



Summer Programme 2024 – ‘Building Confidence and Connections’

March 2024

Dear Principal,

I am writing to let you know about this year’s Summer Programme and to highlight supports in place to assist with this year’s Primary School Programme. Ministers Foley and Madigan have announced a package of supports to allow all schools to offer a summer programme for children with complex special educational needs and those at greatest risk of educational disadvantage. We really hope your school will consider running a programme.

For 2024, one of the main priorities is that more children with complex special educational needs and/or those at risk of educational disadvantage has access to a school based programme.

The central theme for this year’s programme continues to be ‘Building Confidence and Connections’. The primary aim of this theme is to help our children and young people to realise their potential, to be resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their lives, to take care of their physical wellbeing and to have a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to their school community.

For 2024 the Department is continuing with the Primary Mainstream Scheme. This Scheme replaces the Inclusion and Special Class programmes of previous years and allows for a more cohesive and inclusive approach. It is still open to schools to offer places to pupils enrolled in special classes, pupils who have complex special educational needs in mainstream classes and those who are most at risk of educational disadvantage.

To further support the inclusive approach of this scheme, schools have more options in relation to numbers of groups that they can provide a programme for. Previously, there were defined allocations in relation to the number of groups that schools could run a programme for, based on the size of a school. This approach is more reflective of meeting the individual needs of a school and the children who are eligible to take part.

This year’s programme also continues with the Organiser role, replacing preparation hours in previous years, to help support schools in their planning and participation from an early stage in the school year. The functions for the Summer Programme Manager role remains largely the same from previous years.

The Primary School Scheme can run for 2 to 4 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.



DEIS primary schools also have the option of running existing Literacy and Numeracy Camps/Campaí Samhraidh. Schools can run up to 2 camps of one week's duration each. DEIS schools who participate in both the Primary School Scheme and the DEIS Literacy and Numeracy Summer Camp Programme/Campaí Samhraidh **should run both schemes concurrently**. This coordinated approach aims to create a more inclusive learning environment for all pupils during the summer months, whilst also supporting pupils in the development and maintenance of positive relationships with their peers.

Further details are contained below:-

School Organiser Role

Continuing on from 2023, instead of preparation hours, there will again be a dedicated role of School Organiser in each school offering the summer programme in 2024. The School Organiser will receive additional remuneration for their role. This is envisaged to be a key leadership role that will offer development opportunities for staff in schools. The School Organiser in all schools will develop the school's summer programme and have responsibility for recruitment of staff employed by the school for the Summer Programme.

While Principals can undertake this role, the intention is to alleviate pressure from school management and present an opportunity for other teachers.

Summer Programme Manager

In all primary schools, each school can appoint one the Summer Programme Manager for their overall Summer Programme. This can be the same person as the School Organiser. It would be recommended that this appointment be considered in the context of the person with the most relevant special educational needs (SEN) experience.

The Organiser and 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.

Online Payment of Staff

The online payments system for staff that was introduced in 2022 will be in place again for 2024. Further improvements will be made to the system for 2024 and this will ensure that staff who take part in the school-based programme are paid as quickly and efficiently as possible.

External Staff

Schools can engage substitute teachers and SNAs from outside of their school if the staff normally employed by the school are not available. The Teaching Council and the Irish Primary Principal's Network (IPPN) will promote the summer programmes with this year's graduate teachers and undergraduate students registered under Route 5 to increase the supply of available teachers this summer via <https://www.educationposts.ie/>. This will support recruitment of staff for posts in the primary and post-primary sector.



School Transport

School transport services may be available to students who avail of services under the SEN transport scheme. It is really important that this process runs smoothly for you and your school. Therefore, it is essential to submit School Transport Application Forms as soon as possible as doing so will allow the Department's School Transport Section to provide timely confirmation to schools.

Where services are not available for students who normally avail of SEN transport scheme, grant funding is payable to schools following completion of the programme.

Support and Guidance

If you have any queries please email schoolsummerprogramme@education.gov.ie or call 090 648 4292. Full details on the schemes including available supports is available at gov.ie/summerprogramme.

Based on a recent Inspectorate report conducted on the Summer Programme 2023, it was observed that where a summer programme has taken place, not only has it enhanced the well-being and learning of the children during the summer, but it also positively impacted on their performance upon their return to school or eased their transition to Post-Primary school. To view this report, please go to [gov - Inspectorate publications: Evaluation reports and guidelines \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie/inspectorate/publications/evaluation-reports-and-guidelines).

Your co-operation and support for this year's programme is paramount in making it a success and I would greatly appreciate if you could give time to consider running a programme in your school this year. We understand that schools are very busy places during the school year and the dedication from you and your staff is much appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Frank Hanlon
Principal Officer
Special Education Section