



**Circular 0037/2023**

**To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Secondary,  
Community and Comprehensive Schools  
and  
the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards**

**PARTIAL ABSENCES FOR MEDICAL-RELATED SERVICE APPOINTMENTS  
ARRANGEMENTS FOR POST PRIMARY TEACHERS**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Following discussions between the Department and the Education Partners, the purpose of this Circular is to set out the agreed approach dealing with instances where a post primary teacher needs to take a brief, medical-related absence during class contact time with effect from the 2023/2024 school year.
- 1.2 Under the terms and conditions of the [Sick Leave Scheme](#) for teachers, medical-related service appointments should be arranged outside of regular working hours or working days.
- 1.3 However, it is acknowledged that there are situations where it is necessary for a post primary teacher in Oireachtas funded posts, including post primary teachers working in settings other than post primary schools (e.g. further education settings/special schools providing the post primary component) to be absent for a portion of the school day, for the purposes of attending a medical-related service appointment, resulting in a partial absence from the workplace.
- 1.4 In these exceptional instances, a post primary teacher may, under this Circular, be granted a paid partial absence by the employer, for the purpose of attending a medical-related service appointment and avoid the need to be absent from the workplace for a full working day.
- 1.5 A partial absences apply only in respect of appointments for medical-related services and will be subject to a maximum time permitted of 2 school days.

**2. General Provisions**

- 2.1. This is an interim measure pending the development of a technical solution to record such absences.
- 2.2. The welfare and educational needs of the students must take precedence over all other considerations.

- 2.3. This Circular should be read in conjunction with Sick Leave Scheme contained in [Circular 0054/2019 Leave Schemes for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools](#).
- 2.4. Partial absences apply only in respect of appointments for medical-related services for the teacher concerned. They do not cover the teacher to accompany other individuals, such as family members, to their medical related services appointments. For the avoidance of doubt, protected leave such as maternity related appointments, are not included under this Circular.
- 2.5. Medical related service appointment will include appointment such as doctor, dentist, optician, hospital appointments and medical-related referrals. Such appointments may include, but are not limited to, blood tests, doctor/dental, physiotherapy, and hospital appointments.
- 2.6. The duration of the absence will be calculated by reference to the amount of tuition/class contact time missed during the absence subject to the maximum time permitted under this circular. For the purpose of the reckoning of these absences each school day is 4 hours and 24 minutes (i.e. 22 hours/5).
- 2.7. Partial absences will apply only in respect of appointments for medical-related services and will be subject to a maximum aggregate time permitted of 2 school days (8 hours 48 minutes) per school year.
- 2.8. Absences which result in an absence of a full day will be recorded in the usual way as a normal sick leave on the OLCS/relevant ETB system.
- 2.9. All teachers/employers must adhere to the regulations and procedures set out in this Circular.
- 2.10. In the case of an unapproved absence, the teacher should be informed that such an absence will result in the employer advising the Paymaster to record his/her absence as Unapproved Leave (unpaid) on the OLCS/relevant ETB system.

### **3. Partial Absences for Medical-Related Service Appointments**

- 3.1. Under the terms and conditions of the Sick Leave Scheme, medical-related service appointments should be arranged outside of regular working hours or working days.
- 3.2. However, it is acknowledged that there are situations where it is necessary for a teacher to be absent for a portion of the school day for the purposes of attending a medical-related service resulting in a partial absence from the workplace. In these exceptional instances, a teacher may be granted a paid

partial absence by the employer, for the purpose of attending a medical-related service appointment.

- 3.3. Where the partial absence has been approved by the employer, the teacher must attend for duty prior to and/or following the medical-related service appointment on the day in question. For the avoidance of doubt, a teacher must attend the school prior to and/or after the medical-related service if there is a commitment to compulsory school duties, such as timetabled classes, supervision and substitution duties, Croke Park hours etc.
- 3.4. The approved partial absence will not count towards a teacher's Sick Leave record, subject to the maximum time permitted of such paid absences per teacher per school year.
- 3.5. It is the responsibility of the employer to record appropriately the teacher's partial absence at school level.
- 3.6. Partial absences are recorded locally until such time as they reach the maximum time permitted under this circular. Any subsequent partial absence due to attendance at a medical-related service appointment must be recorded as normal as a 1 day Sick Leave by the employer on the OLCS/relevant ETB system under the terms of the Sick Leave Scheme.
- 3.7. The duration of the absence is calculated by reference to the class contact time missed by the teacher attending the medical-related service appointment.
- 3.8. An absence arising from a medical-related service appointment which results in the teacher not attending for duty prior to and/or following the medical-related service appointment on the day in question and/or which results in the teacher missing all timetabled classes in that day must be recorded by the employer on the OLCS/relevant ETB system as 1 day sick leave.

#### **4. Application Procedures for Partial Absence**

- 4.1. Application for a partial absence must be made to the employer as early as possible. The Teacher should indicate the likely duration of the absence.
- 4.2. Evidence of attendance from the relevant medical practitioner is required and must be submitted promptly to the employer following the partial absence. Such evidence may include a payment receipt. Confirmation of the appointment alone is not sufficient.
- 4.3. The employer must provide the teacher with a written notice of their decision to approve/refuse the partial absence application. This notice will also be given as early as possible. Where an application is refused, the employer must include the grounds for refusal.

- 4.4. All documentation relating to teacher absences must be retained by the employer with the relevant personnel records in a safe and secure manner and in line with the employer's data protection policy and data protection regulations.

## **5. Replacement Teacher**

- 5.1. For the duration of these interim measures, substitute cover for these partial absences is not paid by the Department. The absence should be covered through the Supervision and Substitution Scheme.

## **6. Recording of Partial Absences**

- 6.1. Details of the approved partial absence(s) must be recorded and retained by the employer at school level. These details will include the nature and duration of the absence.
- 6.2. Absences will only be recorded on the Department's Payroll system/relevant ETB system once the teacher has reached the maximum time permitted in the school year.
- 6.3. Where the cumulative partial absences exceed the maximum time permitted in the school year, subsequent partial absences are recorded as sick leave on the OLCS or on the relevant ETB system in accordance with Circular 0054/2019.

## **7. Circulation and Queries**

- 7.1. Please ensure that the contents of this Circular are brought to the attention of all members of the Board of Management/Education and Training Boards and all teachers in your employment including those on leave of absence.
- 7.2. This Circular can be accessed on the Department's website under [www.gov.ie/en/circulars/](http://www.gov.ie/en/circulars/)
- 7.3. All queries regarding this Circular should initially be addressed to the employer who may wish consult with their representative organisation. Any further queries may be directed to the Department at the following email address: [teachersna@education.gov.ie](mailto:teachersna@education.gov.ie). ETB post primary teachers, should contact their relevant HR Department.

James Walsh  
Principal Officer  
Teacher/SNA Terms & Conditions  
28<sup>th</sup> August 2023