



## Information Note SD 0002/2021

**To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Post Primary Schools and the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards.**

### **Measures to increase the availability of substitutes for post primary schools for 2021/2022**

The Department of Education has engaged with the education stakeholders on the issues raised about the difficulty accessing substitutes for teacher absences at this time.

It is recognised that there are pressures in this area at the moment due to COVID-19 and therefore the following arrangements have been put in place to assist with the availability of substitutes until the February 2022 mid-term break, when it will be reviewed.

#### **Student teachers**

Following positive engagement with the Higher Education Institutions who provide post primary initial teacher education programmes they have agreed to greater programme flexibility to enable students on consecutive (PME) programmes and Year 3 and Year 4 students on concurrent programmes to support schools up to the end of term.

They have also agreed to explore flexible options in relation to the assessment requirement for programmes in the context of students being available to support schools. It would be important that schools would be mindful of the impact of this additional work on the overall well-being of the student teachers.

The Education Stakeholders, including the Department, the HEI Colleges and the Teaching Council, will continue to work together to address any practical issues and ensure the ongoing availability of student teachers to support schools pre and post - Christmas 2021.

#### **Retired teachers**

Retired teachers returning to classrooms until the end of the current school term will not have their pension abated. This arrangement is in place for the 2021 calendar year.

#### **Job Sharing teachers**

As set out in [Information Note TC 0016/2021](#), restrictions for job-sharing teachers, undertaking substitution, have been temporarily suspended which



allows these teachers to work additional days if available to cover vacancies in their own and other schools.

### **Career Break**

The restriction on a teacher carrying out substitute work whilst on Career Break has already been relaxed for the current school year under [Information Note TC 0015/2021](#). Teachers on career break can carry out substitute work without restriction.

### **Temporary emergency substitution arrangements**

A new temporary arrangement has been put in place to provide Principals with an alternative means of sourcing appropriate substitution cover, preferably with subject appropriate qualifications, where none is otherwise available.

This scheme will assist Post Primary schools to ensure that they can source sufficient substitution cover, in circumstances where schools cannot source cover through the existing arrangements.

Post primary teachers will now be able to work over 22 hours per week, working extra hours to provide substitute cover, up to a total of 35 additional hours between 29<sup>th</sup> November and 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2022.

Details of the arrangements for this scheme are available at [Information Note TC 0026/2021](#)

### **Suspension of some Continual Professional Development (CPD) at post-primary where substitution is required**

Planned CPD relating to reforms in Senior Cycle examinable subjects will continue. All other CPD where substitution is required should be deferred until after the February 2022 mid-term break.

It is intended that this deferred CPD will be re-scheduled in the period following the February 2022 mid-term break.

The temporary suspension of CPD will not affect the completion of the Droichead process for NQTs whose contracts are due to end prior to mid-term break in February 2022. Allowable substitution and the allocation available to teachers involved in the mandatory Droichead process will continue to be facilitated in post primary schools between now and February 2022.

### **Qualified Teachers on secondment to the Department's Teacher Education Support Services**

The Teacher Education support services funded by the Department have been asked to release teachers who are on secondment to make themselves



available to provide substitute cover in schools. Arrangements will be made for available teachers from these services to register on the SubSeeker portal.

### **Treoraithe (formerly co-operating teachers) who host student teachers on school placement**

It is acknowledged that *Treoraithe* play a very important role in supporting the development of student teachers.

In exceptional circumstances where there is no substitute available, following use of the temporary emergency substitute arrangement, it may be possible for the Treoraí of a registered student teacher to provide substitute cover for absences of a very short duration in their own school if another substitute cannot be sourced at short notice. This should be for the shortest time possible until a substitute can be recruited. It should not impinge on any required arrangements associated with school placements.

### **Communications campaign with all registered teachers**

The Teaching Council register of teachers currently has over 111,000 teachers registered. The Council has run a number of campaigns to raise awareness with teachers, who are currently registered but are not teaching, to the current challenges in schools around recruiting substitutes. Any teachers who are available to undertake substitution work, have been asked to register on SubSeeker so that schools are aware of their availability when seeking to fill substitute vacancies

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29 November 2021