure to return the Staff Planning Form to the Primary Allocations Section of the Department of Education and Skills. If you had difficulties accessing your school building and obtaining this form, please contact Primary Allocations without delay by email at Primaryallocations@education.gov.ie and advise them of your situation.

Special Needs Assistants

The Minister for Education and Skills has announced that the planned new allocation model for SNAs has been deferred for one year and that no school will receive a lower allocation of SNA support for September 2020 than it currently has. If schools identify that additional SNA support for children in mainstream classes will be required, which cannot be met from existing allocation, they will be able to apply by email for their allocation to be reviewed. A circular on the allocation of SNAs for the 2020/21 school year will issue shortly.

Department of Education and Skills email addresses

At the moment, contact with the Department is primarily by [email](#). The following list of email addresses may be helpful in relation to payroll matters.

- Primary Payroll prim_tchpayroll@education.gov.ie
- Non -Teaching Staff Payroll NTSpayroll@education.gov.ie
- OLCS IT Support onlineclaims@education.gov.ie



Circulars/Communications from Department of Education and Skills

Recent DES Circulars

[0027/2020](#) COVID-19: Temporary assignment arrangements for certain staff in the education and training sector

[0027/2020](#) [FAQs](#) Temporary Assignment Arrangements for certain staff in the education and training sector

[0024/2020](#) Coronavirus (COVID-19) Delay Phase: Arrangements for teachers and special needs assistants employed in recognised primary and post-primary schools

[0019/2020](#) Release Time for Principal Teachers in Primary Schools

[0018/2020](#) Staffing arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2020/21 school year

[Appendix A](#) Schedule of Enrolment of Pupils Governing the Appointment and Retention of Mainstream Class Teachers in Ordinary Schools, Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht National Schools for the 2020/21 school year

[Appendix B](#) Enrolments required for Administrative Principal status and Administrative Deputy Principal status in Ordinary Schools, Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht National Schools for the 2020/21 school year

[Appendix C](#) School List for Allocations by County

[Appendix D](#) Special Education Teacher Post (Shared) 2020/21

[Appendix E](#) Application Form for Permanent/CID Holding Teachers' Access to the Main Redeployment Panel for the 2020/21 school year

[Appendix F\(a\)](#) Application to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board for the 2020/21 School Year:
Criterion A – Exceptional Accommodation Difficulties

[Appendix F\(b\)](#) Criterion B – Additional Enrolments in October 2019

[Appendix F\(c\)](#) Criterion C – Developing Post based on Additional Enrolments after 30th September 2020

[Appendix F\(d\)](#) Criterion D – English as an Additional Language (EAL) Teaching Posts

[Appendix F\(e\)](#) Criterion E – Small Schools

[Appendix F\(f\)](#) Criterion F – School losing 3 or more Posts

[Appendix F\(g\)](#) Criterion G – Alleviating some of the pressure on class sizes at infants level

[Appendix G](#) Declaration by a school for the 2020/21 school year where a teacher has acquired a CID under Part A1 or A2 of Circular 0023/2015

[Appendix H](#) Application for Department sanction for the award to a teacher, of a contract of indefinite duration (CID) in the 2020/21 school year in accordance with Circular 0023/2015

Recent DES Communications

25th March 2020 [Letter to Principals and Teacher.](#)

1st April 2020 [School Administration issues during the current public health emergency.](#)



CPSMA National Art Competition 2020

Living in harmony in our Catholic Schools

CPSMA wishes to thank all those who took part in its National Art Competition for 2020. It was very difficult to choose winners this year. The winning entries have been notified by email to their schools. Congratulations to all our entrants. The following are the prizewinning pictures.

Category 1



1st Place: Aaron,
Drim National School,
Co. Galway



2nd Place:
Cillian, Scoil Treasa Naofa,
Co. Donegal



3rd Place:
Emma, Ballincrossig NS,
Co. Kerry

Category 2



1st Place: Sofia,
St Columba's NS, Dublin 9



3rd Place: Mary,
Dromclough NS, Co. Kerry



2nd Place: Sineida, Scoil Mhuire
na nGael, Co. Louth

Category 3



1st Place: Morgan,
St John's NS, Co. Sligo



2nd Place: Shalid, Scoil Eanna
Special School, Co. Cork



3rd Place: Daniel, St Fiacc's,
Co. Carlow.