



Information Note SD 0003/2022

To: The Managerial Authorities of all recognised Primary, Post Primary and Special Schools

Updated Covid-19 Guidance to Schools following the mid-term break 2022

This note is to inform schools of the new public health advice from 28th February 2022. It is understood that schools may need time in order to make any adjustments depending on their own circumstances. It is not expected that any work will be undertaken over the mid-term break.

On 21st of January 2022, the Government announced the easing of a number of public health measures. The infection prevention control measures and restrictions in school settings were to remain in place until 28th February 2022, so that all children of school going age would have the opportunity to avail of the Covid-19 vaccines.

On 17th February 2022, NPHE reviewed the remaining public health measures including the infection prevention control measures and restrictions in school settings.

Having closely considered relevant epidemiological data and other matters as set out in their letter of 17 February 2022, the Government has accepted the recommendations of the NPHE to remove remaining restrictions relating to mask-wearing and physical distancing in schools. If members of staff or students wish to continue wearing face masks or coverings, they may do so.

Continued use of good infection prevention and control measures such as hand washing, respiratory hygiene, and ventilation is advised.

Critical components of the collective response in relation to COVID-19 continue to apply including self-isolation if symptomatic (even if fully vaccinated/boosted) or if having a positive COVID-19 test.



In general, schools should now resume normal school routines and normal teaching and learning activities.

Staying at home if you have symptoms

The requirement to stay at home if you have symptoms remains – for students and staff alike. One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread.

Hand Hygiene

Schools should continue to promote good hygiene. Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean). Funding will continue to issue to schools for the purchase of PPE, including hand sanitiser.

Face coverings/mask wearing

It is no longer a requirement for staff or pupils/students to wear a face covering/mask in school. Staff and student/pupils can continue to wear a face covering/mask if they wish to do so on a personal basis and schools should continue to make masks available on request as they are currently doing. Funding to support the purchase of PPE, including masks, will continue to be made available to schools.

School transport and Face coverings/mask wearing

With effect from Monday 28 February the wearing of face coverings/masks on school transport will no longer be mandatory but will continue to be advised. All other measures relating to hygiene (including the provision of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning of services) and pre-assigned seating will remain in place subject to further review.

Cleaning and Hygiene in schools

The Department of Education has provided additional funding to schools to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of COVID-19. This funding will continue for this academic year and will be reviewed in advance of the start of the next school year.



Physical Distancing

- **Primary Schools**

Physical distancing has been implemented in primary schools mainly by structuring pupils and their teachers into class bubbles (i.e. a class grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible) and discrete groups or “Pods” within those class bubbles, to the extent that this was practical.

It is recognised that this has impacted on teaching and learning and the normal socialising and mixing between and within classes and year groups. As the general requirement for physical distancing in society no longer applies, schools are no longer required to maintain class pods and bubbles.

This will facilitate a return to team teaching, sports, singing and music, breakfast clubs and inter schools activities. Use of changing rooms, PE halls and lockers, staff rooms etc. can resume where there has been limited access in this regard.

Where schools implemented staggered drop offs or pickups or breaks, these are no longer necessary.

- **Post Primary Schools**

The suite of measures set out in the Framework for physical distancing at post primary schools included, reconfiguring class spaces to maximise physical distancing; reviewing timetables, use of live streaming within the school; and accessing available spaces within the local community.

As the general requirement for physical distancing in society no longer applies, schools are no longer required to maintain these arrangements. Where these arrangements are impacting negatively on teaching and learning such as live streaming or restricting team teaching etc. they should cease immediately. It is not envisaged that timetables would be rearranged mid-year.

Use of changing rooms, PE halls and lockers, staff rooms etc. can resume where there has been limited access in this regard.



Visitors to schools/Parent teacher meetings

There is no longer a requirement to restrict visitors to schools and schools should revert to the normal arrangements for visitors. In this context parent teacher meetings should resume and schools where parent teacher meetings have not taken place should commence these as soon as possible. All schools should ensure that they have a parent teacher meeting for each year group within this academic year (where these have not already taken place).

Return to Work Form/ return to schools form

Schools no longer need to request staff or pupils/students to complete a Return to Work form or a Return to School form after school holidays/breaks.

Antigen testing arrangements for children in primary schools and special classes and special schools)

As part of the transition arrangements the HSE will continue with the current processes to support the provision of antigen tests to primary schools, special schools and childcare settings.

The Antigen Free phone number is: 1800 110055 or parents may order antigen tests online via www.hse.ie/schooltest.

The call centre opening hours will be altered slightly and from next week onwards will be 8:45am to 6:00pm Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays). The online portal will remain operational 24/7 and will shortly be available through Irish as well as English.

Participation in antigen testing is voluntary, therefore it is not necessary for parents to share information with the school about whether they have requested antigen tests and nor to confirm negative antigen tests

Children who are well should continue to come to school whether they participate in antigen testing or not.

Public health risk assessment arrangements for special schools

Where a positive case occurs in a special school Public Health will undertake a public health risk assessment if the positive case was in the school setting during their infectious period.



Staffing flexibility arrangements

It is recognised that public health advice to remain at home if symptomatic or if testing positive for Covid-19 will result in a continued demand for substitutes and the need for some continuing flexibility in regard to leave arrangements. Separate guidance to schools will issue in respect of parental leave arrangements.

Banking of SET hours

Schools are asked to continue to make every effort to obtain a substitute for all teacher absences. Non-classroom teachers should only be used as a measure of last resort where it is not possible to secure a substitute teacher through any of the other sources.

In these circumstances the Department is permitting the banking of SET hours from January until the Easter break.

Temporary COVID-19 emergency substitution arrangements for Post Primary Schools

Information Note 0026/2021 advised schools that post primary teachers could provide up to a maximum of 35 additional teaching hours between 29th November 2021 and 28th February 2022. In order to continue to support schools to source substitution cover over the coming weeks, this provision is now being extended for a further period, and allows up to a maximum of a further 35 additional teaching hours, during the period between 1st March 2022 and 31st May 2022.

Queries should be directed to the Post Primary Payroll Section of Department of Education, Athlone via email PPPayroll@education.gov.ie or to the HR Department of their ETB if employed in an ETB school.

Helpline for schools

The Department of Education has a helpline to provide support to schools during Covid-19.

The email address and phone number of the helpline is as follows:
Covid19_alert@education.gov.ie or telephone 057 9324461.

This line had been operating 7 days per week since January 2022. The volume of calls has dropped significantly and therefore the operation of the helpline has been reviewed. The helpline will remain in place for the remainder of this school year and will operate from Monday - Friday 09.00 - 17.00.



Deirdre Shanley
Assistant Secretary
23 February 2022

Financial Guideline P22 - 2019-2020

Guidance for Primary Schools on A. PPE, Consumables and Equipment and B. Update on Coding for recording COVID-19 Grants Income and Expenditure

A.PPE, Consumables and Equipment

1. Introduction

Further to Financial Guideline P21 issued on July 29th, as per the Department's document [Guidance for Primary Schools & Special Schools on PPE, Consumables and Equipment](#) the Department has established, following a procurement process, a multi-supplier arrangement from which schools can choose suppliers and products which best suit their needs.

All PPE, consumables and equipment requirements of schools under the Roadmap and with schools COVID-19 Response Plans, and in line with the public health advice, will be available through the Supply Arrangement including:

- Hand sanitiser dispensers;
- Hand sanitiser liquid;
- Hand soap;
- Disposable Paper Towels;
- Wipes;
- Gloves;
- Face masks
- Face coverings
- Face visors;
- Aprons; and
- Detergents etc.

An information pack has been emailed directly to all schools, including a User Guide, which sets out the steps schools should follow when purchasing goods from suppliers under the Supply Arrangement.

Schools are encouraged to purchase their PPE and consumables requirements through this Supply Arrangement to the greatest extent possible to avail of the value for money achievable through the centralised procurement approach. **For queries in relation to the procurement of PPE please contact the Schools Procurement Unit (SPU) on 01 2035899 or procurementssupport@spu.ie**

2. Payments

A COVID-19 Capitation Grant for PPE, Consumables and Equipment of €25 per pupil, with an enhanced rate of €100 for students in special classes will issue to fund school costs in this regard from reopening until the end of 2020. This capitation grant rate up to the end of 2020, reflects the fact that there are a number of once off type costs which schools face in implementing COVID-19 Response Plans (i.e. installation of sanitiser units, signage/posters etc.) which will be incurred upfront. It is envisaged that this grant payment will issue to schools later in August.

COVID-19 Capitation Grant for PPE, Consumables and Equipment	
<i>Rate per pupil (Up to end of 2020)</i>	
Mainstream	€25
Special Class	€100

The COVID-19 capitation grant will also be the mechanism through which further additional funding will be provided to cater for school costs related to hand hygiene measures and PPE requirements. The funding will be paid in instalments, the first of which will be paid in mid-August to cover the period to December 2020.

The COVID-19 Capitation Grant for 2021 up to the remainder of the school year, will be confirmed in December following review/monitor of usage in schools in the period up to the end of the year. A timeline of Payments of Covid Related Grants is included in Appendix 1.

3. Usage

This COVID-19 Capitation Grant for PPE, Consumables and Equipment is ring-fenced funding provided to schools for the purchase of appropriate PPE, consumables and equipment (including signage, pedal bins where required etc.) required by schools in minimising the risk of spread of infection of COVID-19 in line with the Roadmap, public health advice, Return to Work Safely Protocol and their COVID-19 Response Plan and should only be used for that purpose. This includes PPE and consumables which may have been purchased by schools from sources outside of the Supply Arrangement established by the Department.

See [Guidance for Primary Schools & Special Schools on PPE, Consumables and Equipment](#) for recommendations on quantities of supplies required.

4. Department Helpline for schools

For further queries, please contact the Department's Helpline

- Department's Helpline **057 9324461**.
- The helpline is open from 9.15am to 5.00pm daily.
- Queries can also be sent by email to reopeningschools@education.gov.ie

B. Update on Coding for recording COVID-19 Grants Income and Expenditure

1. Accounting for COVID-19 grants income and expenditure

The following codes must be added to the school's chart of accounts in order to account for this and other COVID grants. **Note these codes have been updated since Financial Guideline P21 "COVID-19 Financial Supports for the full return to school" issued July 29th.**

Nominal Code	Description	Type	Category
3277	COVID Minor Works Grant-Non Capital	Income	Department of Education & Skills Income
3280	COVID Aide Grant	Income	Department of Education & Skills Income
3281	COVID Capitation PPE Grant	Income	Department of Education & Skills Income
3283	COVID Capitation for Additional Cleaning Grant	Income	Department of Education & Skills Income
5316	COVID Minor Works Grant (Non Capital) Expense	Expenditure	Repairs, Maintenance & Establishment
5801	COVID Aide Grant Wages Expense	Expenditure	Repairs, Maintenance & Establishment
5802	COVID Capitation for PPE Grant Expense	Expenditure	Repairs, Maintenance & Establishment
5804	COVID Capitation for Cleaning Wages Expense	Expenditure	Repairs, Maintenance & Establishment
5805	COVID Capitation for Cleaning Non Wages Expense	Expenditure	Repairs, Maintenance & Establishment
2169	COVID Minor Works Grant Unspent	Current Liability	Accruals
2181	COVID Aide Grant Unspent	Current Liability	Accruals
2182	COVID Capitation for PPE Grant Unspent	Current Liability	Accruals
2184	COVID Capitation for Additional Cleaning Grant Unspent	Current Liability	Accruals

If you need any further information please email primary@fssu.ie
or phone (01) 910 4020

Financial Support Services Unit

August 2020

Appendix 1 – Timeline of Payments of Covid Related Grants	
Covid Grant	Paid
Minor Works (December Advance)	Yes
Minor Works Enhanced	Yes
Covid Aide	Yes
Covid 19 Capitation Grant (Covid Cleaning Grant)	Yes 1/3 paid
Covid 19 Capitation Grant (PPE & Sanitisation Grant)	First Tranche: Mid August Mainstream €25 per student Special: €100 per student