



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

2023 Summer Programme 'Building Confidence and Connections'

Special Schools

Overview – Terms and Conditions

Contents

Background		4
Summer Programme 2023	4	
Theme for Summer Programme 2023	5	
What's new for 2023	5	
Measures to facilitate schools to offer the programme.	6	
1. Special School Scheme		7
Pupil eligibility	7	
Duration of Scheme	7	
Staffing Allocation	7	
Minimum pupil numbers required	7	
Summer Programme National Coordinator	7	
2. Application process		9
Online Registration Portal	9	
Resource Allocation Appeals	9	
3. Staffing resources		10
Organiser Role	10	
Summer Programme Manager Role	11	
Role of the Teacher	11	
Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)	12	
Recruitment of external staff	12	
Recruitment of graduate teachers	12	
Recruitment of PME student teachers	13	
Recruitment of undergraduate student teachers	13	
Recruitment of undergraduate students – non-teaching	13	
4. Staff information		14
Payment rates	14	
Substitute rates of pay	14	
Eligibility of teachers/SNAs on approved leave	14	
Retired teachers	14	
5. Payment process		15
6. Additional supports		16
Summer Programme Student Grant Payment	16	
Special School Grant Payment	16	
Transport	16	
7. Further information		18
Child Protection	18	

Irish language	18
Public Health Guidelines	18
Length of school day	19
EPV days	19
Queries and Support	19

Background

Summer Programme 2023

This year's Summer Programme is building upon the 2021 and 2022 initiatives. The main priority in the 2023 Summer Programme is to ensure pupils with the most complex needs should have access to a school-based programme. This year's programme is designed and developed to ensure supports are targeted to assist pupils with complex special educational needs.

Following significant interaction with stakeholders, including the schools themselves, parents and advocacy groups, it is recognised that the school-based programme available to children in special schools needs to be tailored further, in order to increase the number of schools offering the programme and the number of children participating.

A pilot programme has now been developed for all special schools. The main priority in 2023 is that those children with the most complex needs, especially in special schools, should have access to a school-based summer programme. This pilot programme is designed to ensure supports are targeted:

- o to enhance the availability of school based programmes in special schools
- o to coordinate and support children's access to such a programme
- o to assist with the identification of staffing needs and resources
- o to reduce the administrative burden associated with leading and managing a school-based programme The programme aims to support pupils' wellbeing through building their confidence and enhancing their sense of connection with their school and their peers. It also strives to support children and young people who are at key transition stages in their education to progress to their planned educational placement in September.

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated disruption to education has had adverse consequences for many children and their families. The effect on children with special educational needs and those at greatest risk of educational disadvantage has been greater. The interruption of the regular school routine, social interaction with friends and other school supports presented a risk of regression in the learning, social and emotional development and wellbeing of these children.

The Department of Education encourages all recognised schools to run the initiative during the school summer holidays at a time that is suitable for staff and pupils.

The Department of Education is seeking the involvement of all special schools in the provision of the 2023 Summer Programme.

Note: school refers only to a school as recognised under Section 10 (3) of the Education Act 1998.

Theme for Summer Programme 2023

The theme for this year's programme is 'Building Confidence and Connections'.

The Summer Programme is intended to be an enjoyable experience for both pupils and staff. The range of activities should reflect this year's theme and include opportunities for pupil-centred, play-based engagement. This can help schools transfer the focus away from any feelings of distress and allow pupils to enjoy the present moment and to look forward with optimism by 'Building Confidence and Connections'.

Each school's Summer Programme Organiser will be required to attend online training which will be facilitated through an Education Centre. In addition, further opportunities for collaboration and sharing of experience will be facilitated for Organisers.

Supports, guidance and training material will be provided to schools and staff to help develop and deliver this year's programme.

What's new for 2023

This year a separate pilot scheme for special schools is being introduced .

The **Special School Pilot Programme** recognises the complexities of organising a summer programme in special school environments. This programme developed for special schools has been designed to ensure supports are targeted to enhance the availability of a school-based programme for pupils in special schools. These targeted measures include a higher level of capitation, additional grant funding, faster pay times for staff working on the programme and systems to reduce the administrative burden associated with leading and managing a school-based programme .

This year's programme also introduces a new **Organiser** role, replacing preparation hours in previous years, to help support schools in their planning and participation in the Summer Programme. Also, the title of the Overseer role is changing to **Summer Programme Manager** role and the functions for this role remains largely the same from previous years. Full details of both roles are prescribed later in this document.

A new **National Summer Programme Coordinator** will liaise with special schools, the Department and Education Centres to facilitate the organisation of programmes in special schools. This will include identifying staffing resources, supporting potential clustering arrangements, offering advice on administration and training needs and supporting schools in identifying available places for children, where necessary.

For this pilot programme, following feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, the **length of the day** is being reduced for special schools from the full school day to 10am – 2pm. The same daily rate will be paid to staff taking part. This again recognises the challenges associated with running the programme in a special school, including break time routines and transport concerns.

Full details on all resources and measures for the programme are outlined in the sections below.

Measures to facilitate schools to offer the programme.

A broad suite of supports has been put in place to encourage and facilitate special schools to offer the programme. These measures are designed to provide flexibility and to assist management in relation to administrative tasks. The supports also include the earlier payment of school staff through ESINET and the provision of funding to schools to facilitate preparation, co-ordination and supervision of the programmes. Further details in relation to the ESINET payment process are available in Section 5 of this document.

While many principals may wish to continue with organising and running the programme in their schools, similar to previous years, the 2023 Summer Programme permits principals to delegate these functions to other members of staff.

The new **Organiser** role is being introduced so that boards of management and school principals can assign responsibilities for programme planning and preparation at a much earlier stage in their school year. There is also a **Summer Programme Manager** role during the summer months when the programme is running in the school. Principals are encouraged to engage with staff members to take on these responsibilities to ease their own workload and to promote distributed leadership.

The Organiser and Summer Programme Manager roles provide an exciting professional opportunity for teachers to develop their leadership skills and to gain management experience both at a whole-school and career development level. These roles will be outlined in more detail in [Section 3](#) of this document.

With regard to staffing, newly qualified teachers and undergraduate student teachers who have registered with the Teaching Council under Route 5 are eligible to be employed on the Summer Programme. It is also open to schools to recruit appropriately-qualified staff for the role of SNA.

Another staffing resource available for special schools this year will be undergraduate students and other suitable workers, including early childcare workers who wish to work locally. A new portal, developed by the IPPN on www.educationposts.ie is available for students and other workers to register their interest in working on the Summer Programme. They will be able to submit preferences on location and availability.

1. Special School Scheme

Pupil eligibility

The Special School Scheme is open to all students attending special schools.

If the number of places available on this programme is less than the number of students enrolled in a school, schools should focus on students that have difficulty accessing the home-based programme.

A Home-based programme will only be available for pupils with complex special educational needs where their school is not running a Summer Programme or a place on a school-based programme is unavailable.

Duration of Scheme

The Special School Scheme should run for at least 2 weeks and for a maximum of 5 weeks during the school summer holidays. The weeks do not have to be consecutive; the scheme is flexible to allow schools choose weeks which best suit their needs and staff availability. The programme cannot run on weekends or on a Bank Holiday.

Staffing Allocation

Staffing resources (teachers and SNAs) for the Special School Scheme are the same as those provided for the participating children during the normal current school year, having regard to the prevailing Pupil Teacher Ratio and, subject to the full participation of the relevant students.

Minimum pupil numbers required

Schools are asked to note that classes should be comprised of a minimum of four students to participate in the Special School Scheme. However, the Department's approach is intended to be flexible so as to maximise the number of schools participating. If schools have any queries in relation to minimum thresholds please contact schoolsummerprogramme@education.gov.ie

Summer Programme National Coordinator

For special schools, a Summer Programme National Coordinator will be available. This person will liaise with schools, the Department of Education and Education Centres to facilitate the organisation of programmes. This will include identifying staffing resources, supporting potential clustering arrangements, offering advice on administration and training needs and supporting schools in identifying available places for children, where necessary.

This role is being introduced as part of the pilot scheme to be a flexible support to special schools and to bring a focus on children with the most complex special educational needs to support their needs during the summer period. The Department will support the National Coordinator and special schools to identify possibly solutions for pupils to have access to a Summer Programme, in their own special school in the first instance.

As part of this year's programme, the National Coordinator will work with special schools on a regional/local basis to determine if collaborative arrangements are required between schools to facilitate the participation of eligible students in a school based programme. This could include clustering arrangements. Staffing and resource allocations will be the same as provided for in this terms and conditions document.

The National Coordinator will be available to special schools to discuss the Summer Programme. Further information regarding this support will be communicated directly to special schools.

2. Application process

Online Registration Portal

Special schools that wish to participate in the 2023 Summer Programme must register on the Department's Online Registration Portal.

The portal will be available on www.gov.ie/summerprogramme soon after the launch of the programme to allow schools to consider what scale of programme they can run. The opening date of the portal will be communicated to schools with the appropriate link.

Following registration, sanction emails will issue to schools that have registered outlining the resources that have been sanctioned.

Resource Allocation Appeals

If a school has a query or wish to appeal for additional staffing including SNA support, their Organiser should contact schoolsummerprogramme@education.gov.ie setting out the basis of the appeal prior to the commencement of their programme.

Closing date for appeals will be communicated to schools when the registration portal opens.

3. Staffing resources

The roles of the **Organiser** and **Manager** are not restricted to the school principal. It is encouraged that these roles are developed within the school to ease workloads

These roles create new development and leadership opportunities for school staff and growth in distributed leadership within schools.

Organiser Role

The new Organiser Role will carry a gross payment of **€3,000** for participating special schools only, which can be claimed once their schools programme starts. The role of Organiser can be undertaken by any permanent or fixed term teacher, including the principal, in the participating school. Where more than one teacher is interested in this role, it is the responsibility of the Boards of Management to select the most suitable candidate. It is anticipated that the Organiser will undertake specific duties as outlined below.

It is envisaged that the bulk of the Organiser's work will include preparation work for the programme which will begin in February 2023 through to the commencement of the Summer Programme.

Hours associated with this role may be used for some or all of the following activities:

- Engage with the Summer Programme National Coordinator and provide information as required;
- Engage with associated Summer Programme training provided by the Department and/or other agencies;
- Familiarise teachers/SNAs with guidance materials and resources provided by the Department;
- Recruit staff to work on the summer programme, both internally and externally.
- Where schools are using external staff, establish procedures to facilitate the sharing of relevant pupil information, appropriate planning documentation and details of school policies and procedures to new staff or to staff who are unfamiliar with the pupils.
- Work collaboratively with school personnel to identify the pupils who should participate on the school-based programme and communicate with their parents/guardians.
- Develop the school's summer programme and activities in line with this year's theme.
- Develop a timetable for the Summer Programme.
- Where required, make arrangements for transport.
- Liaise with the school's Esinet Local Administrator to ensure they include external staff on the schools resource / staff list. This will need to be done before the Summer Programme Manager takes over.

Collaboration will be needed between the Organiser and the school's Summer Programme Manager prior to commencement of each scheme to support the delivery of the Summer Programme in the school. This handover of duties to the Summer Programme Manager is needed as part of the Organiser's preparation work.

Summer Programme Manager Role

The Summer Programme Manager role is a change in title from the Overseer Role last year.

Each school must appoint a Manager for the Summer Programme. The role of Summer Programme Manager can be undertaken by any permanent or fixed term teacher, including the principal and Summer Programme Organiser in the participating school.

The role of Summer Programme Manager may be shared between more than one permanent teacher within the school, however, only one Manager can work in that capacity in the school in any one day. Each Manager will only be paid for the days/weeks of the programme that they work in the role.

The Summer Programme Manager is not permitted to participate in the programme in a teaching role as they will be responsible for managing and leading the programme within the school.

The Manager(s) must be present for the full duration of the programme in order to deal with any issues that may arise.

The Summer Programme Manager role is not limited to, but will include the following duties:

- Acting as the point of contact for the Department and/or Education Centre and parents in relation to the Summer Programme
- Acting in a liaison role with other staff members working on the programme regarding any issues they might be experiencing
- Establishing and ensuring that their programme operates within resources as sanctioned by the Department
- Where applicable, dealing with any issues relating to transport services for participating pupils
- Ensuring appropriate returns to the Department in respect of teacher, SNA, Organiser and Manager remuneration on or before published deadline dates
- Ensuring all staff involved with the payment process are issued with any relevant guidance documentation provided by the Department
- Submitting claims to the Department or Education Centre for capitation/grant payments and any transport costs
- Ensuring that any Summer Programme evaluation material is completed and returned to the Department, including online evaluation questionnaires

Role of the Teacher

Ideally, schools offering the summer programme will be assisted by the participation of teachers who are familiar with the needs of the children or young people attending. Where teachers have this familiarity it will be easier for them to establish learning priorities aligned to existing support plans and to design a programme of support designed to maintain connection to the school. Where other teachers are employed, these teachers should seek access to the most recent support plan for the pupils to help with establishing learning priorities. Teachers should maintain a record of content and skills taught during the Summer Programme and provide a summary of this to the school and the parents, as appropriate.

Role of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA)

Where possible, schools offering the Summer Programme should seek to secure the participation of SNAs who are familiar with the pupils who will be attending. The roles and duties of the SNAs during the summer programme should continue to be in line with roles outlined in the school's SEN policy and reflect existing care plans for the pupils. There should be a particular emphasis on attending to health and care needs and fostering independence.

SNAs must be at least 17 years of age to work on the Summer Programme

Recruitment of external staff

Schools can employ teachers and/or SNAs from outside of their school if the staff normally employed by the school are not available for any/all of the summer programme.

For the first time a portal on www.educationposts.ie will be available for teachers and SNAs to register their interest in working on a school based programme in a special school. Students and others, including early childcare workers, will also be able to register their interest in working on such programmes. They will be able to submit preferences on location and availability. The rate payable to students and others, including early childcare workers and carers, will be the SNA rate of pay. This portal will be available before noticeboards are opened for mainstream schools to ensure an initial focus on recruitment in special schools. In addition, there will be publicity in 3rd level institutions to help attract students to work on the programmes.

Schools are advised to establish procedures to facilitate the sharing of pupil information, relevant planning documentation and details of school policies and procedures to new teachers or to teachers who are unfamiliar with the pupils. Further guidance will be provided to schools and their Organisers as part of supports for Summer Programme 2023.

The Teaching Council and Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN) will promote the summer programme with this year's graduate teachers, Professional Masters of Education (PME) student teachers and undergraduate students registered under Route 5 to increase the supply of available teachers this summer. More information is available for each category of teacher in the relevant sections below.

Schools must comply with standard recruitment and vetting procedures in the employment of all staff.

Recruitment of graduate teachers

Graduate teachers can work on the Summer Programme where they have commenced their registration process with the Teaching Council and where the following conditions are fulfilled:

1. They have received their final results from their HEI confirming they are eligible for registration with the Teaching Council
2. Garda vetting has been completed as part of their application for registration with the Teaching Council.
3. Their registration with the Council will be finalised prior to 06 October 2023.

Teachers who are registered under Primary Route 1 can only be paid the primary qualified rate from the registration date as advised by the Teaching Council. Otherwise, the unqualified rate will apply.

Recruitment of PME student teachers

A PME student teacher registered with the Teaching Council under Route 3 Further Education can work on the summer programme.

PME student teachers currently in Year 1 of the programme, who have applied for registration with the Teaching Council under Further Education, can be engaged by special schools where the following conditions are fulfilled:

1. Garda vetting has been completed as part of their application for registration with the Teaching Council.
2. Their registration with the Council under Further Education will be finalised prior to 06 October 2023.

PME student teachers who are registered with the Teaching Council under the Further Education route will be paid at the unqualified rate for work on the summer programme.

Recruitment of undergraduate student teachers

A student teacher registered with the Teaching Council under Route 5 can be engaged by special schools.

Undergraduate student teachers who are registered with the Teaching Council under Route 5 will be paid at the unqualified rate for work on the summer programme.

Graduate teachers, PME student teachers and Route 5 undergraduate student teachers will be paid in the same manner as substitute staff.

Recruitment of undergraduate students – non-teaching

Undergraduate students in relevant disciplines can be recruited into the role of SNA. This would include but is not limited to therapy, nursing, social care and physical education.

Students will be able to register their interest in working on such programmes. They will be able to submit preferences on location and availability. The rate payable to students will be the SNA rate of pay. This portal will be available before noticeboards are opened for mainstream schools to ensure an initial focus on recruitment in special schools. In addition, there will be publicity in 3rd level institutions to help attract students to work on the programmes.

4. Staff information

Payment rates

Managers, teachers and SNAs who work on the programme will be paid for this work based on the rates they are normally paid during the school year, i.e. their personal rate.

Where a teacher participates in the programme in the SNA role they will receive the SNA rate of pay.

Substitute rates of pay

Contracted teachers and SNAs will be remunerated for their work based on the rates they are normally paid during the school year i.e. their personal rate. All others will be paid a daily/hourly rate of pay.

Eligibility of teachers/SNAs on approved leave

A teacher or SNA who is availing of approved paid or unpaid leave from his/her employment during the period of the summer programme is not eligible to participate. However, a teacher or SNA who is on career break or who is job sharing may be employed as a teacher or SNA during the period of the programme. Job sharing teachers or SNAs can participate full-time in the summer programme.

Retired teachers

Teachers who have retired on medical grounds Strands 1 and 2 cannot participate in the summer programme.

Teachers retired under Strand 3 may participate in the summer programme. Please note they are subject to the restrictions of the pension scheme governing their retirement.

5. Payment process

Participating schools will utilise the Department's Esinet system to submit claims. This will allow claims to be processed on an ongoing basis during the summer.

The Department will endeavour to reduce payment times this year for all complete payment claims submitted before published deadline dates. The Department will process payments to teachers and SNAs as completed payment claims are submitted over the summer period through the Esinet portal.

The Principal or Local Administrator is to assign Summer Programme Data Approver and Summer Programme Data Entry roles within the school for the purposes of the summer programme.

The Summer Programme Manager is responsible for ensuring appropriate returns are submitted to the Department on or before published deadline dates; They must ensure that all staff involved with the programme are issued details regarding the payment process and are provided with any relevant guidance documentation provided by the Department;

It will be important that all payment claims are submitted by published deadline dates to ensure staff are paid on time. Schools should only submit their payment claims when their programme has concluded.

Guidance and support will be provided by the Department throughout the process. Further details on how claims can be submitted will be issued to participating schools in due course.

6. Additional supports

Summer Programme Student Grant Payment

A non-pay enhanced grant for special schools of €60 per pupil per week will be paid to all schools participating in the Special School Programme.

The grant payments can only be processed **once the school has completed the pupil Number returns** on the Esinet portal. Schools will be provided with full guidance on how to make this return.

Special School Grant Payment

The complexities of organising a summer programme in special school environments have been recognised as part of enhanced measures to support schools for this year's Summer Programme.

In order to mitigate against the unique circumstances that arise in a special school during the summer months, additional grant funding of €2,000 will be provided for each week a special school provides the Summer Programme.

This grant funding will be paid to each special school that takes part in the summer programme and will form part of their school's payment claim on the Esinet portal after the programme has concluded in their school.

Payments for both grant payments will commence in October 2023 for schools that have made this return.

Transport

School transport services for the Summer Programme 2023 may be available to pupils who normally avail of transport under School Transport Scheme for Children with Special Educational Needs during the school year.

A family who is availing of a special transport grant during the school year may continue to do so if their child has been sanctioned to attend the Summer Programme in their school. Grants are paid in the normal manner upon receipt of a Statement of Attendance Form from their school.

When a school registers for the Summer Programme they must do the following if they require SEN transport services to continue:

- When a school registers for the Summer Programme they will receive a link to a school transport application form.
- Complete the form fully for all pupils who are currently on SEN transport (pupils who avail of a Special Transport Grant do not need to be listed)
- Return completed form to the Department's School Transport section as soon as possible to SENtransport@education.gov.ie
- Any queries can be sent to SENtransport@education.gov.ie

All School Transport Application Forms must be submitted by the school before **02 May 2023** in order for transport to be in place for the Summer Programme 2023.

Escorts who are required to assist on existing SEN School Transport Services as outlined above should continue to be paid in the normal manner.

Only services who have received sanction for an escort by the Department during the school year will be funded in this regard.

7. Further information

Child Protection

The child protection procedures for schools provide that boards of management must designate a senior full-time member of the registered teaching staff of the school as the designated liaison person (DLP) for the school. It is expected that the DLP will normally be the principal.

It is also the responsibility of the board of management to designate another member of the full time registered teaching staff of the school (to be known as the deputy DLP) to assume the responsibilities of the DLP, in the absence of the DLP. It is expected that, where possible, the deputy DLP will normally be a deputy principal of the school.

In order to ensure that duties arising under the various obligations of the school under Child Protection are met, it is important that there is no delay in reporting any child protection concerns that may arise.

In the event that the Supervisor is someone other than the Designated Liaison Person (DLP)/Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy DLP), the DLP/Deputy DLP should be contacted immediately to deal with any child protection concerns that may arise.

If the DLP/Deputy DLP are not available to be contacted during this period the Board of Management/ETB should make arrangements to designate the Summer Programme Manager to take up the role on a temporary basis. This decision needs to be taken by the board of management and clearly documented in the board's minutes. The names of the acting DLP/DDLP need to be displayed prominently at the entrance/exit to the area of the school where the summer programme is taking place. Appropriate training for the acting DLP/DDLP needs to be undertaken for their roles prior to the commencement of the summer programme

It is important that there is absolute clarity in relation to the arrangements being used and that all staff including the DLP and Deputy DLP are aware of the limited and exceptional circumstances in which they are to be activated.

Procedures need to be in place to ensure that the anti-bullying policy and procedures are implemented/adhered to during the summer programme and that the principal of the school and the board of management are informed of any concern/incidents of bullying

Irish language

It is important that Irish is the sole language of communication in the Irish-medium programmes.

Public Health Guidelines

Schools are required to operate summer programmes in accordance with any current public health advice and guidelines. The most up to date information is published on the HSE website at:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/>

Length of school day

It is recommended that activities for this scheme will be from 10am to 2pm, or alternate hours which best fits the school's need.

- The starting time for a scheme is to be no later than 10 am.
- Four hours of activities must be provided each day.

EPV days

Principals and permanent qualified teachers engaged in delivering the summer programme are entitled to one day extra personal vacation (EPV) for each week worked (to a maximum of 4 days). Principals or teachers are not permitted to exceed an overall maximum of 5 (EPV) days in the school year.

Queries and Support

All relevant information and training resources for the summer programme can be found at this link: <https://www.gov.ie/Summerprogramme>

All other queries can be directed to schoolsummerprogramme@education.gov.ie

A Summer Programme helpline is also available at 09064 84292; times and dates of availability will be published on <https://www.gov.ie/Summerprogramme>

NCSE provide resources to support the school-based summer programme. The resources support tutors to provide engaging learning experiences for pupils that focus on consolidating relationships with their schools, supporting physical, social and emotional well-being, developing resilience, building their confidence as learners and developing skills and routines to support successful transition into the next stage of their schooling. The resources will be available at this link: <https://ncse.ie/summer-programme>