



Circular Letter 0078/2026

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

Work Stoppages by Trade Unions in the Education Sector

1. I am directed by the Minister for Education and Youth to inform you that, arising from the results recent ballots of members, Unions representing various cohorts of staff, including teachers, special needs assistants (SNAs), and other school staff are planning a one-day work stoppage on 14 October and 21 October 2026. Should there be further one-day work stoppages as part of this industrial action the provisions of this circular will apply.
2. It is a matter for school management (in the case of ETB schools, the Chief Executive) to decide whether their school should open for students on these dates. In reaching this decision, account should be taken of the potential Health & Safety risks inherent in opening the school as normal, in view of the anticipated number of staff expected to take part in these work stoppages.
3. If a decision is taken not to open a school for students on these dates, care should be taken to ensure that all parents, guardians and students are notified of this decision in adequate time to allow alternative arrangements to be made.
4. Staff cannot be paid for periods of unauthorised absence due to industrial action. Employers should ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to notify the appropriate Payroll, within a reasonable timeframe, of employees participating in industrial action and any resulting pay deductions or adjustments required.

Payroll arrangements for staff employed by primary, post-primary and Community and Comprehensive Schools

5. In the event that these work stoppages proceed, the management of each school should make appropriate arrangements to record the attendance or absence of all staff employed by the school on each date. This applies to all teaching and non-teaching staff employed by the school.



6. The Online Claims System (OLCS) is the system to record all leave absences for school staff who are paid on payrolls operated by the department. The management of each school must record the absence for staff who are rostered to work due to the work stoppages on the Online Claims System (OLCS) under the Leave Category "School Business", Leave Sub-category "Strike In School". Absences for reasons other than the work stoppages (e.g. for maternity leave, parental leave etc.,) should be recorded on the OLCS in the normal way.
7. Where a school closes on grounds of health and safety and a staff member has indicated their availability to work, there is no requirement to record a leave absence on OLCS in respect of that staff member
8. School management should ensure that a similar arrangement is put in place for any staff who are not paid via the department's payroll system.
9. Further information on the impacts of the work stoppage on pay and pensions can be found in the Appendix.

Payroll Arrangements for Staff Employed by Education and Training Boards

10. In the event that these work stoppages proceed, it is the responsibility of the Chief Executive of each ETB to ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place to record the attendance or absence of staff employed in the school/centre on each date. This applies to all teaching and non-teaching staff employed in the school/centre.
11. The Chief Executive of each ETB should ensure that all absences due to the work stoppages are notified to the ESBS via ETB HR in accordance with its appropriate procedures in order to facilitate the appropriate pay deduction(s). Absences for reasons other than the work stoppages (e.g. for authorised leave) should be recorded in the normal way.

Caoimhe Allman
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External Staff Relations

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Appendix: Information for Staff, Boards of Management and Chief Executives

Information for the School Staff member

The effect of a strike day on salary

- Salary will be deducted for the day(s) of strike action in the next available payroll.
- Incremental progression is dependent on the number of day(s) worked and the payment of next increment will be delayed by the day(s) of the strike.

The effect of a strike day for Pension Benefits

- Strike days are not reckonable for pension purposes because the school staff member is on an unapproved leave absence.
- The period of strike action does not count towards pensionable service accrual under either the pre-existing public service pension schemes or the Single Public Service Pension Scheme.
- No pension contributions are payable in respect of strike days because no pensionable remuneration is paid.
- Strike days cannot be bought back to re-instate the day for pensionable service.
- A strike day is not treated as a break in continuity of employment, but it is excluded from reckonable pension service.

Single Public Service Pension Scheme.

- Pensionable earnings for the year are reduced by the strike-day deduction.
- The pension referable amount for that year is marginally reduced because benefits are based on pensionable earnings actually received.
- The strike day itself does not generate pension accrual.

Information for the Chairperson/BOM of Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive schools

- Schools will be required to record the strike day for the school staff member on the Online Claims System (OLCS) as set out in this circular.
- Separate guidance is available from ETBI for ETBs