



Circular Number: 0053/2026

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

Circular on Post Primary Admissions Process

1. Purpose

The purpose of this circular is to acknowledge the ongoing work across schools in managing their admissions processes, to request schools to make all necessary preparations to ensure the admissions process for the 2027/2028 school year is commenced as early as possible in October 2026 and to inform and remind schools of the steps being taken by the Department to assist the smooth running of the admissions process for first year student enrolments.

It is intended that an additional communication will issue shortly in relation to admission to post-primary special classes.

2. Steps to be taken by schools in support of streamlined admissions processes.

2.1 Local coordination of admissions policies

Schools are requested to coordinate with other post primary schools in their area regardless of patronage to ensure that local applicants for both mainstream and special classes are appropriately prioritised and that enrolments across all post primary schools are sustainable. In reviewing applications for investment in school accommodation, and with a view to ensuring existing school capacity is fully optimised, the Department of Education and Youth must consider the extent to which schools are catering to local needs or unnecessarily drawing from other areas.



2.2 Local coordination of admissions timelines

Schools are requested to commence their admissions processes as early as possible in October 2026 (but no earlier than the 1st of October) and to coordinate their application and offer timelines with other schools in the local area. This facilitates more efficient admissions processes, as parents have clarity on all available offers in the same time window, and can accept or reject offers more expeditiously.

2.3 Optimising functionality of Post-Primary Online Database

To support the enrolment process, the Department has, since 2024, provided PPSN Conflict Resolution and PPSN Validation functionality as part of the central Post-Primary On-line Database (PPOD) IT system. The functionality is already used by many schools, and the feedback has been very positive.

The department is now requesting all schools to avail of this functionality by inputting data on students who have accepted offers to PPOD as those acceptances are received by the school. If schools in an area coordinate well, the PPSN Conflict Resolution function will give a real-time indicator of students who have accepted places in multiple schools and support earlier resolution of this issue, for the benefit of all the schools, and of other children on waiting lists who can receive an earlier offer of the freed-up school place. The maximum benefits from this new functionality will be realised through good coordination by schools. This earlier clarity and certainty on student admissions will assist schools with their planning for the following school year.

User guides for PPOD, including for the PPSN Conflict Resolution and PPSN Validation functions are at this link: [gov.ie - Post Primary Online Database \(PPOD\) User Guides](https://www.gov.ie/en/post-primary-online-database-(ppod)-user-guides/).



2.4 Data sharing with the Department

When requested by the Department, good engagement from schools, with respect to the sharing of data on applications for admissions, is important in identifying and quantifying school place requirements in an area. For the 2025/26 admissions process the Department initiated data-sharing arrangements with schools in 33 areas of enrolment pressure at post-primary level. This has helped to identify any emerging capacity pressures and to collectively work on putting solutions in place. As previously set out in Department circular letter 0080/2024, schools may also be required to share data on waiting lists with the National Council for Special Education to support forward planning. This information is key to support the opening of new special classes.

2.5 Admissions to other year groups

The Department is aware that students may need to enrol in any year group at any point during the academic year due to factors such as student mobility, last minute enrolments and expulsions. To ensure that every young person has access to education, schools must accept and process all applications throughout the year, including those submitted outside of standard application windows. Schools are expected to maintain flexibility to accommodate students who apply after the application deadlines and schools are reminded that admissions may only be refused based on the specific criteria outlined in the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018.

The Department is working closely with Tusla Education Support Service and the National Council for Special Education to ensure that every child has access to education. In instances where a child is unable to secure a place through the normal admissions processes, both agencies hold the authority and responsibility to designate a school place under Section 67 of the Education Act 1998. This ensures that no student is left without access to education.



3. Single Online Application to School

While the steps outlined above can significantly streamline admissions processes nationwide in the near term, the Department is progressing work in parallel on the development of a common application system for school admissions. In October 2025, the Department and participating schools successfully ran a pilot of a Single Application System for admission to first year, including special classes, at post-primary schools in the five School Planning Areas of Athenry, Clonakilty, Greystones, Leixlip and Tullamore_Killina.

A review of the pilot lessons learned has demonstrated the benefits of a centralised admissions system for both families and schools. While the primary focus of the first pilot phase was on streamlining the application process for parents, it is intended that the next phase of the pilot will test enhanced functionality for schools, including the capacity to manage offers through the central system. The Phase 2 pilot will also extend to five further School Planning Areas that are adjacent to the existing pilot. The additional School Planning Areas are Rosscarbery, Kilcoole, Maynooth, Oranmore and Kilbeggan.

The pilot Single Application System is the first step in an incremental development process by the department towards a nationwide common application system. The development of the nationwide system will require significant technical development, stakeholder engagement and change management over the coming period. In the interim, the aforementioned functionality on the PPOD system provides a national mechanism for real-time data for schools for identification of duplicate acceptances of enrolments and thereby greatly assists with the efficient operation of admission processes.

END

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