



## Primary Schoolbooks Scheme Quick Reference Guide for Schools

**Note:** In this document where it states “see section XX” this refers to a specific section in the **Schoolbooks Grant Guidance for Primary and Special Schools 2024/25** document, available at [www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes](http://www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes)

### 1. Scheme aim and minimum requirements (see section 4)

The main aim of the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme is to eliminate the cost of schoolbooks, workbooks, and copybooks for parents/guardians. The minimum items that are to be provided under these areas are included in Section 4.2 of the guidance.

### 2. Funding (see section 5)

The grant is paid directly to recognised primary and special schools in the Free Education Scheme in 2024 at a per capita rate of €80. Schools will receive funding in respect of each pupil they have enrolled in each class group. This includes pupils in dedicated special educational needs classes. Funding is based on enrolment figures on 30 September 2023.

For ETB schools, payment will issue directly to the relevant ETB, which will distribute the funding to those schools under its remit.

### 3. Students registered in Junior Cycle programmes in special schools (see section 4.5.2)

Special schools with students registered in Junior Cycle programmes will now receive the same per capita rate (€309) that post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme receive in respect of these students. Special schools that will be in receipt of this grant should also refer to the post-primary guidance for details of the scheme.

### 4. Exceptional circumstances (see section 5.5)

Schools will be expected, for the main part, to absorb the cost of additional enrolments which occur within the normal course of fluctuations which take place throughout any given school year.

As a general rule, an additional payment will only be made by the Department in situations where the number of new pupils enrolled after 30 September is equal to or greater than 10% of the 30 September enrolment figure or greater than 15 pupils, and where the school has insufficient Primary Schoolbooks Scheme funding to meet the additional costs.

Schools that wish to apply for additional funding under “exceptional circumstances” should email [primaryschoolbooks@education.gov.ie](mailto:primaryschoolbooks@education.gov.ie). The Department will send the school an application form where schools can provide relevant information about additional enrolments. Such applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **5. Administration Support Grant (see section 5.6)**

Each school will receive a separate Administrative Support Grant to assist with the implementation of the scheme. The grant amount is based on the total number of pupils enrolled in a school on 30 September 2023.

The daily rate sanctioned for the Administration Support Grant is €160.62 (this includes holiday pay) and the Department will provide an additional 11.05% to cover employer PRSI cost.

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.

Please note changes to the banding and allocation for this year.

<b>Size of School (enrolment September 2023)</b>	<b>No of Days</b>
0 – 100 pupils	3
101 – 300 pupils	4
301 – 599 pupils	6
> 600 pupils	7

This Administration Support Grant can be used to employ a person/s to assist with the implementation of the scheme or it can be used towards other administration costs such as purchasing a tracking/barcoding system for books or for covering or storage of books.

### **6. Second-hand schoolbooks (see section 6.6)**

Schools can purchase second-hand schoolbooks under this scheme. This is a matter for the school management in each school when budgeting each year in order to achieve best value for money.

## **7. Surplus funding (see section 4.6)**

In the first instance, the grant for the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme must be used to eliminate the cost of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks for parents/guardians.

Once these have been provided, the grant should be used to eliminate other costs for additional classroom resources where a charge may have otherwise been paid by the parents/guardians.

Additional classroom resources covers items such as pens, pencils, crayons, folders, scrapbooks, rulers and calculators.

Surplus grant funding can be used to purchase shared/library books, audiobooks or other materials to enhance literacy (in English, Irish or other languages) and numeracy resources in the school.

Additional classroom resources does not include any items currently provided in primary schools through existing funding streams, either from the Department of Education or from other Departments and agencies.

In the event that after providing schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks and eliminating the cost to parents/guardians of additional classroom resources, schools have schoolbook grant funding remaining, this may be carried forward to the next school year. Schools should consider the need to replace or purchase new schoolbooks in the following year when deciding how to use any surplus grant.

Schools should be aware that a scheme of free schoolbooks for pupils will operate in 2025/26.

## **8. Developing schools (see section 5.4)**

The Department recognises a specific number of schools as developing schools. These are schools which have newly opened since September 2017 and which have significantly increased their enrolment size each year. The schoolbooks grant for the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme will be calculated/paid based on the projected enrolment for 30 September 2024.

However, if the validated enrolment on 30 September 2024 is less than the projected enrolment, the school is liable to refund any excess schoolbooks grant to the Department. The Department will be in contact with these schools before the end of the 2023/24 academic year to seek projected enrolment figures.

## **9. School based activities**

The schoolbook funding is ring-fenced for schoolbooks workbooks and copybooks and, where funding permits, additional classroom resources. The cost for any school-based activity, such as swimming lessons or class trips, is not considered a legitimate expense under the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme.

## **10. Voluntary contributions from parents/guardians**

Section 64 of the Education (Admissions to schools) Act 2018, which was commenced in 2018 explicitly **prohibits** the charging of admission and enrolment fees for admission to or for continued enrolment in a school, with some exceptions such as boarding or fee-charging schools.

The manner in which any voluntary contributions are sought and collected is a matter for school management, however their collection should be such as not to create a situation where either parents/guardians or pupils could reasonably infer that the contributions are compulsory.

This funding is being provided to schools to provide schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and where funding permits additional classroom resources. Parents/guardians must not be asked to purchase schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks or to make a contribution to the school towards the cost of these items.

## **11. Book ownership and movement of a pupil to a new school during the school year (see section 6.6)**

All schoolbooks remain the property of the school and are provided on loan to pupils.

While schoolbooks remain the property of the school, children and young people should be allowed to bring schoolbooks home in order to complete homework or to allow parents/guardians stay connected with their child's learning in school.

If a pupil moves to another school during the school year, the schoolbooks are retained in the school. The new school will provide the pupil with a complete set of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks and any additional classroom resources that were provided for other pupils at the start of the school year.

## **12. Maintenance of schoolbooks loaned to pupils under this scheme (see section 6.8)**

The maintenance and upkeep of schoolbooks and classroom resources is a matter for each school. In the interests of prolonging the lifespan of schoolbooks it is strongly recommended that a cover is placed on all schoolbooks.

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

Schools should also devise a mechanism for keeping track of schoolbooks that best suits their needs.

### **13. Communication with parents/guardians (see section 6.9 and Appendix 1)**

The main aim of the new scheme is to eliminate costs to parents/guardians of providing schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks.

Schools are required to communicate with parents/guardians as early as possible in relation to this scheme for the coming school year. To avoid any confusion, it is recommended that schools communicate separately with parents/guardians in relation to any other fees, for example, fees to cover school trips.

Parents/guardians must be informed of the items (including where funding permits classroom resources) now covered through the school under the scheme. For classroom resources not covered by the school, parents/guardians must be given a detailed list of what they are required to purchase and/or for what classroom resources the school is charging a fee.

In the unlikely event that a parent/guardian indicates that they do not wish to receive free schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks and additional classroom resources under this scheme, the parent/guardian must be provided with the relevant class booklist(s). They can then make their own arrangements to source the necessary schoolbooks and any other classroom resources provided by the school under the scheme.

In such instances the school is **not obliged to refund the parent/guardian** the cost of such purchases as the parent/guardian has clearly expressed their wish not to participate in the scheme.

### **14. Special classes where learning supports are required in addition to or as an alternative to schoolbooks (see section 4.5)**

The main aim of the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme is to eliminate the cost of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks for parents/guardians. When this has been achieved for pupils in special classes in mainstream schools and special schools, any surplus funds may be used to provide related classroom resources. Special schools and primary schools operating special classes are best placed to identify related classroom resources required for their individual setting and to meet the learning needs of their children and young people.

### **15. Use of grant for digital devices (section 6.3)**

Funding under the Primary 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.

### **16. Using the grant for online resources**

In the first instance the grant must be used to eliminate the cost of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks for parents/guardians.

Any additional online resources acquired using grant funding under this scheme must primarily be to fulfil the aim of reducing costs that would have been borne by parents/guardians, either by providing the item or paying a fee to the school to provide the item. The Department provides open access to digital resources through Scoilnet.ie, through which all primary and post-primary learners can access an array of resources.

### **17. Procurement of schoolbooks and classroom resources (see section 7)**

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 OGP.

Schools should familiarise themselves with the public procurement guidelines before undertaking to purchase goods.

The Schools Procurement Unit (SPU) is the central support resource for providing guidance to all primary 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 the best result in their procurement processes and practices. The Unit has published a suite of resources and instructional videos, including procurement guidance, which are available to support schools on their procurement journey. They are available on the SPU website Schoolbooks Scheme webpage; <https://www.spu.ie/schoolbooks-scheme/>

In addition the OGP guidelines can be downloaded at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c23f5-public-procurement-guidelines-for-goods-and-services/>. Further information about procurement is set out in the scheme guidance.

## **18. Protection of copyright (see section 7.7)**

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

Information, including a School Licence User Guide and how to make the most of your ICLA School Licence can be accessed on the ICLA website

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

## **19. Policy on workbook usage and replacement**

It is a matter for each school to determine its position on the usage of workbooks. A school may already have a mechanism in place which reduces the use of or allows for the re-use of workbooks.

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

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