



Newsletter

No. 61 October 2020

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Dear Member, This has undoubtedly been one of the most challenging periods in the history of primary education, but thanks to your hard work and commitment, Irish primary schools and special schools have reopened successfully. It provides a reminder, if such was needed, of the importance of primary education to society at large.

The latest figures from NPHET support the view that the hard work of school staff and boards in ensuring a safe environment for education is paying off. This is testament to the remarkable efforts of primary and special school communities nationwide.

Now it is up to the Health Service Executive (HSE) to match the hard work and professionalism of the education sector by improving its response time and its communication with schools impacted by COVID-19. Schools are delivering on their responsibilities. We are now urging the State to do likewise. I have written to both the Department of Education and the Minister for Health, seeking an urgent improvement in HSE response times and communication with schools.

Part of that responsibility is ensuring proper funding for PPE. The Department is currently reviewing the funding needs of schools for the second half of the academic year. I would urge you therefore, to order your supplies now, through the Framework Agreement, as we need to make sure that the Department is fully aware of the demand that is out there.

While the return to school has been a successful one, I am very concerned about its impact on school principals. With little or no break over the summer, principals worked harder than ever to ensure a successful school reopening.

The October break offers a possibly of some respite and I would urge all Chairpersons to encourage their principals, to ensure time off to recover during the mid-term. The times ahead will be difficult for schools and it is important to take a break, where possible.

Seamus Mulcahy

P.S CPSMA has negotiated an insurance offer from Allianz for board members, as a small thank you for your work. Please find more details in the advertisement at the end of this newsletter. I would be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of all board members.

CPSMA COVID-19 Documents

CPSMA has listed documents and guidance for schools in relation to COVID-19 in the “Return to school” section in the COVID-19 yellow tab <https://www.cpsma.ie/return-to-school/>

A list of Department of Education documents is available [here](#).

CPSMA also has a [FAQ document](#) which is being updated on a regular basis.

In case you missed it, CPSMA had a [webinar](#) with Public Health officials in relation to the Public Health Pathway for COVID-19 in schools. Department of Education has published a number of documents relating to the Public Health Pathway for COVID-19 in schools which are included as items 33-36 of [this list](#) on the CPSMA website.

In addition, Trinity College hosted an [information session](#) with Professor Luke O’ Neill regarding COVID-19 and schools.

School Admissions

[The Education \(Admissions to Schools\) Act 2018 \(Admission Policies and Admission of Students\) Regulations 2020](#) and [Circular 0007/2020](#) require schools to publish their **Admission Policy** and make it available on request to a parent or member of the public.

Schools are also required to publish their **Annual Admission Notice**, prior to taking applications for the 2021/22 School Year. The **Annual Admission Notice** must be published one week before applications for enrolment are received.

CPSMA has prepared a series of template Admission documents to assist schools in managing their Admissions’ procedures. The documents can be accessed at the following links:

- [A Guidance Note on the use of CPSMA template Admission Documents](#) is available.
- [Template Application Form for Admission to Junior Infants.](#)
- [Template Letter of Offer of Admission to Junior Infants, including a template Acceptance of Offer of Admission to Junior Infants.](#)
- [Template letter of “non-offer” of admission to Junior Infants.](#)
- [Template Application Form for Admission to Classes other than Junior Infants.](#)
- [Template Letter of Offer of Admission to Classes other than Junior Infants, including a template Acceptance of Offer of Admission to Classes other than Junior Infants.](#)
- [Template letter of “non-offer” of admission to Classes other than Junior Infants.](#)

Decisions in relation to applications must be communicated no later than three weeks after the closing date for applications. Letters of Offer must state the date by which such offer has to be accepted and must advise that failure to accept the offer, within this period, may result in the offer being withdrawn.



New Arrangements and Procedures for Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998

Effective From 12 November 2020 onwards

Section 7 of the [Education \(Admissions to Schools\) Act 2018](#) has provided for the replacement of the existing Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 with a series of new sections numbered 29 to 29F. These new appeal provisions in sections 29 to 29F are designed to work alongside the wider admissions framework in the 2018 Act and will come into operation from 12 November 2020 onwards. Following consultation with the education partners and in accordance with section 29B of the Education Act 1998, the Minister has also determined the following procedures for appeals which will apply from 12 November 2020 onwards:

- Procedures for appeals in relation to refusal to admit a student to a school, where the decision to refuse admission is due to the school being oversubscribed
- Procedures for appeals in relation to refusal to admit a student to a school where the decision to refuse admission is due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed
- Procedures for appeals in relation to permanent exclusion of a student from a school or suspension of a student from attendance at a school for a period or periods totalling not less than 20 school days in a school year

The [procedures](#) are available on the Department's website and in [Circular 0069/2020](#) along with a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQ) document to assist with queries in relation to the new procedures. The FAQ document will be updated from time to time as required.

Renewal of CPSMA Membership

Many thanks to all schools who have already renewed their membership. If you need to check the status of your renewal you can do so under "My Account" on www.cpsma.ie or alternatively email info@cpsma.ie giving your roll number. Please see the membership letter below which outlines the fees and methods of payments. Don't forget to fill in the Membership Form below and to download our CPSMA App. Please contact us if you require any assistance with any aspects of your membership.

- [Membership Letter](#)
- [Membership Form](#)

Recruitment

CPSMA has prepared a [Guidance Note](#) on holding face to face interviews during a COVID-19 pandemic with [template letters](#) of invitation to face to face interviews. For schools engaging in online interviews, CPSMA has prepared a [template letter of invitation to online interviews](#) and a [candidates checklist for such interviews](#).

Schools should note the reduced timescales introduced by the Department in [Information Note TTC 0006/2020](#), Information Note for the Recruitment of Teachers in Primary Schools for the upcoming school year. All recruitment must take place in compliance with public health guidelines, taking account of any particular diocesan requirements in this regard.



Parental leave/Carer's leave

Under the provisions of [Circular 0049/2020](#) [Coronavirus (COVID-19): Arrangements for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants employed in recognised Primary and Post Primary schools] special leave with pay is not available for an employee who has COVID-19 related caring or childcare responsibilities or for an employee who is living with a high risk or very high risk individual.

However, an employee who wishes to avail of existing relevant leave entitlements is entitled to have such requests considered by his/her employer (e.g. Parental Leave/Carer's Leave) in line with the terms and conditions of Department publications. When considering such an application, a board of management may waive/reduce the application period for such leave, whilst taking account of the school's policy on employee absences, where the welfare and educational needs of the pupils must take precedence over all other considerations.

Board Meetings

In the current climate, it is preferable, where possible to hold board meetings remotely. CPSMA has prepared a [Guidance Note](#) in relation to remote board of management meetings, which may be of assistance in these circumstances.

At present, it should be noted that the Child Protection Oversight Report may not be dealt with at remote board of management meetings, but all relevant documentation should be retained for the next face to face board meeting. Schools should note that this matter is currently under review by the Inspectorate and further guidance may issue in this regard shortly.

Substitutes

CPSMA is acutely aware of the difficulties being experienced by schools in relation to substitute teachers and has relayed this to the Department of Education. Where a substitute is engaged, schools should ensure that a [Self-Declaration Form](#) is completed before work is commenced by that substitute in the school. In addition, care should be taken to ensure that the substitute is fully aware of the school's COVID-19 Response Plan.

Transition Year Students

We have been asked by schools whether it is currently advisable to facilitate transition year students in primary schools.

The nature of the work of a transition year student would mean that the student is working with numerous pods in a classroom and perhaps with a number of classes. In addition, having a transition year student in the school, links the primary and secondary school, in the event that there is a COVID-19 case in either school, which may result in additional closures in either or both schools.

While it is a matter for an individual school, the current rising numbers of COVID-19 infections would justify a deferral of applications from transition year students this term, with a view to considering any such applications from next term onwards.



Student Teacher School Placements

The Teaching Council has issued guidance for schools and Higher Education Institutes in relation to student placements during COVID-19. The guidance is available [here](#).

The Teaching Council recommends that student placements continue to take place during this time, within the framework of the health and safety measures in place at local school level.

As part of this recommendation, the Teaching Council has reiterated the importance of placements for students as part of their studies and acknowledges the role of schools and co-operating teachers in supporting the professional development and growth of student teachers during placement. It also outlines that placement blocks cannot be reasonably be postponed until after students graduate and that a continued supply of qualified teachers is required to deal with the ongoing teacher supply issue.

Flexibility of sites of placement practice have also been incorporated for the purpose of accreditation, in the event of school closures during the current school year.

As a result, it recommends that schools should continue to engage with Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) with regard to placements and to ensure that all students are familiar with the COVID-19 Response Plan protocols and procedures in place in schools as part of this process.

The Teaching Council are acutely aware of the concerns of schools in relation to safety of pupils, teachers and student teachers and has organised a meeting with stakeholders for 22nd October 2020 in this regard. We would be grateful if you would email CPSMA at info@cpsma.ie with any concerns or observations you may have in relation to the operation of such placements, particularly in relation to safety.

Employee Assistance Scheme

Schools should bring the following information from the Department to the attention of staff:

Spectrum. Life, the current Employee Assistance Service provider, will run a series of weekly Wellbeing Live Events for school staff on the dedicated EAS portal until 6th January, 2021. These events will be available at the following link: <https://wellbeing.spectrum.life/wellbeing-series-2020/>.

The weekly wellbeing events are in addition to the [EAS Wellbeing Webinars](#) which began in August and will run up until 20th January, 2021.

These events are recorded and are available approximately 30 minutes after the event has ended.

School staff can access the Spectrum.Life wellbeing portal as follows:

- Sign Up link at: <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login?org=yLVIIU17>.
- Organisation code will be pre-populated. If not, organisation code is yLVIIU17
Log in thereafter at: <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login>.

Information on the EAS is also available on the Department's website at the following link: <https://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Information/Occupational-Health-Strategy/>.



Guardianship – Right to information and documentation

CPSMA regularly receives queries regarding the rights of parents to information about their child, in circumstances where there is disharmony between the parents.

The key question is whether the person seeking the information or documentation is the child's legal guardian. If so, they are entitled to discuss the child with the teacher, attend parent teacher meetings and receive copies of reports and other documentation relating to their child. If not, they can only do so with the consent of the guardian.

Guardianship means having the right to make decisions regarding the upbringing and welfare of a child, as well as having a duty to ensure that the child is properly maintained and cared for. It is different to *custody*, which concerns the day to day care and control of the child, or *access*, which gives a temporary right to see a child.

Generally speaking, parents who are married are both guardians to their children. When parents are unmarried, the mother is normally a guardian, but the father may in certain circumstances become a guardian. If a parent seeks information or documentation about a child and the issue of guardianship is not clear, the school should request a solicitor's letter confirming the guardianship of that parent.

CPSMA does not advise that court orders be sought by the school, as these documents are confidential to the parties named. If a parent is concerned that a court order has implications for school, the parent should ask their solicitor to write to the school explaining any such implications.

Members are referred to our [December 2016 Newsletter](#) which contains further guidance on Parental Status and School Communication.

Guidelines for Clergy visiting Schools during COVID-19

As schools reopen after a prolonged period of closure, each board of management has prepared and adopted a COVID-19 Response Plan that outlines the measures taken by the board to ensure the school's safe operation through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19.

In accordance with the provisions of the school's COVID-19 Response Plan, protocols for visits from the school chaplain/priest, should be agreed between the school and the parish to ensure that the board of management can continue to promote close pastoral links between the school and the parish, whilst observing the safety measures that have been put in place to minimise the introduction of infection into the school.

CPSMA has prepared the [Protocol for school visits of Priests/School Chaplains](#) which may be of assistance in these circumstances.





November Moment for Catholic Schools

November 2020: The Month of the Holy Souls

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces."
(Isaiah 25:8)

The theme for Catholic Schools Week 2021 is 'Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith and Resilience'. As we look forward to and begin our preparations for celebrating Catholic Schools Week 2021, it is important for each of us to remember those who have gone before us in the hope of the resurrection promised by Jesus.

The Moment of November resource aims to assist schools with activities and lesson ideas for 'The Month of the Holy Souls'. More than most years, this November will be especially poignant as we remember all those who have died during this COVID-19 pandemic. In light of this, The Moment of November recalls to us God's love for us, a love that conquers all things, even death.

In our moments of sadness and grief, God never leaves us. God's love is so great for us that Christ was raised to new life, overcoming death forever.

Included in the resource are:

- Relevant content from the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*
- Junior Lesson (Junior Infants–Second Class/P1–P4)
- Senior Lesson (Third Class–Sixth Class/P5–P7)
- Prayer Service of Remembrance

The resource will be sent directly to schools via email and will also be available on the Catholic Schools website: www.catholicschools.ie



Latest Circulars and Information Notes

Circulars

0069/2020	New Arrangements and Procedures for Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 effective from 12 November 2020 onwards
0068/2020	Emergency Works Grant Scheme: Migration to On-Line Applications and Minor Revisions of Scheme
0064/2020	Revision of Salaries Clerical Officer and Caretakers 78 79 schemes with effect from 01 October 2020
0061/2020	Revision of Salaries for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) with effect from 01 October 2020
0060/2020	Revision of Teacher Salaries with effect from 1 October 2020
0057/2020	Home Tuition Grant Scheme for children who do not have a school place
0056/2020	Cycle to Work Scheme
0054/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Arrangements for certain employees of recognised Primary and Post Primary schools in the Free Education Scheme and of ETBs, employed using grant funding
0049/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Arrangements for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants
0045/2020	COVID-19 operational supports for the full return to school
0044/2020	Home Tuition Grant Scheme 2020/2021 – Special Education Component
0040/2020	Arrangements for the Inspection and School Self-Evaluation for the 2020/2021 School Year

Information Notes

TTC 002/2020	Information Note for the Filling of Internal Leadership and Management Positions in Primary Schools during the Period of Covid-19 Restrictions
TTC 003/2020	Information Note for the filling of Special Need Assistant vacancies during the Period of Covid-19 Restrictions
TTC 004/2020	New Employee Assistance Service (EAS) Provider 'Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile'
TTC 005/2020	Changes to the Job Sharing Scheme for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools – 2020/21 School Year
TTC 0006/2020	Information Note for the Recruitment of Teachers in Primary Schools for the upcoming school year.
TTC 007/2020	Changes to the Career Break Scheme for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools – 2020/21 School Year
TTC 0008/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Revised arrangements for Primary Schools in respect of Substitution and Extra Personal Vacation (EPV) Leave for the 2020/21 School Year
TTC 009/2020	Extension of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS)
TTC 00010/2020	Partial Return to Work for SNAs-2020.21 School Year

Office Closure

Please note that CPSMA phonelines will be closed from Monday 26th till Friday 30th October 2020.

We wish all our members a well deserved break over the October Midterm.





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