



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Schoolbooks Grant

Guidance for Post-Primary Schools 2024/25

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Foreword from Minister for Education Norma Foley TD

I am very pleased to extend the Free Schoolbooks scheme to all students in Junior Cycle years from this September. This follows the hugely successful roll-out of the Free Schoolbooks scheme for all children and young people enrolled in primary and special schools this past year.

I strongly believe education is the greater leveller. It ensures that no dream is too big, no ambition too great.

By providing our Junior Cycle students with schoolbooks, we are enhancing their educational experience, not just in the classroom but at home and as they prepare for life after school. Fundamentally, we are ensuring that no student will be disadvantaged by a lack of ability to access essential learning resources, and we are easing some of the financial burden facing families.

The extension of this scheme will benefit approximately 213,000 young people, across every county in Ireland. This brings to 774,000 the total number of children and young people benefitting from free schoolbooks across Ireland.

Of course, government's approval of this scheme would be meaningless without the dedication and hard work of individual schools on the ground. I know that the implementation of this new scheme will require leadership on the part of school staff and boards of management, and I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your work in this regard.

These guidelines have been developed to assist post-primary schools to implement the scheme in advance of the 2024/25 school year. They were written with the assistance of the education partners and input from other key stakeholders, including schoolbook publishers and schoolbook suppliers. Again, I would like to note my gratitude to all partners for their work on these guidelines. I look forward to working with schools and other stakeholders in the implementation of this important scheme.

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Education



1. Introduction

This guidance is designed to support post-primary school leaders in administering the new Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme. It should help to answer any questions about the scheme and support school planning for the 2024/25 school year and the overall implementation of the scheme.

This guidance also set out the arrangements regarding the payment of the book grant to recognised post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme in order to provide assistance for schoolbooks, including book rental schemes, for students in Transition Year, Fifth Year and Sixth Year.

The cost of preparing children and young people for going back to school can be challenging for many families who are under increased financial pressure each year to provide the range of items required for the return to school. One of the significant outlays is the cost of providing schoolbooks* and classroom resources. Even though up to now a large number of post-primary schools have operated book rental schemes, there was still a participation cost levied on families.

This new Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme being introduced for the 2024/25 school year will remove the cost from families of funding schoolbooks for post-primary school students in Junior Cycle years.

Parents/Guardians will no longer be required to make any contribution towards the cost of schoolbooks, including the cost of core classroom resources, in the school year 2024/5. Schools will be required to communicate with parents/guardians in relation to the scope of the scheme in their school.

*where the word “**schoolbooks**” is used throughout this document it encompasses all relevant textbooks, including ebooks, and workbooks in use at school level to support teaching and subject learning at Junior Cycle. It also includes necessary additional texts such as novels and plays for English or books of past Junior Cycle examination papers for all subjects.

2. Benefits for parents/guardians

The main benefit for parents/guardians is that the cost of schoolbooks and core classroom resources is now eliminated and will be borne by the State.

Parents/Guardians will also have peace of mind that all children and young people will have the same schoolbooks and core classroom resources as all other students in their class.

The free Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme will provide schoolbooks and core classroom resources to all children and young people enrolled in Junior Cycle years in post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme. The introduction of this new scheme will eliminate the cost of schoolbooks and classroom resources for their families and will ease the financial burden facing families at back to school time.

The scheme will ensure equity of access, where all children and young people enrolled in Junior Cycle years in post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme can commence the new school year in 2024/25 with the same schoolbooks and classroom resources as other children and young people in their class.

The Department has produced an information leaflet for parents/guardians which is published at www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes and has been emailed to all post-primary schools.

Schools should circulate this information leaflet to all families with children entering or in Junior Cycle years.

3. Benefits for post-primary schools

Providing funding directly to schools to purchase schoolbooks and classroom resources for students has many benefits for schools.

Post-primary schools will retain the discretion to implement the curriculum by choosing the schoolbooks and classroom resources that best meet the needs of their students.

All children and young people will now start the new school year having a full set of schoolbooks and core classroom resources. Where the funding allows, some schools may also be in a position to provide additional classroom resources (see section 4.3 Classroom resources).

Post-primary schools that previously operated book rental schemes will no longer need to collect book rental charges from parents/guardians of students in Junior Cycle years.

Schools may be able to achieve cost savings by purchasing in bulk and by re-using schoolbooks in future years.

Schools will own the schoolbooks and classroom resources and they will be provided on loan to students for either the duration of a school year or for the entire three years of Junior Cycle.¹ Schoolbooks will be available for re-use in subsequent years. This means that post-primary schools will not usually need to buy a complete new set of schoolbooks for each school year.

¹ While schools own the classroom resources provided under the scheme, it is acknowledged that some of the resources cannot be reused by other students in subsequent years. Some classroom resources, such as calculators and dictionaries, may remain with the student for the duration of their post-primary education.

4. Scope of the scheme

4.1 Use of grant by schools

Schools are, generally, permitted discretion in how the schoolbook grant funding is used, on the understanding that it eliminates the overall cost of schoolbooks and core classroom resources for parents/guardians of students in Junior Cycle years.

For the 2024/25 school year the grant funding is set at a rate of €309 per student in year 1, 2 and 3 of the Junior Cycle. This provides for the cost of all schoolbooks (see definition of schoolbooks in Schoolbooks section 4.2) and the cost of classroom resources as outlined in this guidance (see Classroom resources section 4.3).

However, where school-designed resources are provided in lieu of schoolbooks the school may use the grant to meet any costs associated with the provision of teacher-generated content, once all schoolbooks and core classroom resources have been provided (see section 4.6 for post-primary schools using teacher generated content).

The Junior Cycle Schoolbook Scheme does not include any costs associated with Junior Cycle mock exams.

4.2 Schoolbooks

The scheme will provide schoolbooks for all students in Junior Cycle years in recognised post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme. It will eliminate the cost of schoolbooks for parents/guardians of children and young people enrolled in these years.

The term 'schoolbooks' includes all relevant textbooks, including ebooks, and workbooks identified by schools as necessary for completion of the curriculum for each subject. It also includes necessary additional texts such as novels and plays for English or books of past Junior Cycle examination papers for all subjects. Schools should determine whether it is more cost effective to print/photocopy examination papers, which are available from the State Examination Commission's website, or to purchase these.

Parents/guardians of students in Junior Cycle years will not be asked to purchase schoolbooks or to make a financial contribution to the school towards the cost of schoolbooks.

4.3 Classroom resources

4.3.1 Core classroom resources; In 2024/25 the scheme will cover, at a minimum, core classroom resources, which includes materials, for example copybooks, hardback notebooks, school journals and calculators, required for all subjects as well as subject-specific resource items such as lab copybooks for science subjects or dictionaries for language subjects.

A detailed list of the core classroom resources for which costs have been provided under the scheme is included at **Appendix 1**. At a minimum, these are the items which must be provided by schools.

4.3.2 Additional classroom resources; In any given school year, post primary schools will have different needs under the scheme, taking into account schoolbooks already in stock, the need to update or replace schoolbooks and various requirements for classroom resources. When all schoolbooks and core classroom resources under this scheme are provided, schools may use any surplus funding to purchase additional classroom resources. Expenditure under additional classroom resources is limited to expenditure that, up to the commencement of the scheme, was borne by parents/guardians, either by providing the item or paying a fee to the school to provide the item.

Additional classroom resources covers resources used in Visual Art, Home Economics, Graphics, Engineering, Wood Technology, Applied Technology, Science and Music. In essence, additional classroom resources are the supporting materials for any Junior Cycle subject or short course required by students to complete projects and practical elements of the curriculum, beyond schoolbooks and core classroom resources.

Additional classroom resources does not include any items currently provided in post-primary schools through existing funding streams, either from the Department of Education or from other Departments and agencies. When deciding what items to purchase under additional classroom resources and where surplus funding permits, schools are requested to consider providing items across a range of different subjects.

The scope of the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme focuses on schoolbooks, materials to write on, materials required for practical subjects and project support equipment where the costs for these items were previously borne by parents/guardians, either by purchasing the item or by paying a fee to the school for the item.

4.4 Students commencing second or third year in the 2024/25 school year

A significant portion of the schoolbooks and classroom resources that schools require students to have for Junior Cycle are either purchased by parents/guardians in first year or provided by schools through book rental schemes in first year. Therefore students commencing second and third year in the 2024/25 school year should already have the majority of their required schoolbooks and some classroom resources.

However, post-primary schools are required under this new scheme to provide any additional schoolbooks and core classroom resources required by students commencing second or third year in the 2024/25 school year.

4.5 Special classes in post-primary schools

The Department recognises that in some circumstances students enrolled in special classes in mainstream post-primary schools may not use schoolbooks or classroom resources as listed in **Appendix 1**.

A broader range of schoolbooks and classroom resources may be required in these settings to meet the educational needs of the students, including the need to provide an audio version of a schoolbook alongside the text version of the book or resource to allow students to access a more individualised curriculum.

The main aim of the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme is to eliminate the costs of providing schoolbooks and classroom resources to parents/guardians. When this has been realised for students in Junior Cycle special classes, any surplus book grant funding may be used to provide additional classroom resources. Schools operating special classes are best placed to identify additional classroom resources required for their individual setting and to meet the learning needs of their students.

4.6 Teacher generated resources and content

It is recognised that a small number of post-primary schools have, over the past number of years, moved away from the use of schoolbooks, including ebooks. Teachers in these schools have generated their own bank of resources for students. Students access these resources in the main through a digital device. Such schools may still require a small number of schoolbooks each year, such as English plays and novels.

When schools that use teacher-generated resources and content have eliminated the cost of all required schoolbooks and classroom resources as detailed in the preceding sections of this guidance, they may use the funding to cover other resources associated with teacher-generated content such as purchasing or subscribing to educational apps. If surplus funding remains, schools may use the funding to facilitate the provision of school-owned digital devices to students on a temporary basis, as needed.

Schools that use teacher-lead resources in some, but not all, subjects will need to consider any requirement to provide new books in the following year before spending surplus funding in any one year.

Schools that are wholly or largely reliant on teacher lead resources may be asked to provide details of their implementation of the scheme to the Department.

4.7 Surplus funding

After the costs of schoolbooks, core and additional classroom resources, as set out in this guidance, have been met for all students in Junior Cycle years if schools have any remaining grant funding it can be carried forward to the next school year.

Where post-primary schools have recently introduced a book rental scheme and obtained a loan to meet the start-up costs, surplus funding from the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme may be used to meet the 2024 loan costs, but only in respect of the element of the loan relating to Junior Cycle students.

Schools should be aware that a scheme of free school books for students in Junior Cycle will operate in 2025/26.

Funding under this scheme is for use in Junior Cycle years only and cannot be used for purposes other than those outlined in this guidance including towards the cost of schoolbooks and resources in any years other than for students in first, second and third year.

Post-primary schools will continue to receive the existing Department book grant under Circular 46/2013 for all students in Transition and Senior Cycle years. This grant remains in place to assist schools with the purchase of schoolbooks, including as part of book rental schemes.

Post-primary schools that have unspent book grant remaining from years prior to the 2024/25 school year may use this surplus funding for any of the Junior or Senior Cycle years.

Schools, that use teacher-lead resources in some, but not all, subjects will need to consider any requirement to provide new books in the following year before spending surplus funding in any one year. See section 4.6 teacher generated resources and content.

5. Funding arrangements

5.1 Allocation to schools

The per capita funding to be provided is as follows:

Rate per capita €309 (all students in Junior Cycle years in recognised post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme). This equates to €927 across the three years of Junior Cycle and takes into consideration that generally the cost of schoolbooks and core classroom resources are much higher in first year than in second or third year. Schools have discretion to spend funding across the three Junior Cycle years taking into account the specific context and needs of the school.

Please note that this rate is applicable to the 2024/25 school year only.

5.2 Payment of grant

It is envisaged that the book grant for the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme will be paid to schools no later than 31 March 2024 so that schools will have the necessary funding in place to implement the scheme in advance of the commencement of the 2024/25 school year.

The grant will be calculated based on validated September 2023 enrolment figures.

Worked example of funding provided under the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme 2024/25

On 30 September 2023 School A has 112 students in first year, 132 in second year and 128 in third year.

The total grant that will be paid to this school in spring 2024 for the 2024/25 school year in respect of these 372 students is €114,948.

The existing book grant for Senior Cycle years will be paid to post-primary schools in June in line with previous year's payments. This will enable schools to identify both grants separately.

The Senior Cycle grant will also be calculated based on validated September 2023 enrolment figures.

5.3 Post-primary schools under the patronage of education and training boards (ETBs)

Book grants will issue directly to the relevant ETB, which will distribute the funding to those schools under its remit through its established funding administration processes.

5.4 Developing schools

The Department recognises a specific number of post-primary schools as developing schools. These are schools that have newly opened since September 2019 and have significantly increased their enrolment size each year.

It is envisaged that an initial payment of the book grant will be made to all post-primary schools that have developing school status in March 2024 and this will be calculated based on September 2023 validated enrolment data.

When developing schools have provided the Department with projected September 2024 enrolment data, and where this enrolment projection shows an increase from the validated enrolment of September 2023, a “top up” Junior Cycle book grant payment will issue.

Where the validated September 2024 enrolments are less than the projected September 2024 enrolments, developing schools will be required to return the excess schoolbook grant to the Department. Schools in this situation should email jcschoolbooks@education.gov.ie for instructions and bank details for making the repayment.

Worked example of additional funding provided to developing school under the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme 2024/25

For example, a school with developing school status has 350 students enrolled in Junior Cycle Years on 30 September 2023. The book grant will issue in March 2024 in respect of 350 students. The school projects September 2024 enrolments of 380 students. A top-up book grant will issue in respect of 30 students.

5.5 Exceptional circumstances

Like many grants, the payment structure for this grant is such that funding is paid to schools in advance of the coming school year (2024/25) and is therefore based on the previous September's validated enrolment figures, from September 2023.

Any increase or decrease in enrolment figures since the previous year will be captured in the next year's grant funding. It is important to be assured that, on this basis, funding is provided for each student for the full duration of their enrolment in the school.

While students who enrol in first year in the 2024/25 school year are not captured for Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme grant in 2024/25 (as it is based on validated enrolment on 30 September 2023) they are counted for the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme grant for the 2027/28 school year. This is when they will have completed Junior Cycle and will most likely be in transition year or fifth year.

Schools will be expected, for the main part, to absorb the cost of additional enrolments that occur within the normal course of fluctuations which take place throughout any given year in all schools. Schools will not receive additional funding for any increase to enrolments in Junior Cycle years which might be considered in the normal operation of the school. Schools that experience a decrease in enrolments since the previous September will not be asked to refund any excess grant funding (with the exception of developing schools: see section 5.4). Funding will, as outlined above, balance and will be accounted for year on year.

In certain and limited circumstances, however, where a school enrolls a large number of new students after 30 September and where funding was not originally allocated to take account of these students, the school may contact the Department to make an application for additional funding. As a general rule, an additional payment will only be made by the Department in situations where the number of new students enrolled after 30 September is equal to or greater than 10% of the 30 September Junior Cycle enrolment figure or greater than 15 students, and where the school has insufficient Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme funding to meet the additional costs.

Schools that wish to apply for additional funding under "exceptional circumstances" should email jcschoolbooks@education.gov.ie setting out the detail of the additional enrolments.

Such applications will be considered on a case by case basis.

5.6 Administration Support Grant

The Department recognises that, while many post-primary schools already operate book rental schemes of considerable scale, there is additional work associated with implementing this new scheme.

The Department has put in place a grant payment for schools, for administrative support in the 2024/25 school year.

This grant may be used to employ a person to work for a specified number of days in advance of, or during, the 2024/25 school year to carry out administrative work on the scheme. The daily rate sanctioned by the Department for this work is €160.62, which includes holiday pay. The Department will provide an additional 11.05% to cover the employer PRSI cost. The payment must be processed by the school as it would be the payment of any person carrying out work for, or in, the school.

Although the rate is based on a daily rate, schools have the autonomy to use the equivalent number of hours over the course of the school year as they consider most suitable for their needs.

The specific duties are to be determined by the school management but can include placing orders with schoolbook shops and suppliers, checking delivery of orders from schoolbook shops and suppliers, covering schoolbooks, preparing and tracking sets of schoolbooks and classroom resources for individual classes/students, liaising with schoolbook shops and suppliers and subject teachers.

Appendix 3 contains a list of some of the key tasks involved in the implementation of the scheme at school level. This is not an exhaustive list and will differ from school to school.

The person/s paid for this work can be an existing member of staff of the school/ETB such as: the principal/deputy principal, a teacher, a special needs assistant (SNA), the school secretary, an ETB head office staff member or an individual deemed suitable by the school management to carry out this role effectively. It is acknowledged that some post-primary schools have already appointed a post holder position to a staff member for the purposes of the operation of a book rental scheme. This additional support grant may be paid to the existing post holder, if appropriate, for additional work carried out to administer the new scheme, or it can be paid to a different person or persons as outlined above. No additional class time can be given to this role, outside of existing time allocated to post holders.

Where a post-primary school does not need to pay a person or persons for additional administrative support to implement the new scheme, the school may use the

Administration Support Grant for other administrative purposes associated with the new Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme, including but not limited to, the purchase of a tracking/barcode system or the purchase of storage cabinets.

The number of days allocated are based on the Junior Cycle enrolment size of the school and are as follows:

Size of School (Junior Cycle enrolment September 2023)	No of Days
0-300	10
301-600	13
601-900	16

The ongoing requirement for administrative support after the first year of the scheme will be kept under review.

For developing schools, the grant for administrative support will be calculated based on projected enrolment figures for September 2024.

The Administration Support Grant will be paid separately to the schoolbook grant and will issue to post-primary schools before the end of May.

A school can also opt out of receipt of this grant payment by emailing jcschoolbooks@education.gov.ie before 30 April 2024.

6. Administration of the scheme

6.1 Key principles

The board of management/ETB will be responsible for ensuring the effective administration of the scheme within the following key principles:

- Schoolbooks and classroom resources will be chosen to support the implementation of the teaching and learning in the school and the provision of the Junior Cycle curriculum to students.
- Schools will retain ownership of schoolbooks.
- All students will have access to the schoolbooks and classroom resources provided for by this scheme.
- No costs for schoolbooks and core classroom resources will be sought from parents/guardians.
- Parents/guardians will not be asked to purchase schoolbooks and core classroom resources provided for by this scheme.

6.2 Selection of schoolbooks

Post-primary schools will continue to have autonomy to choose schoolbooks and classroom resources that meet curricular requirements. In the case of special classes in post-primary schools, they have autonomy to choose resources that meet the learning needs of the students.

A school's policy on the selection of schoolbooks should include consideration of the need for schoolbooks and/or workbooks, the criteria used in selecting schoolbooks and a commitment to keeping a schoolbook on the school booklist for a specified period of time.

6.3 Digital devices

With the exception of post-primary schools that use teacher generated content and resources in place of schoolbooks, funding under the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme does not extend to including the purchase of digital devices by schools. However, schools may use the funding for digital media support, which relates to teaching and learning within curricular requirements.

Decisions regarding the use of digital technology, such as ebooks, in schools is a matter for the board of management/ETB of each school. Schools are advised to consult with members of the school community including parents/guardians when planning for the introduction of digital technologies, with cost and other implications being fully considered.

You can access advice on the use of digital media at; <http://www.pdst.ie/DistanceLearning/DigitalLibraries> and, <https://www.pdst.ie/distancelearning/othersources>

In the case of post-primary schools using teacher-generated resources and content, those schools may implement a scheme to provide digital devices on loan to students if they have surplus funding to facilitate this. See section 4.6 and 4.7 above.

6.4 Resources that support the teaching of Irish

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) compiles a list annually which provides up-to-date information on publications and teaching materials that support the teaching of Irish and the teaching of other subjects through the medium of Irish in post-primary schools. This list can be accessed on www.cogg.ie. COGG also organises workshops and exhibitions from time to time to inform teachers about the material available for Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools. This information can be very valuable when decisions are being made on possible schoolbooks for individual subjects/class groups.

At post-primary level, there are a number of prescribed texts for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate English and Irish. The decision on which particular text to use rests with the school itself. They can choose whichever text best suits the context of their teaching.

6.5 Early ordering of books and resources

It can take time for orders to be fulfilled and delivered to schools. It is important that subject teachers decide as early as possible what schoolbooks and classroom resources are required by their students to allow sufficient time for ordering and delivery. The board of management/ETB and school management should ensure that all practical tasks relating to the administration of the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme are concluded in time for the beginning of the new school year. Some of these key tasks involved are outlined in **Appendix 3**.

Schoolbooks and classroom resources can be stored in classrooms or any other area of the school as deemed suitable over the summer period. Many schoolbooks and classroom resources used in this loan scheme will remain in use by a student for the full three years of Junior Cycle. Schools should decide whether they wish to collect all schoolbooks at the end of the school year and re-distribute them in time for the start of the next school year, or leave the items in the care of the student and their family for the three years of Junior Cycle (where the schoolbook is being used for more than one year).

Schools should devise a system for monitoring items such as name tags/barcodes (where used) which are placed on each book in advance. Students and parents/guardians should be reminded of the need for schoolbooks and resources care and maintenance throughout the year.

At the end of the school year or at the end of Junior Cycle, schoolbooks and resources (where applicable) should be collected and checked. Damaged schoolbooks should be repaired if possible.

6.6 Ownership

All schoolbooks remain the property of the school and are provided on loan to students. Schoolbooks can consist of both new and second-hand schoolbooks. Students should retain schoolbooks for one school year or for the duration of Junior Cycle (as applicable and determined by the school), at the end of which, they must be returned to the school.

6.7 Reduce waste

As far as possible, schools should make every effort to reduce wastage under the scheme. Schools are expected to adopt a cost-conscious and environment-conscious approach to the selection of schoolbooks and classroom resources.

It is strongly recommended that a cover is placed on all schoolbooks. Schoolbook shops and suppliers may provide a book-covering service at a cost or a school may decide to provide its own book-covering service or consider requesting parents/guardians and/or students to assist with this task.

Parents/Guardians should be reminded that students are expected to take good care of their schoolbooks and classroom resources and keep them in good condition during the year.

6.8 Communication with parents/guardians

Post-primary schools are required to communicate as early as possible with parents/guardians in relation to this new scheme. This is to ensure all parents/guardians are fully aware of the new scheme and parents/guardians of Junior Cycle students do not incur any unnecessary expenditure between now and the start of the 2024/25 school year.

The communication with parents/guardians **should only reference the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme**. To avoid any confusion the communication should not include reference to any other fees or charges levied on parents/guardians of Junior Cycle students, for example, fees for school trips or school activities. Where they exist, other fees and charges should be covered in a separate communication from schools to parents/guardians.

Parents/Guardians must be informed of the classroom resources now covered under the scheme.

Where additional classroom resources are required but cannot be covered under the scheme, parents/guardians must be advised of how these items will be provided. Schools should either provide parents/guardians with a list of the specific items that they are required to purchase, or provide them with information of the fee that the school will charge and a list of items that the school will provide for this fee. A draft communication to parents/guardians is available at **Appendix 2**.

Parents/Guardians must also be informed of the arrangements in place for the distribution of schoolbooks and classroom resources to Junior Cycle students.

7. Procurement

The Department is aware that many post-primary schools currently implement some form of book rental scheme and have experience in purchasing schoolbooks.

Schools have obligations that stem from both EU and national public procurement rules when sourcing goods and services.

Schools have access to the Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services published by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP). These Guidelines promote best practice and consistency of application of the public procurement rules in relation to the purchase of goods and services. The guidelines are available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c23f5-public-procurement-guidelines-for-goods-and-services/>

The Office of Government Procurement also aims to promote schemes to facilitate Small and Medium sized Enterprise (SME) participation in Public Procurement. DPER Circular 05/2023 refers to initiatives to assist SMEs in Public Procurement and outlines the schemes which schools may consider as part of their procurement process. It can be accessed here <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/9e7bf-circular-05-2023-initiatives-to-assist-smes-in-public-procurement/>.

Schools can use the Office of Government Procurement Office Supplies Framework for stationery requirements (<https://buyerzone.gov.ie/> or contact the helpdesk at support@ogp.gov.ie). Some items which may be required by schools under this scheme are listed on the framework and schools are encouraged to engage the services of the Office Supplies Framework which aims to achieve value for money on the items included on the framework.

Further information and assistance on accessing the OGP Office Supplies Framework as well as a summary of procurement thresholds is set out at **Appendix 4**. It is expected that many post-primary schools will now be required to advertise schoolbook tenders on etenders and a small number may now be required to advertise schoolbook tenders simultaneously on both etenders and in the official journal of the EU.

Over the coming period, the Department will provide additional procurement support to post-primary schools to assist them in meeting EU and national public procurement obligations.

7.1 Schools procurement unit

The Schools Procurement Unit (SPU) is the central support resource for providing guidance to all recognised primary schools, including special schools, and post-primary schools (except ETB schools) on any procurement-related issue. The SPU delivers free advice and practical support to schools to help them achieve improvements in their procurement processes, practices and outcomes. The Unit has produced Guidance for Schools on Good Procurement Practices which is available at <https://www.spu.ie/procurement-guide/>.

The guidance does not place any additional responsibilities upon schools that are not already in legislation. They offer guidance for schools on ways to satisfy their procurement obligations when sourcing goods and services.

7.2 Post-primary schools under the patronage of education and training boards (ETBs)

These schools are supported in their procurement activity by their local ETB.

7.3 Green public procurement

The public sector has a vital role to play in leading Ireland's transition to a sustainable and carbon-neutral economy and society. Public procurement is one of the primary ways in which public bodies will help to shape this transition, and to meet the 2030 targets for reducing CO₂ emissions and improving energy efficiency.

The Green Public Procurement Guidance for the Public Sector provides step-by-step instructions and criteria for implementing green public procurement (GPP), in line with Irish and EU policy and legislation. All tenders using public funds must include green public procurement (GPP).

The guidance is available at; <https://www.epa.ie/publications/circular-economy/resources/GPP-Guidance-for-the-Irish-Public-Sector.pdf>

A green criteria search tool developed by the OGP and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is also available which allows users to search for specific green criteria in relation to a particular item which they are buying. One of the main sub categories that Schools review is the "Paper products and printing services" green criteria. The tool can be accessed here: <https://gppcriteria.gov.ie/>.

7.4 Annual booklists

Annual booklists should continue to be compiled by post-primary schools arising from the decisions of subject teachers and school management based on the requirements of the school. These should be maintained for audit purposes.

Annual booklists should be available for schoolbook publishers, to aid the publishers in their yearly planning process and to ensure that any associated teacher resource materials and appropriate licences are provided to the school.

Schools should note that book publishers will require proof of purchase in order to provide teacher resources that accompany schoolbooks. Any cost associated with acquiring a teacher resource, where a school does not need to purchase the accompanying schoolbook, is a matter for schoolbook publishers. Schools will need to consider this and clarify with respective suppliers when budgeting and ordering each year.

7.5 Template for quotations where total contract is under €50,000 (exclusive of VAT)

The Department engaged with a range of stakeholders when developing this scheme, including Bookselling Ireland. One of the key issues identified by bookshops is the lack of a standardised process used by schools to obtain quotations from bookshops. This results in increased time required by bookshops to respond to requests for quotations.

Contracts under €50,000 (exclusive of VAT) may be awarded on the basis of written quotations from three suppliers.

Where the total value of a contract is less than €50,000 (ex VAT), the use of a standard template by schools will assist to streamline the process whereby schools obtain three quotations. The template is available at the following link. www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes. While schools are not obliged to use this template, it is considered beneficial to both schools and suppliers to increase efficiency in the procurement process where the total value of the contract is less than €50,000 (ex VAT).

7.6 Irish Education Publishers Association (IEPA) code of practice

The main Irish educational publishers have agreed to apply a code of practice designed to help reduce the cost of schoolbooks for parents/guardians and schools. As part of this code, publishers have given commitments to maintain new editions of schoolbooks in print for a minimum of six years, to co-operate with individual schools in the development of schoolbook schemes and to have improved engagement with school communities, parents/guardians, teachers and other stakeholders. See **Appendix 5**.

7.7 Irish Copyright Licensing Agency

In Ireland, books, magazines, journals, digital publications and websites are protected by Irish copyright law, and that law applies to everyone. Therefore when a teacher wants to provide copies of content from a website or a book or magazine for their students, they need permission to do so.

It is mandatory for any educational establishment wishing to make multiple copies of a variety of copyright-protected works to have a licence. As of September 2022, the Department of Education holds a central Educational Licence on behalf of all primary and post-primary schools recognised in the Free Education Scheme. This allows schools to re-use content in lessons without having to clear permissions to do so.

Further detail of what schools are permitted to use under the schools license is provided at the following link <https://www.icla.ie/licences/primary-and-post-primary-schools-licences>.

7.8 Schoolbook shops and schoolbook suppliers

In the past, many parents/guardians purchased schoolbooks directly from schoolbook shops and schoolbook suppliers over a number of months. Schoolbook shops, schoolbook suppliers and suppliers of classroom resources for students with special educational needs will now engage directly with a number of schools in relation to the scheme. Such shops and suppliers may now be required to process large orders from a number of schools.

In order to ensure a smooth implementation of the new arrangements, post-primary schools are requested to finalise their booklists, tender requests and other requirements for the 2024/25 school year as early as possible to ensure that

schoolbooks and classroom resources are available, delivered to schools and provided to students in advance of the new school year.

Schools must follow public procurement guidelines (see Appendix 4).

The funding will be released to schools in March to facilitate prompt payment to schoolbook shops and schoolbook suppliers.

It is accepted that there are certain circumstances where some post-primary schools may need to place orders after the start of the 2024/25 school year, for example, where there is a requirement to purchase additional books or resources or in the case of finalising subject choices after completion of first year taster programmes.

8. Financial management

8.1 Financial administration

Proper financial management procedures must be applied at all times to the funding provided to schools under the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme. The schoolbook funding is ring-fenced for schoolbooks and classroom resources for students in Junior Cycle years, as set out in this guidance. Transactions in relation to the scheme should be identified as such in the schools accounts.

If schools have surplus funding under the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme at the end of the 2024/25 school year such funding may be carried forward into the 2025/26 school year. It is important that schools consider their requirements to replace schoolbooks or purchase new schoolbooks in the following year when deciding how to use any surplus grant.

As with all Exchequer grant aid, school authorities must be able to provide detailed records on how funding, provided under this scheme, was spent. All expenditure in connection with the scheme must be vouched and schools must be able to prove that expenditure was used on the purchase of materials allowed under the scheme.

Invoices and receipts must be retained for the purposes of potential audit/inspection by the Department, the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) / Internal Audit Unit-ETBs as appropriate and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General. It is necessary for schools to retain, on school grounds, booklists, details of quotations received, invoices, receipts and any other relevant records in respect of all expenditure for a period of seven years.

Schools, or ETBs if applicable, will be provided with an income and expenditure report to be completed in order for outputs from the scheme to be determined. This will issue to schools in due course.

If a school closes permanently, any balance held in the account must be surrendered to the Department on the date that the school ceases operation. Where a school closes permanently, due to an amalgamation, any balance held in the account shall transfer to the new school.

The Department reserves the right to recoup funding issued from other grant funding for non-compliance with any of the terms of this scheme. Schools must ensure compliance with [DPER Circular 13/2014](#), *Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds*.

8.2 Surplus from existing book grant scheme and book grant for students in transition year and senior cycle in recognised post-primary schools in the Free Education scheme

Any funds remaining from the previous book grant allocation should be carried forward to the 2024/25 school year.

While the funding provided under this new Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme can only be used to cover the costs associated with Junior Cycle years, any remaining book grant funding carried over from the previous year may be used to support costs of schoolbooks in any year. It is a matter for each school to determine the requirements across all years before deciding how to use any previously unspent book funds.

Schools that have accumulated unspent book grant in their accounts from the previous year/s are encouraged to consider this as part of their overall expenditure when budgeting for books and resources requirements across all classes and years.

The arrangements regarding the payment of the Book Grant to recognised post-primary schools in the Free Education scheme in order to provide assistance for schoolbooks, including book rental schemes, for students in Transition Year, fifth year and sixth year are as follows:

Post-primary per capita rates for Senior Cycle book grant	
DEIS schools for schoolbooks (enhanced)	€39
Non-DEIS schools	€24

It is expected the existing book grant for students in Transition Year and Senior Cycle in recognised post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme will issue to schools in June 2024. In the case of ETB schools, the grant will issue to the ETB concerned.

The Department encourages all schools to consider putting in place book rental schemes for students in Transition year, fifth year and sixth year. The purchasing of schoolbooks remains a very significant cost for parents/guardians of students in these year groups and schoolbook rental schemes are a practical way in which this cost can be reduced greatly.

Queries from schools in relation to the book grant for Transition Year, fifth year and sixth year students should be addressed to Schools Division Financial at

sdfinfo@education.gov.ie or in the case of ETBs to ETB Financial and Administrative Personnel Unit at financialetb@education.gov.ie.

8.3 Financial support services unit

In accordance with Department Circular 0002/2018, *Operation of the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU)*, the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) provides advice and support to Voluntary Secondary Schools and Community and Comprehensive schools in financial governance. This circular can be accessed here <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/df9bbc60ef4c49478d67bd7db173ad5f/>.

This includes standardising arrangements for compliance with accounting requirements under Section 18 of the Education Act 1998 and enhancing current financial support structures for schools. The FSSU also supports boards of management in meeting their compliance requirements to other regulatory and statutory bodies. The FSSU has produced guidance to assist schools with their accounting requirements. It can be accessed at the following link <https://www.fssu.ie/post-primary/>.

Schools may be subject to audit by the FSSU as part of its ongoing programme of work in supporting schools on financial governance matters and enabling them to comply with the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

Funding to ETB schools may be subject to audit by the Internal Audit Unit-ETBs.

9. Scheme evaluation

In order to fully and accurately assess the ongoing requirements of the scheme the Department intends to carry out an evaluation to input into the development of the second year of the scheme. To facilitate this all post-primary schools will be required to complete and submit an income and expenditure report in respect of the scheme. The Department will communicate with post-primary schools over the coming period in relation to the income and expenditure report. Schools will be required to co-operate with the process.

The ongoing evaluation of the scheme may involve selecting a sample of schools to participate in any evaluation of the scheme.

Schools selected for any future evaluation will be informed in advance and will be required to co-operate with the process. The evaluation will aim to, among other things;

- review the operation of the scheme, including compliance with relevant legislation, Circulars and the scheme guidance
- identify possible improvements to the operation of the scheme;
- review expenditure under the scheme;
- consider measures to improve efficiency for future years;
- assess the wider impacts of the scheme in relation to (1) reducing the cost of education to households (2) removing barriers to education for some students (3) promoting value for money through joint procurement at school-level (4) promoting environmental and cost efficiency through the reuse of books.

The views of school management, teachers, parents/guardians and students, schoolbook publishers, schoolbook shops and other relevant stakeholders will be considered in the development of any evaluation.

It is essential that schools retain all documentation pertaining to the scheme including proof of compliance with EU and national procurement rules, and details of all items purchased under the scheme to ensure valid information is provided to the evaluation process.

10. Review of this guidance

This guidance is applicable to the 2024/25 school year. The guidance will be reviewed ahead of the 2025/26 school year and/or as required. Any review will be notified to schools and education partners.

11. Queries

All queries on this guidance should be sent to jcschoolbooks@education.gov.ie

The Department has produced a Quick Reference Guide for schools to assist with general queries on the scheme. It can be accessed at www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes

Appendix 1 – Core Classroom resources

The following resources are the items which **must** be provided by schools for all students in Junior Cycle years (where the items are required based on particular subject choices and each school's own individual requirements):

- 1 school journal per student per Junior Cycle year
- 12 copybooks (incl. equivalent hard back copybook or refill pad) per student per Junior Cycle year
- 1 display A4 plastic folder per student per Junior Cycle year
- 1 plastic zip A4 folder/carry case per student per Junior Cycle year
- 1 set of ledgers/journals/cash books required for accounting/business studies per student per Junior Cycle year
- 1 science copybook per student per Junior Cycle year
- 1 music copybook/manuscript per student per Junior Cycle year
- 1 set of grammar books per student (to remain assigned to that student for the duration/remainder of the Junior Cycle)
- 1 maths formulae & tables/log book (to remain assigned to that student for the duration/remainder of the Junior Cycle)
- 1 scientific calculator (to remain assigned to that student for the duration/remainder of the Junior Cycle)
- Dictionary/(ies) (to remain assigned to that student for the duration/remainder of the Junior Cycle)

Where a school uses any of the items listed above they must be provided by the school from within the grant funding.

Where a school does not intend to use some of the items listed above but uses similar or alternative items, for which parents/guardians were previously charged a fee or asked to purchase items, the school has the discretion to substitute items listed here to meet their own curricular needs in the various subjects. A school cannot, however, choose to use the funding for items not listed here and continue to charge or introduce a charge to parents/guardians or ask parents/guardians to provide the items listed above.

Appendix 2 – Draft communication to parents/guardians of students enrolled in Junior Cycle years in recognised post-primary schools.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Re: Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme for the 2024/25 school year.

For the 2024/25 school year all students in Junior Cycle years in the free education system will receive free schoolbooks and certain other resources. These will be in place in September 2024.

This new scheme is being introduced by Minister for Education Norma Foley TD. It is in recognition of the cost of preparing children and young people for the return to school. The new scheme eliminates the cost to parents/guardians of providing schoolbooks and core classroom resources. The scheme will ensure equity of access, where all children and young people enrolled in Junior Cycle years in post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme can commence the new school year in 2024/25 with the same schoolbooks and classroom resources as other children and young people in their class.

“Schoolbooks” includes all relevant schoolbooks, including ebooks at Junior Cert level. It also covers workbooks in use in the school to support teaching and subject learning at Junior Cycle. It also includes necessary additional texts such as novels and plays for English or books of past Junior Cycle examination papers for all subjects. Schools should determine whether it is more cost effective to print/photocopy examination papers, which are available from the State Examination Commission’s website or to purchase these.

Funding for the scheme in 2024/25 is being provided directly to post-primary schools by the Department of Education. Schools now have responsibility for providing schoolbooks and core classroom resources to all Junior Cycle students at the start of forthcoming school year.

(Where parents/guardians of second and third year students currently own their schoolbooks these can be used)

Parents/Guardians of students commencing second and third year will have already purchased a significant amount of the schoolbooks and classroom resources

required for Junior Cycle. Any additional schoolbooks and core classroom resources required by students in second and third year will now be covered under the new scheme.

All schoolbooks and core classroom resources provided under the new scheme will remain the property of the school, so that they can be reused in future years (where applicable).

Schoolbooks will be provided on loan to students for the duration of the 2024/25 school year and must be returned to school at the end of the school year/at the end of the 3 years of Junior Cycle. **DELETE AS APPROPRIATE**

Please remind your children to take care of their schoolbooks and classroom resources and keep them in good condition during the period that they are in their possession. It is not permitted to write on schoolbooks.

There may be some additional classroom resources that are not covered by the scheme.

Further details (if any) on what items parents/guardians will need to supply for the return to school in September 2024/pay a fee to the school for will be itemised and communicated to parents/guardians by the school in due course.

Yours sincerely

Chair of BOM

Appendix 3 – School task list

- Compile booklist received from each individual class/subject teacher and classroom resources required for each class/subject
- Establish, and list, the total number of schoolbooks and core classroom resource items that need to be purchased
- Establish budget breakdown for schoolbooks, core classroom resources and additional classroom resources
- Determine what additional classroom resources will be covered by the grant
- Adhere to public procurement guidelines including seeking the required number of quotes from schoolbook shops and suppliers and adhering to advertising and tendering requirements where applicable
- Decide on a supplier for schoolbooks and classroom resources and place order/s
- Furnish schoolbook publishers with details to satisfy requirements for digital supports such as proof of purchase of schoolbooks to obtain eBook licences or teacher resources
- Ensure all the necessary teaching resources/copyrights are provided by the relevant publishers
- Liaise with schoolbook shops and suppliers in relation to any issues
- Check all invoices against orders
- Check stock delivered against orders/invoices
- Arrange a suitable place to store stock
- Arrange for payment to issue to schoolbook shops and suppliers in a timely manner
- Arrange for a cover to be placed on schoolbooks to help extend their lifespan
- Ensure that there is an adequate system in place to catalogue schoolbooks, for example, label/barcode/scanner system
- Sort schoolbooks and classroom resources as appropriate
- Maintain financial records and retain quotations, tender documents and proof of purchase of materials funded by the scheme
- Communicate with parents/guardians
- Cooperate with the Department if selected to participate in any evaluation of the scheme
- As required during the year, order additional stock (both schoolbooks and classroom resources)
- Organise for the return of schoolbooks from students at the end of each year or at the end of the Junior Cycle, as appropriate.

Appendix 4 – Procurement requirements

OGP is one of 5 Central Purchasing Bodies in Ireland. This means it can put together procurement arrangements for a group of public sector bodies (PSBs). A framework is one of the procurement arrangements used between one or more contracting authority and one or more supplier.

The Office Supplies Framework is designed with a number of geographical lots to allow more suppliers gain access to public sector business.

Schools can register to access the OGP Buyerzone for full information about this Office Supplies framework. The Buyerzone is accessible to Public Sector Bodies only. It holds all the information about procurement arrangements that PSBs can use.

Public Sector Bodies sign up to the lot in which their offices/buildings are located.

Each school should chose the geographical lot in which their school is located. On the Buyerzone, you will find associated documentation which will explain, in detail;

- How to use the framework on the user guide document (by completing Notification to Activate Goods form or NAGF and sending it to the supplier to co-sign. You can then discuss how the contract will operate with the supplier and arrange payment method, delivery days, assigning contact person/persons)
- What items are available to purchase from this framework. Each Lot will have an Excel catalogue with line items and cost for each item. The items available range from foolscaps, pens, pencils to wallcharts and whiteboards.
- The suppliers' obligations as members of this framework are listed on the framework userguide on the OGP Buyerzone (such as delivery turnaround times, processing returned items)

Schools may only order products under this contract that are included in the catalogue.

If a school requires additional stationery items that are not part of the catalogue for the Lot, then they are required to follow proper public procurement guidelines in obtaining these items.

How to use the OGP Stationery Framework



The below table sets out the procurement requirements when not using the OGP Stationery Framework.

Schoolbooks and Classroom Resources – Expenditure Threshold Guide			
Below €5,000	€5,000 to €50,000	€50,000 to EU Threshold (€220,999)	Above EU Threshold (221,000)
Can be awarded on the basis of verbal or written quotes from one or more competitive supplier.	Minimum of 3 Quotes (or eTenders)	eTenders	eTenders & OJEU
Email request or RFQ Template	RFQ Template from SPU	OGP Template or CFT template document from SPU	OGP Template or CFT template document from SPU
Quote submitted in writing or email	Submission response by email	Submit tender response via tender postbox on eTenders platform	Submit tender response via tender postbox on eTenders
1 – 2 weeks to respond	14 days	21 days	Minimum 35 days Open Competition
Lowest Price	Most economically advantageous tender (MEAT)	MEAT	MEAT
Select Lowest Price	Evaluate offers against spec, qualification and award criteria	Evaluate offers against spec, qualification and award criteria	Evaluate offers against spec, qualification and award criteria
Email results	Email results with reasons	Standstill period of 14 days is recommended by the CSSO Issue Standstill Notices	Standstill period of 14 days is mandatory Remedies Directive applies Issue Standstill notice

	Publish contract award notice on eTenders for contracts above €25,000	Publish contract award notice on eTenders	Publish contract award notice on eTenders
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Appendix 5 – Irish Educational Publishers’ Association (IEPA)

IEPA CODE OF PRACTICE – Revised May 2022

Members of the Irish Educational Publishers’ Association subscribe to the following Code of Practice which is designed to help reduce the cost of schoolbooks and improve the education experience for parents and schools.

- Publishers will not revise any text within at least four years – unless there is a change in the curriculum, the state examination or methods of assessment, or there is recognised teacher-led demand to do so.
- When a revised edition of a textbook is produced, the old edition will be kept in print for a two-year period, unless annual sales fall below 500 copies. This means that a new edition of a textbook will be available for a minimum of six years.
- Members of the IEPA will co-operate with the Department of Education and the various charitable organisations in the development of initiatives to improve access to educational materials for disadvantaged children both in Ireland and overseas.
- Apart from the commitment to maintain editions in print for a minimum of six years, the publishers will co-operate with individual schools in their development of textbook rental schemes
- Member publishers will continue to engage actively with school communities, parents, teachers and government agencies to improve the education experience for students in Irish schools
- Adopted in October 2011 and revised in June 2015, this Code of Practice is supported by the following publishers: CJ Fallon, Educate.ie, Folens, Gill Education, An Gúm, Mentor Books, Prim-ed, The Educational Company and Veritas.

Useful links

[Gov.ie - Public procurement guidelines for goods and services \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

[Guidance for Schools on Good Procurement Practices - SPU](#)

[Green Public Procurement \(epa.ie\)](http://epa.ie)

[COGG | An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta](#)

[PDST.ie/DistanceLearning/DigitalLibraries](http://pdst.ie/DistanceLearning/DigitalLibraries)

[PDST.ie/distancelearning/othersources](http://pdst.ie/distancelearning/othersources)

[Irish Educational Publishers Association/code-of-practice](#)

[DPER Circular 05/2023 - Initiatives to assist SMEs in Public Procurement](#)

[DPER Circular 13/2014 - Management of Grants from Exchequer Funds](#)

[DE Circular 0046/2013 Allocation to schools for books](#)

[DE Circular 0002/2018 Operation of the Financial Support Services Unit \(FSSU\)](#)

<https://www.icla.ie/licences/primary-and-post-primary-schools-licences>