



## **In-person Supplementary Programme to Support the Education or Care Needs of Students with Complex Needs during this period of school closure at Post Primary.**

### **Impact of COVID-19 on the education of students with complex needs**

The COVID-19 pandemic saw the closure of all schools in March 2020 and again in January 2021 followed by an immediate move to remote teaching and learning for students.

While most students reportedly adapted reasonably well to remote learning, there is a developing body of evidence which indicates that the absence of school and other supports can have a disproportionately negative impact on the lives and wellbeing of students with complex special educational needs and their families.

The combined effects of a loss of the regular school routine, social interaction with friends, access to teachers, Special Needs Assistant (SNAs), therapy interventions and respite type supports present a risk of regression in the learning, social, emotional development and wellbeing of these students. Many families have reported significant challenges caring for children and young people who have complex special educational needs in the absence of school supports, structure and routines.

**What is currently being provided for students with complex needs?**

*Updated Guidance on Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs* advises on how schools and teachers can support students with special educational needs during the school closures associated with COVID-19.

The guidance builds on the key messages in a range of guidance materials which were issued to schools and centres for education previously. Specific guidance has been published by the Department to support schools in the context of remote teaching and learning in a COVID-19 context – *Guidance on Remote Learning in a COVID-19 Context: September – December 2020* which was complemented by the Department of Education Circular Letter 0074/2020 in relation to the establishment of Digital Communication, Teaching and Learning Platforms.

The Department is satisfied that there is scope within a school's overall teacher allocation to provide for some one to one online learning support for students with complex needs in special and mainstream classes for certain periods each day.

### Importance of Providing In-Person Support

Students with complex needs experience the impact of school closures and the cessation of education supports in a very considerable way.

While schools are making conscientious efforts to provide effective remote teaching and learning, including one-to-one remote supports for those with the most complex needs, the Department and stakeholders recognise that this cannot realistically replace the benefits of in-school provision. In these circumstances, the Department continues to work with stakeholders to secure an early return to in-school teaching and learning for all these students.

Following intensive engagement and input from post primary and education partners, a framework has now been developed and agreed with all partners, including unions and management, in order to achieve a phased return to in-school provision for students with the most complex special educational needs.

Under the framework

- Post Primary Special Classes will reopen from Monday 22nd February 2021.

### In-person supplementary programme to support remote education

Despite the provision of remote teaching and learning by schools, there is a widespread concern that the lack of in-person support for learning may lead to regression in students with complex needs.

Therefore, there is good reason to offer an in-person supplementary programme to those students with complex needs at post primary level to alleviate the impact of this period of school closure.

It is intended that this programme would be provided by teachers or SNAs on a voluntary but paid basis to enhance the learning experience for these students and build on the learning taking place as part of the remote provision by the school.

### How will In-Person Support operate?

This supplementary programme of in-person support is intended to supplement the teaching and learning provided by the student's school and alleviate the impact of this period of school closure through provision of an additional 5 hours per week of home based in-person tuition or care support.

These hours supplement existing school provision therefore they cannot be delivered during the school day. They can however be delivered outside of the normal school day and/or at weekends.

As this will be a supplementary programme, it is voluntary for students, families, teachers and SNAs to participate.

Similar to the Department's home based summer programme, parents must engage a teacher or an SNA directly. Schools are requested to assist in this regard.

Teachers and SNAs will be paid for this additional work through the Department's payroll system upon receipt of the completed claim form from parents.

## Eligibility

The following categories of students are eligible:

- All students enrolled in special classes at post primary level
- Students in mainstream classes in post primary schools who are accessing the highest level of the continuum of support (i.e. School Support Plus/for a Few). This will include students with Autism, Down syndrome, sensory impairments, and other disabilities.
- Schools have flexibility to identify students that require the highest level of individualised and specialist support at any given time. This will ensure that students presenting with exceptional needs due to the current school closures can participate in the scheme.

## Allocation of hours/staffing

The Department's approach is intended to be flexible so as to maximise the number of students participating.

An allocation of a 5-hours per week home-based tuition or care support programme will be made available to eligible students. This allocation is intended to supplement the teaching and learning provided by the student's school and alleviate the impact of this period of school closure.

The four-week programme (20 hours) can commence from 22 February 2021 and can be used by families at any time up until the end of April.

Home-based support must be provided on a 1:1 basis, except with siblings.

Eligible siblings are entitled to 5 hours per week each for 4 weeks. Parents are free to arrange for provision to be delivered to siblings together or separately on a one to one basis. If tuition is delivered to siblings together they can avail of the aggregate hours i.e. 2 siblings supported together for one week would be eligible to access 10 hours support or 5 hours each if supported separately.

Teachers/SNAs will for be paid for each hour delivered whether provided together or on a one-to-one basis.

The Department reiterates the need for compliance with all public health and safety measures for in-home provision.

No travel or other expenses are payable.

### Banking of unused hours for delivery during the Easter Break

To give parents every chance to participate in the scheme, the Department will allow parents to arrange for the delivery of any of the unused balance of the 20 hours of support during the Easter break.

All hours must be used by Friday 30 April and completed claim forms must be submitted to the Department by the close of business on Friday 14 May. No claim forms will be accepted after this date.

### Role of the school

School Management will be requested to identify eligible students and bring the scheme to the attention of parents of eligible students and school staff i.e. teachers and SNAs.

Where parents wish to participate in the scheme, schools will complete Part 1 of the attached form and provide it to parents.

School management will also be requested to make every effort to support parents in securing the services of a teacher or SNA who is known to the school.

School management will be asked to contact their teachers and SNAs in order to ascertain their availability to provide support to students with significant needs under the scheme. Principals should then confirm staff availability – check parent requests and match & allocate as appropriate.

School management will be asked to share the relevant online learning plan for each week, student support plan and /or personal students care plan with the students Parents or the teacher or SNA providing the supplementary programme.

## Role of the Parent

### **Step 1 – Eligibility/Sourcing a Teacher/SNA**

Schools will contact parents of eligible students and provide them with the Grant Claim Form with part 1 completed which will establish eligibility.

Parent will then be required with assistance from the schools to identify and secure the services of a qualified and vetted teacher or SNA. A teacher on the register of the Teaching Council is both qualified and vetted.

Similar to the summer programme, the NCSE also provides information on how to source a teacher or SNA where parents cannot source one through their schools.

<https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Supplementary-Programme-2021.pdf>

### **Step 2 – Engagement and Child Protection Procedures**

The decision to engage a teacher or SNA and the hours of delivery will be a matter for agreement between the parents and the teacher or SNA. Insurance cover for the in-home provision is a matter for the parent.

It is a condition of the scheme that before support commences parents and teachers or SNAs complete section of the application form that confirms the relevant qualification and child protection requirements.

### **Step 3 – Submitting claim form for payment**

The Timetable of Teaching/Care Support should be completed as provision occurs. When delivery of the programme of tuition or care is complete, parents and the teacher or SNA must complete the Declaration in Section 3 of the form and return it to the Department so that direct payment to the teacher or SNA can be processed.

The Department is finalising the logistical arrangements to support this supplementary programme. Payments will issue as soon as possible once the programme has been completed. Further information will be provided on this issue in due course.

#### **Additional information**

#### **Rates of pay for the teacher and SNA**

The grant rates per hour for all tuition provided is:

Fully Qualified Post Primary Teacher	€ 47.01 per hour
Modified Rate	€ 35.14 per hour
SNA rate	€ 16.77 per hour