

Financial Guideline 2019/2020 - 39

Community & Comprehensive and Voluntary Secondary Schools

Update to Payments to Employees over the Covid period

1. Introduction

The Department of Education and Skills has issued guidance on *Contract and Employment Issues in the Education Sector arising from COVID_19* to provide guidance to boards on payments to ancillary employees in schools.

Public Sector employees such as Clerical Officers, Caretakers and Cleaners fully funded by the Department in the Community & Comprehensive sector, will continue to be paid as normal subject to any central Government decision on public sector pay.

1978 Scheme Secretaries will continue to be paid as normal subject to any central Government decision on public sector pay.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) has indicated that as a general principle, there should be no double state funding of services so that it is not possible for a school to obtain payment under the COVID-19 financial supports and still be paid the full pay allocation under their publicly funded grant.

This is to ensure that no employer or employee is paid more than 100% of the employee wages from the various state funding arrangements.

In the case of a school availing of the Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS), the Department would need to be informed if the school availed of the WSS for the employees if grant funded. If so, the Department should reduce its public grant funding accordingly to the school.

It is envisaged that initial controls in this area would be in the form of a self-declaration by the school that could be subject to audit at a later date.

On 15th April 2020 the Minister for Finance announced further changes to the Temporary COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme. These changes will be effective from 4th May 2020.

2. Payments to Grant-funded Ancillary Services Staff in recognised Primary Schools and Schools Services Support Fund (SSSF) Grant-funded staff in Voluntary Secondary Schools in the Free Education Scheme and Community & Comprehensive Schools

2.1 As per communication received from the Department of Education and Skills, the Department has confirmed that grants for ancillary staff i.e. **Secretaries, Caretakers and Cleaners**, will be paid to schools as normal.

2.2. The payment arrangements are set out in a table format to reflect the DES guidance:

Payment Arrangements		
Funding Sources	Funding elements	Guidance
Salary 100% Exchequer-funded	Boards of Management continue to pay employees as normal.	No Covid-19 financial supports should be claimed by the employer or the Employee. Where in the normal course of events, ancillary staff apply for Job-Seekers Allowance during periods of school closure such as Easter or Summer holidays, this usual arrangement may continue as appropriate.
Salary is partially funded by Exchequer and non-Exchequer sources	Element funded by Exchequer funding (E.g. Grant aided posts and SSF aided posts)	The Board should continue to pay that element of the wages/salary which is funded from the Grants/SSF as normal.
	Element funded by non-Exchequer funding (school's own financial resource stream)	Boards of Management are encouraged to examine the scope to continue to pay staff as normal where feasible from the school's non-Exchequer sources. (There may be other savings in areas which may be utilised to offset the funding shortfalls to pay these employees.) It is a matter for the Board of Management to decide what action is to be taken in such cases, having regard to contracts, etc.

		<p>Where non exchequer funds are used to supplement grant funding to pay Secretaries, Caretakers and Cleaners, and the board cannot afford to continue to pay the element of payroll usually covered by non-exchequer funds, the board should consider offering a 3 day week or other reduced work pattern to affected employees which would assist to better manage the financial circumstances in the school and also retain a link with the individual employees such that, if the restriction were lifted, these employees would be available more immediately to support business needs, especially if circumstances arise where certain employees may be needed to work non-standard periods (e.g. schools operating in summer break months for the leaving certificate).</p> <p>Such employees whose working hours have been reduced may be entitled to claim welfare payments from the DEASP.</p>
Salary 100% funded by non-Exchequer sources	Additional funding will not be made available by the Department of Education and Skills to provide for costs associated with these positions.	Where an income stream covers the payroll cost of an employee has now ceased e.g. canteen employee, sports centre caretaker, then the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme should apply. Please see 3 below.

2.3 The Department has confirmed that grants for **School Bus Escorts** will continue to be paid as normal while schools remain closed in the current school year. Normal pay arrangements regarding such staff should continue to apply.

2.4. Where schools have queries in relation to contracts for their employees, they should contact their Management Body.

3. Availing of the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme

(Please see [Financial Guideline 2019/2020-36](#) for further information and eligibility criteria)

Application of the scheme is based on self-assessment principles. The board must follow the steps below in order to apply for the scheme:

1. A board of management intending to avail of the scheme must contact Revenue's National Employer Helpdesk via the myEnquiries system. They need to provide details of the income stream/separate business unit that has now ceased and has resulted in the board registering for the scheme. They will also need to confirm that these employees are not employed and paid for services elsewhere by the school. It is required that decisions made at board level to avail of the scheme are recorded in detail as the school may be audited by Revenue in future.
2. The source of income that was financing this role is now gone i.e. canteen income, rental income
3. The business unit must be able to be identified separately e.g. a canteen
4. The employees involved do not crossover into any other areas of the school

Please note that employees who were laid off after the 29th of February 2020 may be taken back on to the school's payroll for the purposes of the scheme.

The following employees are now also eligible for the scheme;

- People age 66 and over who are getting the State pension are eligible for the Wage Subsidy Scheme and can keep their pension payment
- People getting a Family Income Supplement (Working Family Payment) are also eligible for the Wage Subsidy Scheme, provided all other eligible criteria are met as laid out by DEASP.

4. Changes to the Temporary Covid-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme from 4th May 2020:

- The subsidy will increase from 70% to 85% for employees with a previous average take home pay below €412 per week
- The subsidy will be €350 per week for employees with a previous average take home pay between €412 and €500 per week
- The subsidy remains the same for employees with a previous average take home pay of between €500 and €586 per week
- A tiered system has been introduced for employees with a previous average take home pay of over €586 per week
- Employees who were taking home more than €960 per week will be able to avail of the scheme (this change applies from 16 April)
- The new rates apply from 4 May and will not be backdated.

- Revenue will provide more information on the operation of the new arrangements within the payroll process from May 4th.

For general issues relating to the scheme, employers should contact Revenue's National Employer Helpdesk via the myEnquiries system, providing details of the query and a direct dial contact number.

Should you require further assistance, please contact the FSSU.

Tel: 01-269 0677

info@fssu.ie

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