

2010/2011 Financial Guideline 04

Funding for Voluntary Secondary Schools

School Charges & Voluntary Contribution

1. Grants to Voluntary Secondary Schools from January 1, 2011

As outlined in JMB Bulletin 11 issued last week, there will be a 5% reduction in all capitation grants paid to voluntary secondary schools with effect from January 1, 2011. The reduction will apply to every grant paid on a per capita basis with the possible exception of the book grant. A detailed guideline on the new grant structure will be issued to schools as soon as all details are clarified. The FSSU Budget Template available on the website will also be adjusted accordingly.

The changes will apply to all grants payable to schools in January and April 2011 for the current school year. All schools are urged to adjust their budgets accordingly for the current year and to carefully monitor all expenditure on a regular basis.

It is the intention of the Department of Education and Skills to amalgamate all grants into one annual grant which will be disbursed in three portions from the beginning of 2012.

2. Changes Announced in the Government Budget 2011

Apart from the reduction in capitation grants announced in the four year National Plan, further details on financial matters of relevance to schools were published in "[An Information Note Regarding Main Features of 2011 Estimates for Education and Skills Vote](#)".

Your attention is drawn in particular to changes proposed for school transport services from 2012/2013.

3. ICT Grants

In recent weeks, all post primary schools have received the following grants:

ICT Grant (1): Base grant of €1,700 (€2,550 in DEIS Schools) plus €63.45 per student

ICT Grant (2): Base grant of €1,700 (€2,550 in DEIS Schools) plus €70.22 per student

All ICT grants should only be spent in accordance with the [detailed guidelines and procurement procedures](#) laid down by the NCTE.

4. PE Grants

- Grant for PE Equipment of €2,000 per school plus €20 per student.

Similarly, the PE Equipment grant should only be spent on the purpose intended and in accordance with [Circular 0069/2010](#) on the DES website. In particular, all purchases must be in compliance with public procurement guidelines and proper records of all expenditure must be retained.

Both the ICT and PE grants are grants of a capital nature and should be clearly identified in the school's annual accounts. All documentation in relation to the purchase of ICT and PE grants should be retained for seven years.

5. School Charges and Voluntary Contributions

The Department of Education and Skills recently issued [Circular 0065/2010](#) in which it emphasises and repeats the requirement that **compulsory fees or charges** cannot be imposed by voluntary secondary schools which are in receipt of DES grants and staffing allocations.

A voluntary secondary school in the Free Education Scheme is eligible to receive a range of State grants on condition that it does not require “**mandatory fees or payments from existing pupils or from those seeking admission to the school**” ([Cir. 0065/2010](#)) This means that a school cannot impose compulsory charges or registration fees on existing or prospective students. State funding may be withdrawn from schools found to be in breach of this requirement.

Certain charges may be legitimately requested from students or their parents as follows:

- Payment for school books or photocopied material provided by the school where the charge is reasonable and reflects the true costs concerned
- Charges for meals and refreshments which are not compulsory
- Charges for services and activities which students may avail of and which are not compulsory e.g. supervised after-school study, school tours and trips of an educational nature such as visits to theatres or sporting events.

Voluntary contributions may be requested from parents provided it is clearly stated that there is no compulsion to pay. Payments or charges cannot be imposed on parents to guarantee a prospective student's place in the school or to ensure continued enrolment. Apart from the legitimate charges listed above, a school cannot impose compulsory charges. In particular, compulsory registration charges for prospective enrolment in a non-fee paying school are not permitted.

6. Boarding Fees

Residential boarding schools are eligible to receive the State funding paid to non-fee paying schools provided fees charged for residential boarding do not exceed the following ceilings for the school year 2010/2011:

- €6,000 per annum for five day boarding
- €7,800 per annum for six or seven day boarding

Any fees charged to boarders must reflect the economic cost of providing the boarding facilities and may not exceed the limits set out above. Full details of these arrangements are set out in [Circular 0065/2010](#).

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