



Circular Letter 0036/2022

**To: Boards of Management and School Secretaries
in recognised Primary and Post Primary schools**

**Revision of Salaries and Annual Leave arrangements for
School Secretaries employed in recognised primary and post primary schools**

Following the acceptance by Forasa of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) agreement in respect of salaries and various leave entitlements for grant funded school secretaries, a process is required to collate information from each person employed as a school secretary to ensure that they are assigned the correct point on the incremental pay scale and also receive the correct allocation of leave entitlements referred to in the agreement, pro rata as appropriate.

The information provided in this Circular will also assist School Secretaries to make a considered decision as to whether they wish to remain on their current terms and conditions as provided by the school or whether they wish to move to the new terms and conditions encompassed in the WRC agreement.

As stated at paragraph 4 of the Circular, the move to the increased pay scale will take effect from 1st September 2022. For now schools are being asked to identify the pay rate and annual leave that would apply should a secretary choose to move to the new terms and conditions and to indicate these to the secretary who can then make an informed decision on the options available. Should the secretary choose to move to the new terms then the new pay rate should be applied (following the process under appendix 1) by the school from 1 September 2022.

The actions required at this point by the school should be carried out by the end of September 2022 at the latest to allow timely transition for secretaries who choose to move to the new terms.

These procedures are to be implemented by each employer and all secretaries must adhere to the arrangements. The forms to record the actions taken are presented at Appendices 4 and 5 and should be retained by the school and secretary as a record of what has been agreed.



The options then available to secretaries are:

- a) to remain on their existing terms and conditions provided by the school, or;
- b) to accept the full package of revised salary, terms and conditions.

This represents the first phase of implementation of the agreement.

The verification of this first phase, the calculation of back pay and the option to have the value of Jobseekers Benefit included in pay will be addressed in the second phase of the assimilation process. The Department will continue to consider the approach to these further aspects and communicate to the schools as needed over the coming months.

Where a secretary chooses to move to the new terms then they may also opt for an additional benefit to cover the value of certain social welfare benefits related to periods of layoff and have that salary 'annualised' across 52 weeks, thereby removing the requirement to seek jobseekers benefit during school holidays. **However, given the current timeframe secretaries who usually apply for Jobseeker's benefit should do so for the remainder of 2022 as this element will not be implemented until 2023. This should be made clear to secretaries as soon as possible.**

The Agreement

The majority of primary and voluntary secondary schools receive assistance to provide for secretarial, caretaking and cleaning services under grant schemes. Where a school employs a staff member to support those functions those staff are employees of individual schools and responsibility for terms of employment rests with the school.

Fórsa trade union tabled a claim seeking parity of these staff with ETB public service staff and officials from the Department and school management bodies engaged with Fórsa on the issues. Following intensive discussions at the WRC there was agreement on a proposed package to settle the claim as follows:

- (a) move School Secretaries' pay rates to a scale which is aligned with the Clerical Officer Grade III pay scale within Education and Training Boards on a pro rata basis with an effective date of implementation for these new pay arrangements of 1st September 2021. Pay rates will be pro rata according to a secretary's current working pattern.



- (b) An allocation of 22 days annual leave (on a pro rata basis according to a secretary's current working pattern) is proposed, with annual leave to be taken outside of the times when the school would usually be operational (i.e. during Christmas / Easter / Summer breaks and mid-terms).
- (c) Maternity leave will mirror the statutory maternity benefit of 26 weeks but includes a 'top up' of the statutory maternity benefit to 100% of wages, subject to a ceiling of €150 a week from employers (i.e. €150 on top of the statutory benefit).
- (d) Paid sick leave for up to 3 sick days in 2022. This is planned to increase to 5 days in 2023, 7 days in 2024 and 10 days in 2025.
- (e) An optional addition to assimilation relates to the issue of secretaries who are currently laid off for periods and as a result apply to the Department of Social Protection for payment of benefits. The solution proposed is that secretaries could receive additional increments based broadly on the amount they usually receive from the Department of Social protection. This will be optional to allow secretaries to choose the approach they wish. Secretaries would still only work their current hours/weeks but anyone choosing this option would be given a contract similar to a shorter working year model (as is commonplace in certain employments) in that they are paid for their existing work (e.g. 35 weeks plus leave) but get pay spread over 52 weeks. This would mean that they could not apply for benefits from Social Protection for periods of layoff.

It is intended to offer a similar package to grant funded school caretakers once more robust data can be gathered to allow the claim to be finalised.

The Minister for Education directs you to ensure that copies of this Circular are provided to all members of the Board of Management/Education and Training Boards and that its contents are brought to the attention of all secretaries in your employment including those on leave of absence.

Any queries on this circular should be directed to secretary_circular@education.gov.ie

This Circular can be accessed on the Department's website at www.gov.ie

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1. Purpose of this Circular.

- 1.1 The purpose of this Circular is to inform Schools of the agreement on terms and conditions for school secretaries, as agreed following discussions between the parties, and to seek the provision of certain information so as to give effect to those arrangements.

2. Optional transition to the package.

- 2.1 It should be noted that these arrangements are optional, school secretaries can choose to stay on their current terms and conditions if they so wish. However, all secretaries will ultimately receive their salary through a centralised payroll administered by the Department of Education.
- 2.2 Secretaries recruited in the future must be employed by schools on the new terms and conditions, including the 52 week payment approach.
- 2.3 A school secretary may elect to:
- a) remain on their current terms and conditions, including salary arrangements and the facility to seek appropriate supports from the Department of Social Protection during periods of layoff.
 - b) accept the full package of revised salary, terms and conditions but continue to be paid for weeks worked and have the facility to seek appropriate supports from the Department of Social Protection during periods of layoff;
 - c) accept the full package of revised salary, terms and conditions and have that salary 'annualised' across 52 weeks, thereby removing the facility to seek jobseekers benefit during school holidays (such staff will have the value of appropriate and relevant benefits paid through their salary).

3. Effective Date.

- 3.1 The provisions of this circular are effective from the commencement of the 2022/2023 school year. Schools should action point 4 and point 5 by September 2022.



4. Revised Salary Scales.

- 4.1 Schools should identify the School Secretaries current rate of pay and apply the below rationale to identify the point that the secretary would assimilate to if the new terms and conditions are accepted. The secretary if assimilated to the new scale would receive an increment each school year and progress one point up the scale as a result. The pay scale to use is set out at Appendix 1. Future changes to the pay scale will be communicated to schools at the appropriate time.
- 4.2 Secretaries will be assimilated to next point on scale based on their pay as at September 2021.
- 4.3 Secretaries with 10 – 19 years existing service will be placed on Point 5 of the scale (€15.07) unless already earning over that amount where they will instead follow 4.1 above.
- 4.4 Secretaries with over 20 years existing service will be placed on Point 7 of the scale (€16.30) unless earning over that amount where they will instead follow 4.1 above.
- 4.5 Salary assimilation will be based on the October 2021 Grade 3 Clerical Officer scale, the information gathered will be derived and verified from September 2021 pay rates.
- 4.6 Worked examples are set out at Appendix 2 (A)
- 4.7 Where a secretary currently has their annual leave entitlement included as a part of their pay, a particular process must be followed to determine their hourly rate of pay exclusive of annual leave. A worked example for calculating an hourly rate minus rolled up holiday pay is set out at Appendix 2 (B).

5. Revised Annual Leave entitlements.

- 5.1 Annual leave for a Fulltime secretary is 22 days per year. As provided for in section 19 of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, part-time staff will have their total inclusive annual leave allowance calculated on a pro-rata basis. The leave provision should equate to a further 4.2 weeks of normal pay. Worked examples are set out at Appendix 3.
- 5.2 “Rolled up holiday pay” (a practice of receiving holiday pay rolled up together with basic pay, therefore slightly increasing the hourly rate) will, as of September 2022, cease as a payment method. All annual leave entitlements will be calculated as shown in 5.1.



- 5.3 When calculating the correct holiday entitlement, the school should include all the hours worked, including time spent on annual leave, maternity leave, parental leave, force majeure leave, adoptive leave or the first 13 weeks of carer's leave or any other statutory leave.
- 5.4 Annual leave should be taken outside of the times when the school would normally be operational (i.e. during Christmas / Easter / summer breaks and mid-terms).
- 5.5 Public holiday entitlements are in line with the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997.

6. Revised Sick leave entitlements

- 6.1 A Sick leave provision will be available to secretaries who assimilate to the new terms and conditions.
- 6.2 Sick leave will be paid for up to 3 days in 2022/2023 school year. This will then increase to 5 days in 2023/2024, 7 days in 2024/2025 and 10 days per school year from 2025 onwards.

7. Revised Maternity leave entitlements

- 7.1 Maternity leave will mirror the statutory benefit of 26 weeks but will include a 'top up' of the statutory maternity benefit to 100% of wages, subject to a ceiling of €150 a week from employers (i.e. €150 in addition to the statutory benefit).

8. Future Assimilation arrangements.

- 8.1 The Department is currently examining the options for how best to gather information on all relevant staff and to carry out a number of functions:
- a) Validation of the new hourly rate and annual leave assigned by schools under this circular
 - b) The calculation of back pay to the agreed effective date of 1 September 2021 due to staff (including to incorporate increases from national agreements) and how to fund schools in relation to that matter



- c) How to best implement the optional additional increments to secretaries who are currently laid off for periods and as a result apply to the Department of Social Protection for payment of benefits but who wish to have the value of such benefits included in their pay over a 52 week period.
- 8.2 Further communications on these aspects will be issued to schools as soon as is practicable.

9. Centralised pay

- 9.1 As noted above, it is expected that secretaries will move to a centralised payroll system managed by the Department of Education in the future. The exact approach is being considered by the Department and will be communicated in due course.
- 9.2 Until this date, secretaries will continue to be paid directly by their employer including the new pay rate identified.
- 9.3 Decisions on the approach to current grant aid funding will also be considered by the Department.



Appendix 1

School Secretary Pay Scale

Scale Point	Gross salary	Hourly rate
1	€ 25,102	€13
2	€ 26,718	€13.84
3	€ 27,116	€14.04
4	€ 27,925	€14.46
5	€ 29,103	€15.07
6	€ 30,285	€15.68
7	€ 31,469	€16.30
8	€ 32,326	€16.74
9	€ 33,299	€17.24
10	€ 34,426	€17.83
11	€ 35,226	€18.24
12	€ 36,345	€18.82
13	€ 37,469	€19.40
14	€ 39,587	€20.50
15	€39,587	€20.50
* Long Service Increment	€ 41,090	€21.28

*After 3 years satisfactory service at the maximum



Appendix 2 (A)

Worked examples for Assimilation of Secretaries onto the agreed pay scale.

Example 1: A secretary currently on €13 per hour and with 3 years' service. The secretary has decided to avail of the new pay agreement and therefore moves to the next point in the scale (€13.84)

Current rate of pay	Current service	New rate of pay when moved to the new pay scale
€13.00	3	€13.84

Example 2: A secretary currently on €13 per hour and with 12 years' service. The secretary has decided to avail of the new pay agreement and therefore moves to point 5 of the scale (€15.07)

Current rate of pay	Current service	New rate of pay when moved to the new pay scale
€13.00	12	€15.07

Example 3: A secretary currently on €14 per hour and with 21 years' service. The secretary has decided to avail of the new pay agreement and therefore moves to point 7 of the scale (€16.30)

Current rate of pay	Current service	New rate of pay when moved to the new pay scale
€14.00	21	€16.30

Example 4: A secretary currently on €18 per hour and with 21 years' service. The secretary has decided not to avail of the new pay agreement and therefore stays on their current hourly rate

Current rate of pay	Current service	New rate of pay when moved to the new pay scale is not applicable
€18	21	€18



Appendix 2 (B)

Worked example to demonstrate the calculation of an hourly rate for a secretary who receives “rolled up holiday pay”

Example 1: A secretary currently on €15 per hour which includes rolled up holiday pay

Current rate of pay	Calculate 8% of the current rate	Take the 8% calculation off the current hourly rate	New rate of pay
€15.00	€1.20	€13.80	€13.80

This secretary would then be assimilated onto the new pay scale as set out in the above examples. It is important to note that while the hourly rate will decrease slightly, the secretary will now be in receipt of paid annual leave days so overall there is no loss.



Appendix 3

The relevant section of the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997 is section 19. Subsection 5 of Section 19 states that “(5) An employee shall, for the purposes of subsection (1), be regarded as having worked on a day of annual leave the hours he or she would have worked on that day had it not been a day of annual leave.”

On the basis that the annual leave allowance for 1 WTE is 4.4 weeks (4 weeks of 5 days each=20 days, plus 2 days, or 0.4 of a 5 day week, = 22 days), examples of common worksharing patterns are as follows:

WTE	Examples of worksharing pattern	calculation	Annual leave entitlement	Annual leave entitlement expressed in terms of worksharing pattern
0.5	Mornings only / 2.5 days per week	$4.4 \times 0.5 = 2.2$ weeks	11 days	22 mornings
0.5	2.5 days per week	$4.4 \times 0.5 = 2.2$ weeks	11 days	4 weeks of '2.5 days per week' and 1 full day or 2 x 0.5 days
0.6	3 days per week	$4.4 \times 0.6 = 2.64$ weeks	13.5 days	4 working weeks and 1.5 days
0.7	3.5 days per week	$4.4 \times 0.7 = 3.08$ weeks	15 days	4 working weeks and 1 day
0.8	4 days per week	$4.4 \times 0.8 = 3.52$ weeks	17.5 days	4 working weeks and 1.5 days
0.9	4.5 days per week	$4.4 \times 0.9 = 3.96$ weeks	20 days	4 working weeks and 2 days

Secretaries who work reduced hours daily, but work the full 5 days a week of the working week will receive their allowance as days, with the value of the days themselves being *pro-rata*. (e.g. a secretary who works 5 hours, 5 days of the week, would receive 4.4 weeks annual leave, but the value of each day's annual leave is 5 hours, being the length of the normal working day).



Appendix 4

**Form for School to complete
(Please retain a copy in school and provide a copy to secretary)**

1. School Name:

2. School Roll Number:

3. Please complete the following in respect of each secretary in your school:

Name:

PPSN:

Employed since (insert date):

Number of years' service as a school secretary:

Hourly pay rate at September 2021:

Does this rate include 8% Rolled up pay in lieu of leave?

Existing Leave Provided to Secretary:

a) Annual leave:

b) Paid sick leave:

c) Unpaid sick leave:

d) Other leave:

New hourly pay rate identified under section 4 if moving to new terms

Annual leave entitlement identified under Section 5 if moving to new terms

Name:

Signature:

Date:



Appendix 5

Form for secretary

I _____ confirm that I have been provided with a copy of the Circular and given an opportunity to consider the terms and conditions presented.

I further confirm that I have been provided with a copy of the form completed by the school at Appendix 4 and am satisfied that it is an accurate reflection of the terms and conditions of my current employment.

Having had the opportunity to consider the terms and conditions offered under the WRC agreement, I am choosing (tick your chosen option below):

1. to remain on my current terms and conditions

2. to accept the full package of revised salary, terms and conditions

Name:

Signature:

Date: