



Newsletter

No. 66 September 2021

Message from General Secretary

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Dear Chairpersons and Principals,

Firstly, I would like to warmly welcome each newly appointed principal this year and to wish you every success in your new role. CPSMA will be happy to support you in whatever way we can, so please call us and we will be delighted to ensure that you are set up to access our website and other resources. It is certainly a challenging time to be principal of a school and we look forward to working with you and indeed all of our member principals and chairpersons during this school year.

Public health advice is constantly evolving in relation to COVID-19 protocols in schools and recent changes to contact tracing have been dramatic to say the least. Vigilance in relation to monitoring of symptoms is more important than ever for school communities. Hopefully we will see brighter days ahead soon.

Spectrum Life, who are the current provider of the Employee Assistance Scheme are providing an array of seminars and resources for all school employees and their families. I have invited Spectrum Life to talk to us at a webinar hosted by CPSMA in early November and will forward you the link in advance.

Please be assured that CPSMA is constantly liaising with the Department on your behalf in relation to the difficulties being faced by you in your schools. Please continue to contact us in relation to the challenges you are encountering so that we can be of assistance to you and highlight the issues to the Department.

As always, our office lines are open from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday or you can email your queries to us at info@cpsma.ie. Our advisers will then contact you to discuss your query.

Cuirimid fáilte roimh Rory D'Arcy go dtí foireann CPSMA. Is príomhóide bunscoile é Rory agus thosaigh sé linn cúpla seachtaine ó shin mar comhairleoir. Tá sé ar iasacht ón scoil Oilibhéir Naofa, Cill Airne, Co. Ciarraí.

Mar fhocail scoir, ag cruinniú le déanaí den Bhord CPSMA, cinneadh fochoiste a bhunú chun breathnú ar bhealaí chun soláthar ár seirbhísí trí mheán na Ghaeilge a fheabhsú.

Le gach deá ghúí



First Term Checklist

The following checklist may be helpful to school principals and chairpersons at this time of year.

1. School Calendar for the 21/22 School Year

A school should review the Standardised School Year ([Circular 0005/2020](#)) and any particular guidance from its Diocesan Education Office in relation to school closures on Holy days. All school closures should be marked in, including staff meetings.

In the current climate, it may be difficult to plan staff meetings right throughout the year, so perhaps it might be an idea to set dates from now until February 2022. Schools should note that the first staff meeting in each term can be on a “half in and half out” basis, meaning that a two hour meeting can begin one hour before the school is scheduled to close. All subsequent staff meetings each term must take place after school.

Croke Park hours could also be planned from now, at least until Christmas.

The relevant aspects of the school calendar should be shared with parents as soon as possible.

2. Board Meetings

It can be helpful for board members if the dates of board meetings for the year ahead, or at least for the next two terms, are planned in advance. The minimum number of meetings required is one meeting per term and five per year.

In the current climate, it may be still preferred by members to hold some 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. The minutes should record the fact that a meeting is held remotely.

However, because a Child Protection Oversight Report (CPOR) is not permitted to be provided at a remotely held board meeting, a face to face meeting of the board must be held at least once in every school term for child protection purposes.

Appropriate social distancing and other relevant public health measures and guidance must be followed for all board meetings held in person, and care should be taken to ensure that as large a space as possible is used with adequate ventilation.

3. Board of Management vacancies

If you have a vacancy on the school board of management, the Appendices to the [Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019–2023](#) outline the guidelines for filling the position. Remember to ensure that new board members should sign Form 2 before attending their first meeting.

Parents of children who were in 6th class and who have no further children in the school, may not remain on as parent nominees. However, pending new appointments, a board with five members is entitled to meet and make decisions. Please contact our office if you require any assistance in relation to the procedures for appointing a member to a vacancy on the board of management.



4. Staff Seniority Listings

Boards of management should ensure that the seniority listing of teachers employed in a permanent/CID capacity is posted on the staff noticeboard in September ([Chapter 5 of Circular 0044/2019](#)).

Boards of management also should ensure that the seniority listing of standard special needs assistants employed in the school is made available to the special needs assistants.

If there are any concerns or issues arising in relation to seniority, please ring our advisers for assistance as it is best to sort these matters out at the beginning of the school year.

5. Census Returns

Annual census returns based on enrolment on 30th September 2021 are due in October. The Staffing Schedule for the 2021/2022 school year was outlined in [Circular 19/2021](#).

If your school has been granted a provisional teaching post based on projected numbers as per Section 2.7 of the Circular, then confirmation of these numbers will be required in October. This applies to the following posts:

- a permanent developing school post
- a permanent post approved under the staffing appeals criterion for small schools
- a permanent post approved under the staffing appeals criterion for alleviating some of the pressure on class sizes at infants level for primary schools that make a significant contribution by absorbing demographic growth.
- a temporary post approved under the staffing appeals criterion for EAL support.

If your school has any queries in relation to 30th September 2021 enrolment figures, please ring our advisers for assistance.

6. Posts of Responsibility

Schools should check if they have filled the correct number of promoted posts as per the most recent revised allocation, to be found in [Circular 0025/2021](#).

7. Appointment Forms

All 2021/2022 Appointment Forms for permanent and fixed term teachers and SNAs should be forwarded to the relevant Payroll Section. Please make sure that the forms are the correct year – 2021/2022.

- [Teachers Forms](#)
- [SNA Appointment Forms](#)

It should also be noted that substitute teachers/SNAs do not require an Appointment Form but their appointment is instead notified to the Department of Education via the OLCS.



8. Contracts of Employment

Schools should ensure that all employees have contracts and that any new employees – teachers, SNAs, secretaries, caretakers, bus escorts or cleaners have been given new contracts. Templates for these contracts are available at <https://www.cpsma.ie/>

If existing staff do not have written contracts in place, it is important to be aware that they do have an oral contract with the school and advice should be sought from our office before preparing written contracts for such employees.

Short term casual substitute teachers or SNAs who are engaged for more than 5 days should receive a written statement of their [terms and conditions of employment](#).

Please note that if cleaning staff have been assigned extra hours due to enhanced cleaning requirements this year, these extra hours should be governed by a specific purpose contract for the period that this funding is in place. At the moment the Department of Education have indicated that this funding will be in place till Christmas.

Tá súil againn go mbeidh gach de na conraithe dréachta atá againn aistrithe go Gaeilge chomh luath agus is féidir. Tá neart obair déanta orthu suas go dtí seo.

9. Admissions Notice

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:

- [Guidance Note on the use of CPSMA template Admission Documents](#).
- [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.



10. Garda Vetting

Schools should ensure that Garda vetting requirements are complied with for teachers, SNAs, ancillary staff, substitute teachers, student teachers etc.

New staff should have completed and signed the Statutory Declarations and Forms of Undertaking. These forms are available as an [appendix to Circular 0031/2016](#).

In essence, any person engaging with children in your school is required to be vetted. If you have any questions or require assistance in this area, please contact our office and an adviser will assist you.

11. School Accounts

The school academic year matches the school financial year, so copies of relevant financial details for the Period 01/09/20 – 31/08/21 should be now forwarded to your school accountant. Returns and budgeting guidance is available at [FSSU](#).

12. NCSE

Schools should consider whether an Exceptional Review of their SNA allocation is required. See [Guidelines](#) for further information on this process.

Update on COVID-19

Changes to contact tracing

The following documents provide details for principals and parents of the recent changes to HSE policy in relation to contact tracing of children attending primary school. In essence, with the exception of special schools and special classes, children who are close contacts of a positive case in school will not be contacted by the HSE and will be permitted to continue to attend school, unless they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19. Parents of children in special schools and classes will still be contacted, if their children are close contacts of a positive case and their children may have to stay at home for a period of five days.

- [FAQ for principals](#)
- [FAQ for parents](#)
- [Public risk assessment for special schools and special classes](#).

Covid Learning and Support Scheme (CLASS)

The Department of Education has issued [Circular 0045/2021](#). This scheme which is operational from 11th October 2021 provides additional teaching hours for schools to enable them support children disadvantaged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of hours provided depends on the type and size of school in each case. If you have any queries in relation to this scheme, please contact the CPSMA office.

Further Communications

We are expecting Guidelines from the Department of Education in relation to the various activities in schools at this stage of the pandemic, and also in relation to operational supports for schools for this school year. We will keep you updated on any developments in this regard.



Guidelines for the Use of Reduced School Days in Schools

The Department has issued [Circular 0047/2021](#) which gives direction to schools around the process to be followed where the use of a reduced school day is under consideration for a student. These Guidelines come into effect on 1st January 2021 which gives boards of management an opportunity to review any arrangements currently in place with students on reduced days to ensure that the school is in a position to comply with the Guidelines in the New Year.

These situations can be very difficult to navigate and we encourage you to contact us to discuss any issues you may have in this regard.

Information Note 0023/2021 – amendment to Maternity Leave Scheme for Teachers

Schools should note that [Information Note 23/2021](#) amends Paragraph 2.6 of the Maternity Leave Scheme for teachers (Chapter 2, Circular [0054/2019](#)) to provide full maternity leave entitlements in the event of a stillbirth, or miscarriage, any time after the 24th week of pregnancy, or where the child has a birth weight of at least 500g. This may be of assistance to teachers in these difficult circumstances.

Employee Assistance Scheme (Spectrum Life)

Principal and Deputy Principal Mental Health Seminars

Spectrum Life organised a series of seminars specifically for principal and deputy principals over the last few weeks on [Building Resilience](#), [Conflict Resolution](#) and [Promoting Communication](#). These are available for you to watch or listen to at your convenience, without the need for registering. Each one is approx. 40 min long and the feedback has been positive so far.

Mental Health Week – October 11th-15th 2021

Spectrum Life has arranged for a series of seminars for Mental Health Week in October. Topics to be covered are:

- [Mental Health 101](#) (Mon, 11 Oct, 4:15pm)
- [The Psychology of Healthy Eating](#) (Tue, 12 Oct, 4:15pm)
- [School Community Wellbeing](#) (Wed, 13 Oct, 4:15pm)
- [Exercise for the Mind](#) (Thu 14 Oct, 4:15pm)
- [Beating Burnout](#) (Fri. 15 Oct, 4:15pm).

CPSMA Webinar with Spectrum Life – November 2021

CPSMA has invited Spectrum Life to join it for a seminar for member schools on the services being provided by Spectrum Life to schools. We invite you to join us for a short webinar with Spectrum Life in early November and will send out details and reminders on this, just before the mid-term break.



Contact details for Employee Assistance Scheme

If you or a member of your staff or their family are experiencing a crisis or just want someone to talk to urgently, you or they can access your [Employee Assistance Scheme](#) (EAS) at any time to speak freely with a Case Manager and they will provide support and guidance. You or they can also call for advice on supporting another team member or colleague (all calls are confidential). You can reach your EAS Service to speak to a Case Manager on:

Freephone: 1800 814 243

SMS & WhatsApp: Text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010

You can also sign up to the **Folláine le Chéile Online Portal**.

Access the following supports here:

- Digital Gym – up to 5 gym classes per day.
- Digital Wellbeing Series – seminars every Wednesday.
- Be Calm – up to 43 different guided meditations.
- Additionally track your steps and kilometres, access up to 250+ recipes, log and track your calories, access supports in stress management, sleeping better, dealing with anxiety, mindfulness parenting and more!

Access your wellbeing portal: <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login>

Organisation Code: yV1IU17

You may wish to bring this information to the attention of your staff.

Relevant Circulars

- [0037/2021](#) Revision of 2011 Entrant Teacher Salaries with effect From 1 March 2021 - Application of Additional Incremental Skips
- [0038/2021](#) Home Tuition Grant Scheme 2021/2022 – Special Education Component
- [0039/2021](#) Extended Breastfeeding Breaks for Special Needs Assistants employed In Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools
- [0040/2021](#) Partial Return to Work for Special Needs Assistants employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools
- [0042/2021](#) Coronavirus (COVID-19): Arrangements for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants employed in recognised Primary and Post Primary schools
- [0045/2021](#) Covid Learning and Support Scheme
- [0047/2021](#) Guidelines for the use of Reduced School Days in Schools
- [0048/2021](#) Home Tuition Grant Scheme for children without a school place

This [useful link](#) contains an index of all publications issued by the Department of Education in relation to COVID-19.

