



Newsletter

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Please photocopy and distribute to members of the Board of Management (BoM). A copy has been sent to the Principal. This Newsletter is also available on the CPSMA website at www.cpsma.ie

BUDGET 2013 MAIN FEATURES AFFECTING PRIMARY EDUCATION

1. **Capitation Grant:** CPSMA regrets the further reduction of the Capitation Grant and related grants to primary schools, by 0.5% (announced last year), despite the fact that almost half of primary schools find themselves facing a deficit, as identified by recent research commissioned by CPSMA. The new basic rate of capitation grants is €176 (reduced from €178) which in real terms is a reduction of 1.1% in the capitation grant.
2. **Pupil Teacher Ratio, Small Schools & EAL Posts:** CPSMA welcomes the maintenance of the pupil teacher ratio at 28:1. However, it is a matter of major concern that the measures introduced in Budget 2013, in relation to phased increases in pupil thresholds for allocation of classroom teachers in 1, 2, 3 and 4 teacher schools (schools with less than 86 pupils) are being continued, as is the phased reduction of approximately 210 language support posts.
3. **Referrals to Medmark in regard to Sick Leave:** Current regulations require BoMs to refer teachers or SNAs to Medmark when they have been on sick leave for 12 and 8 weeks respectively. This regulation will be amended from early 2013 with referrals being required after 4 weeks absence in each case.
4. **Maternity & Adoptive leave in lieu:** Currently teachers and SNAs on maternity leave are entitled to an additional maximum of 30 paid absence days in lieu of periods of maternity leave when schools are closed. Teachers and SNAs will continue to get 26 weeks paid statutory maternity leave and an optional 16 weeks statutory unpaid maternity leave. From 1st May 2013 those on maternity leave will not be allowed to accrue any additional days related to their school's closures e.g. a person going on maternity leave now will be allowed accrue time in lieu for school closures up to and including 30th April 2013. From 1st May 2013 any teacher/SNA on maternity leave will not be allowed to accrue any further time in lieu. Time in lieu accrued up to the 30th April 2013 can be taken after the expiration of statutory maternity leave (i.e. 26 weeks paid statutory maternity leave and/or unpaid statutory maternity leave) post 1st May 2013. Similar arrangements will apply in regard to adoptive leave in lieu.
5. **School Building:** This programme will continue with an additional 50 projects commencing in 2013.
6. **Back to School Allowance:** The current allowance, administered by the Department of Social Protection will be reduced by €50 per child.

RESULTS OF SURVEY ON SCHOOL FINANCE

Arising from concerns regarding the financial situation facing many schools and in relation to the withdrawal of the minor works grant in particular, CPSMA commissioned Amárach Research to carry out a survey on school finances. This survey was completed by representatives of 639 primary schools during October and November and it has highlighted the very real financial difficulties facing schools around the country.

The findings of the survey received extensive national and local media coverage on television, radio stations and newspapers. An *Irish Times* headline referred to 'Half of all primary schools in the red', while the *Irish Independent* reported that "another one-fifth (22%) barely broke even in the academic year to August". CPSMA also participated in a number of radio interviews.

The main findings of the survey were:-

- 44% of schools have experienced a deficit for their last financial year
- Almost 9 out of 10 schools (86%) rely on ad-hoc fundraising while 4-in-10 (42%) ask parents to make an annual voluntary contribution
- Over half of those seeking funds from other sources have seen a decrease in the amounts raised
- One in two of the schools surveyed are over 50 years old which further compounds the issues regarding the removal of the **minor works grant**. The consequences which the withdrawal of this

grant will have on employment in the local community were also highlighted, **as 84 % of schools employed local contractors** to carry out the work, with a completion time of less than 4 weeks in a majority of cases.

- Over 1-in-3 schools surveyed use prefabs (34%)
- 7-in-10 schools reported that the minor works grant was absolutely essential
- Half of schools will be unable to fund maintenance/repair work if the minor works grant is discontinued. 4-in-10 said it would lead to the deterioration of buildings and 1-in-4 (24%) said it would lead to a deterioration of school grounds.

CPSMA thanks all those who completed the survey and the complete set of findings from the Amárach Research survey is available at www.cpsma.ie.

The CPSMA **Pre Budget submission to the Government**, which highlighted many of the issues noted above and concerns in regard to the preservation of the PTR, can be accessed at www.cpsma.ie.

CPSMA will continue to highlight the issue of school finance, particularly regarding the inadequacy of the capitation grant and the need for the restoration of the minor works grant and the summer works scheme.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2013

Catholic Schools Week 2013 will take place from Sunday, 27th January- Sunday 3rd February 2013. The theme this year is **“Catholic Schools in the Community of Faith: Sharing the Good News.”** This is based on the Year of Faith that began in October 2012 and on the new National Directory for Catechesis called *Share the Good News*. All schools are invited to celebrate Catholic Schools Week 2013.

Resource booklets will be delivered to your school by the Catholic Education Service in early January 2013. These resources are also available, as of now, online at www.catholicbishops.ie/catholicschoolsweek

RTÉ will broadcast a special Mass for television in January 2013 and this will celebrate the contribution that Catholic schools and education make to Irish society. In addition, *A Living Word* (RTÉ Radio1) from 28th January 2013- 1 February 2013 will reflect the theme of Catholic Schools Week.

Members will find a link to the information on Catholic Schools Week at www.cpsma.ie

NEW CIRCULARS ON SELF- CERTIFIED (UNCERTIFIED) PAID SICK LEAVE

It should be noted that uncertified leave is now referred to as self certified leave.

Circulars 36/2012 and 37/2012 implement new arrangements in relation to self-certified paid sick leave for teachers and special needs assistants. Circular 42/2012 implements the new arrangements for Department of Education & Skills (DES) directly paid school secretaries and caretakers i.e. secretaries and caretakers employed under the so called “1978” and “1979” schemes who are on the DES payroll. The circular does not apply to secretaries or caretakers who are paid out of the ancillary grant/other school funds whose terms and conditions (including those relating to sick leave) are as per the employment contract with the school.

A. Self Certified Paid Sick Leave Arrangements for Registered Teachers- Circular 36/2012

Circular 36/2012 deals with only one aspect of sick leave for teachers, namely self-certified paid sick leave. This new arrangement provides for a reduction in the number of self-certified paid sick leave days. Once fully implemented the 7 days will be counted over a personal rolling two year period (whereas the previous arrangement allowed for up to 7 days self-certified paid leave *in a school year*).

The new arrangements are to be phased in as follows:

From 1 August 2012 until 31 July 2014 a maximum of 7 days self - certified paid sick leave is permitted. Only self - certified sick leave taken since 1 August 2012 will be counted towards the maximum 7 days allowable in this period. From 1 August 2014 each teacher will have a *personal 2 year rolling period* counting backwards from the date of his/her latest self-certified sick leave absence e.g. where a teacher is absent on sick leave on the 31st May 2015, self-certified sick leave in the two year period between 1st June 2013 and 31st May 2015 will be counted to ensure that the maximum of 7 days has not been reached. Where a teacher who has exhausted his/her 7 self-certified sick leave

days, is absent on sick leave, s/he will have to provide a medical certificate if s/he is to be paid for that absence.

A maximum of 3 self-certified sick leave days may be taken at any one time (as was the position prior to the introduction of the new arrangements).

Self Certified Paid Sick Leave Arrangements for Special Needs Assistants- Circular 37/2012

The new arrangements are to be phased in as follows:

- From 1 January 2012 until 31 December 2013 a maximum of 7 days self-certified sick leave is permitted.
- From 1 January 2014 each SNA will have a personal 2 year rolling period counting backwards from the date of his/her latest self-certified sick leave absence. The maximum number of self-certified sick leave days allowable in that 2 year rolling period will be 7.

B. Self Certified Paid Sick Leave Arrangements for DES Directly Paid Secretaries and Caretakers - Circular 42/2012 (i.e. 1978/1979 scheme employees)

BoMs should note that circular 42/2012 only relates to secretaries and caretakers employed under the so called "1978" and "1979" schemes i.e. secretaries and caretakers who are on the DES payroll and who have an existing entitlement to paid sick leave and who take self certified sick leave from (and including) 1 November 2012.

The circular does not apply to secretaries or caretakers who are paid out of the ancillary grant/other school funds whose terms and conditions (including those relating to sick leave) are as per the employment contract with the school.

The periods of the phased move to the new arrangements for DES directly paid secretaries and caretakers are the same as that set out above for SNAs.

Circular 36/2012, 37/2012 and 42/2012 may be accessed by members at www.cpsma.ie (Circulars section). BoM should ensure that the content of these circulars is brought to the attention of all teachers, special needs assistants and DES directly paid secretaries and caretakers in its employment.

As stated above, from early 2013 BoM will be required to refer teachers and SNAs to Medmark after 4 weeks absence in each case.

BoMs should note that changes to the duration of certified sick leave are on the way. CPSMA will inform members of these, or any other, changes once the relevant circular(s) issues from the DES.

INCLUSIVENESS SURVEY

The DES has announced that it proposes to publish a White Paper in 2013 regarding the promotion of 'Greater Inclusiveness in Irish Primary Schools'.

CPSMA intends to make a submission to the DES on this issue and invites your comments and suggestions regarding:

- (a) examples of good practice regarding inclusion of pupils of other faiths or of no faith in a school of which you are aware
- (b) other views you might have on making primary schools more inclusive.

Your views can be given in either of two ways:

- a) Return the enclosed insert in the envelope provided to CPSMA on/before **Friday, 11th January 2013** or
- b) Go to www.cpsma.ie, click on 'surveys' tab and complete the survey. The on-line version will remain open until **Friday, 11th January 2013**.

SCHOOL SELF- EVALUATION

Circular 39/2012 (Implementation of school self evaluation) and *School Self- Evaluation Guidelines* were launched recently by the Minister for Education and Skills. The School Self-Evaluation Guidelines are intended to support schools in their evaluation of their own work and to set targets to improve teaching and learning. The aim is to help schools to achieve the targets set out in the Programme for Government and in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy launched by the Minister last year.

The following documents, which are available at www.education.ie and www.cpsma.ie, may be of assistance to schools:

- *Circular 39/2012*
- *School self-evaluation guidelines and*
- *Looking at our school- an aid to self-evaluation*

The Inspectorate and members of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) will provide support to assist schools in developing their understanding of school self-evaluation. It is planned that this support will be delivered to schools over the course of the school years 2012/13 and 2013/14.

WEATHER PROTECTION MEASURES

The “Be Winter Ready” 2012-2013 information campaign was launched on the 9th November last. There is a dedicated website; www.winterready.ie. On this website, under the heading “Schools”, advice can be found on a range of issues including school closures, contacting parents, making up for lost days etc. Members will find a link to the above website at www.cpsma.ie.

Schools are reminded that the decision to close the school on health and safety grounds is a matter for the Board of Management. BoM should refer to ***Circular 34/2011- Standardisation of the School Year in respect of Primary and Post Primary Schools for the years 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14*** for guidance in relation to making up for time lost due to unforeseen closures.

Members are also referred to Allianz publications; **Protecting your School from Fire and Weather Related Losses** and **Protecting Your School Property from Frost and Freeze Related Losses** which are available at www.cpsma.ie

CLOSING DATES

Members are reminded of the following upcoming closing dates:

1. **Standardised test results:** Data is to be input by schools on www.Esinet.ie no later than the 20th December 2012.
2. **Primary pay dates:** (i) The closing date for the pay date of 20th December 2012 is Wednesday, 5th December 2012 and (ii) the closing date for the pay date of 3rd January 2013 is Tuesday, 18th December 2012.
3. **CPSMA Inclusiveness Survey:** Friday, 11th January 2013.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS



CPSMA wishes all members of Boards of Management and those in the school community a happy and holy Christmas. Your commitment and hard work on behalf of the pupils in our schools is much appreciated. We look forward to working with you in 2013.