



Circular 36/2022 – Secretaries and Caretakers: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q: Can the Department indicate what an individual's pay rate and/or annual leave entitlement will be, based on the new pay scale?

A: The Circular outlines that as a first phase of implementation of the agreement, schools must, before the end of September, calculate the initial assimilation rate of pay and annual leave entitlement for secretaries and offer it to secretaries. It is therefore a matter for the school in which the secretary is employed to indicate what his/her/their terms would be under the agreement so he/she/they can then decide on whether or not to accept.

Worked examples are included in the appendices to aid this.

2. Q: Will secretaries need to work for 52 weeks of the year?/Are secretaries being made fulltime 52 week employees?

A: No, the agreement is based on no change to current hours so secretaries will continue to work the same hours as they are currently. They will not be made fulltime and are not being made public servants.

In the 2nd phase of implementation (after September 2022), those secretaries who have indicated that they wish to avail of the new terms and conditions will be offered an option to have the value of Jobseeker's Benefit from layoff periods covered in their salaries which will be spread over 52.18 weeks; further information on this will issue in due course.

3. Q: Can the school extend the hours of work currently undertaken by the school secretary?

A: No: the agreement is based on current working arrangements, which in turn is supported by the current funding available.



4. Q: Can a secretary move to the new Pay scale but retain their current annual leave allowance?

A: No, in order to move to the new terms and conditions the pay and annual leave in the agreement must apply.

5. Can a secretary retain sick leave provisions if superior to those being introduced in the agreement?

A: Yes, the sick leave provision introduced are a minimum but secretaries may retain the current sick leave provided by schools if superior.

6. Q: What arrangements should be put in place for new secretaries commencing September 2022?

A: As per paragraph 2.2 of the Circular, secretaries recruited in the future must be employed by schools on the new terms and conditions. The actual working hours / working weeks which the newly recruited secretary should be contracted to undertake should be based on the current working arrangements for the former secretary, in cases where a new secretary is being contracted to replace a former secretary.

In the small number of cases where an additional secretary is being recruited or a new school is hiring staff, the contracted working hours / weeks should be aligned with the funding which has been allocated to support the additional post.

7. Q: What point of the scale should secretaries appointed after 2021 be placed on?

A: Secretaries who were appointed in the school year 2021 - 2022 will be regarded, for the purposes of the Circular, as having been on point 1 of the incremental scale on the reference date of September 2021. The only exception is if they have relevant service from another school.



8. Q: Where should forms be returned to?

A: As per Appendix 4, a copy of the form is to be retained in the school and a copy provided to the secretary; there is currently no requirement to return the form to the Department. The Department advises that the retained copy may be requested in the future, as implementation work progresses.

9. Q: Appendix 1 School Secretary Pay scale is the pay scale for clerical officer grade III at the 01st of Oct 2021. A revised pay scale was issued on the 01st of Feb 2022 Circular 0005/2022, should it not be this pay scale that is to be used?

A: The agreement is retrospective to September 2021. On that basis, the first phase of implementation is to place the secretary on the correct point of scale, using the relevant pay scale which is that of 01st of Oct 2021. The second implementation phase will involve calculating back pay, taking into account the pay increases from February 2022 and October 2022, and/or any other public service pay agreements as may be relevant at the time calculations are performed.

10.Q: Does previous service as a school secretary in a different school count towards overall length of service?

A: Previous service as a school secretary in a different school may be considered.

11.Q: Does previous service as *[non secretary role, e.g. SNA / CO with local authority etc.]* count towards service as a secretary?

A: Previous service in a non-school secretary role is not relevant to these considerations: the two roles are distinct and separate, with significant differences in terms and conditions / rates of pay / contract arrangements.



12. Does the circular apply to all secretaries recruited by schools?

A: Once the school is in receipt of grant funding from the Department of Education that either fully or partially supports the cost of the secretaries then the secretary is included. If a secretary is entirely privately funded i.e. salary costs are not funded using grants received from the Department, they are not included. Please see Q19 for information on the verification process that will be undertaken by the Department.

13.Q: Does the Circular apply to part time secretaries?

A: Yes. In instances where a secretary is part-time, the provisions of the Circular apply on a 'pro-rata' basis.

14.Q: What happens in cases where an individual holds more than one contract (i.e. is contracted for part-time hours in more than one school?)

A: Each school is a separate employer; it will be a matter for each school to consider the contract it holds with the individual and to determine the appropriate rate of pay and leave which applies on the basis of that contract.

15.Q: Can a secretary elect to remain on their current terms and conditions?

A: Yes, the options 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.

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.



16.Q: Can you advise if both parts of Appendix 1 needs to be completed or just the back part if the secretary is not moving to the new terms and conditions.

A: As indicated in Section 3 of the Circular, schools should action point 4 and point 5 by September 2022. Appendix 4 is to be completed by the school, and a copy provided to the secretary. The secretary should complete Appendix 5 and provide a copy to the school.

17.Q: Our secretary currently has PSRA; can this arrangement continue?

A: The Department has no involvement in the administration of PSRAs.

18.Q: Are there pension provisions?

A: No, access to public service status or pensions is not part of the agreement.

19.Q: Is the Department going to provide additional funding to support the implementation of the agreement?

A: Further information will be provided in due course. In the 2nd phase of implementation (after September 2022), the Department will gather relevant information in order to carry out verification and calculate back pay etc.

Verification will involve ensuring that assimilation has been implemented correctly based on the pay that applied on 1 September 2021. Evidence such as payroll or revenue data may be sought.

20.Q: Where a secretary works additional hours, how will these be paid?

A: This is not part of the agreement so would remain between school and secretary as it currently is. Phase 2 of implementation will require consideration as to how this may be managed in the context of a payroll system. The issue may need to be considered for when the cohort move to a payroll system.



21. How are flexible hours incorporated into this agreement?

A: This is not covered under the terms of the agreement and remains a matter to be determined between the employer and the secretary.

22. Q: Is the max working days/weeks for a new school secretary therefore capped in line with school opening?

A: The agreement is based on the secretary's hours remaining the same. Please refer to Question 4 for further information.

23. Q Can a secretary retiring this summer avail of the back pay?

A: Yes, the effective date is 1 September 2021 and secretaries who worked from that date can avail of the agreement for the period.

Schools should complete appendix 4 and 5 and retain. Data will be sought under phase 2 and the relevant information on retired secretaries can be submitted at that point.

24. Q. Is there a mandatory retirement age?

A: There is no mandatory retirement age in this phase.