



Circular Letter 0045/2021

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

**Additional measures to support schools and pupils/students to
mitigate the impact of disruption to in-school education
resulting from Covid-19, to be delivered in the 2021/22 School
Year**

Covid Learning and Support Scheme

A new programme called Covid Learning and Support Scheme (CLASS) is being put in place to help schools mitigate the adverse impacts of Covid-19 on pupil/student learning loss and wellbeing arising from the periods of school closures in 2020 and 2021.

The new programme comprises two main elements:

- The provision of additional teaching hours to schools to support their work in addressing learning loss among pupils/students arising from periods of school closures
- Opportunities for schools to share practice which is considered to be most effective in mitigating learning loss among pupils/students

Details of these elements of the programme are set out below.

Under the programme, additional teaching hours are being provided to schools for the 2021/22 school year as a once off temporary allocation.

Detail of the number of additional hours that are being provided for schools under the programme and the criteria applicable for the utilisation of these hours are set out at Section 2 below.

With this once off allocation, schools can provide additional teaching support to pupils/students who, in their view, arising from Covid-19 disruption, are at increased risk of learning loss and/or at risk of early school leaving.



Guidance is also being provided for schools in relation to how the additional teaching hours should be best used as well as details of appropriate control and oversight measures required in schools.

This guidance is available at:

Covid-19 Learning and Support Scheme (CLASS) Guidance for Primary and Special Schools: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0b4a7-covid-19-learning-and-support-scheme-class-guidance-for-primary-and-special-schools/>

Covid-19 Learning and Support Scheme (CLASS) Guidance for Post Primary Schools: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/31e9f-covid-19-learning-and-support-scheme-class-guidance-for-post-primary-schools/>

As set out in the Guidance:

- The extra resources provided to schools under the CLASS support programme should be used for the pupils who are prioritised by the school as having been most impacted by COVID, including those who may not have previously come to the attention of the school as needing extra supports
- The pupils prioritised for support under the CLASS programme should be identified by a robust whole-school collaborative process, in an evidence-based way using the data available in the school
- The supports provided to existing and newly-prioritised pupils should be tailored to meet the needs of those students in an inclusive manner
- Schools should ensure that the progress of a pupil who is supported by CLASS interventions and resources is measured and reported upon.

Provision will also be made for opportunities for shared learning by schools, supported by the Department of Education, which will allow schools to identify and share information regarding what has worked well previously in addressing issues such as pupils/student engagement and attainment, and in managing schools, in what will continue to be a challenging Covid-19 environment over the 2021/22 school year. Further information will issue on this later this academic term.

1. Background

Arising from Covid-19, school buildings were closed for periods in 2020 and 2021. Despite the efforts made to re-open schools at the earliest possible dates and the priority afforded to special education provision, the disruption to learning over these two years is acknowledged.



In addition to the significant supports provided to allow schools open in compliance with Covid-19 public health and safety guidelines, the Department of Education, from the outset, has focused on providing additional resources and measures to assist schools in supporting all pupils/students, but in particular, pupils/students with special educational needs (SEN) and those most at risk of educational disadvantage.

This is evidenced, *inter alia*, in:

- The publication of guidance for teachers in supporting pupils/students with SEN and those at risk of educational disadvantage in the online environment
- A supplementary education programme which provided additional teaching hours for pupils/students with SEN during the period of school closures in 2021 in which over 14,000 pupils/students participated
- The roll-out of a significantly enhanced Summer Programme for summer 2020 and 2021.
- The early provision of Information Communication Technology (ICT) funding to schools, to support the provision of devices to students and families, where needed.

While there is a range of support measures already in place in the education system to support the children most in need, including those with SEN and those at risk of educational disadvantage, the Department considers it is important to provide schools with the necessary capacity to extend supports more widely to address the needs of those individual and groups of pupils/students who have been impacted most by Covid-19.

The allocation of additional teaching hours for schools over the school year 2021/2022, is intended to support schools in mitigating the medium to longer term impact of Covid-19 related school closures on pupils/students' learning and educational experience.

2. Additional Educational Supports for Schools and Pupils/students for School year 2021/22

Under the programme, a block of additional teaching hours will be provided to each school, from which schools can provide additional teaching support for the pupils/students in their school who have experienced difficulties in settling back into school and engaging with learning.

The additional Covid-19 targeted hours will be provided as a once off temporary allocation for the 2021/22 school year.



The additional teaching allocations for schools are based on school enrolment bands, with enhanced allocations being provided for special schools and schools which are in the Department's Delivering Equality of Opportunity in School (DEIS) scheme.

The enrolment data is drawn from 2020/21 school enrolments, as published on the Primary and Post Primary Online Databases.

Under the programme, each school will receive an additional 1.25 teaching hours for each pupil/student enrolled based on the mid-point of each enrolment band, as follows:

	Mainstream School Additional Teaching Hours Per year	Mainstream DEIS Additional 10% Teaching Hours Per Year	Average Number of Pupils at Mid-Point of Band	Special Additional Teaching per year	School Hours
<u>1-50 Students</u>	31.25	34.38	25	125	
<u>51-100 Students</u>	93.75	103.13	75	375	
<u>101-200 Students</u>	187.50	206.25	150	750	
<u>201-400 Students</u>	375	412.50	300	1,500	
<u>401-600 Students</u>	625	687.50	500	-	
<u>601-800 Students</u>	875	962.5	700	-	
<u>801-1000 Students</u>	1,125	1,237.50	900	-	
<u>1001+ Students</u>	1,200	1,320	-	-	

- The CLASS hours are a once off allocation of part-time hours.
- These additional teaching hours must be provided during the normal school day.



- As schools will require time to initially identify the educational needs of pupils, on their return to school from September, the additional CLASS hours will be available for use in schools from 11th October, 2021.
- The hours can then be utilised at any time from that date, over the course of the 2021/22 school year.
- The additional teaching hours may be provided by registered teachers only, either by:
 - (1) Teachers who are currently on part time contracts and who may provide additional teaching hours up to a full teaching week of 25 hours at primary school level or 22 hours at post-primary school level
Such teachers will be paid at their existing personal rate of pay for any additional CLASS hours.
 - (2) Teachers who may be engaged by the school to provide additional part-time teaching hours in the same manner in which schools engage substitute teachers.

Such teachers will be paid at the appropriate substitute hourly rate, appropriate to their qualification level, as set out in DES Circular 60/2020.

At primary school level, the hours will be allocated to each school via the Online Claims System under the title '**Covid Learning and Support Scheme**' and will be available to be claimed via OLCS.

At post-primary school level, the allocation will be provided on each school's staffing schedule under the title '**Covid Learning and Support Scheme**'

Further guidance will be issued to schools in advance of 11th October, in relation to how the hours can be claimed via OLCS.

3. Shared Learning

In addition to the provision of additional teaching hours, the Department will support schools to share learning, so that what worked effectively to mitigate learning loss and support wellbeing throughout the pandemic can be communicated across the education system for the benefit of all schools and pupils/students. Further information will be provided shortly.



4. Queries

Queries on the content of this Circular should be emailed to the following email address: CLASSQueries@education.gov.ie

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