



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Schoolbooks Grant

## Guidance for Primary and Special Schools 2024/25

Last updated May 2024

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## Foreword from Minister Foley

In Budget 2023, I was delighted to secure agreement at Government level on a landmark new scheme that provided, for the first time ever, free schoolbooks for all children and young people enrolled in all recognised primary schools, including special schools.



I believe strongly that as both individuals and as a society, education is one of our most powerful tools. It can ensure that no dream is too big, no ambition too great.

By providing our primary school children and young people with free schoolbooks, we are enhancing their educational experience, not just in the classroom but reaching out into the family home.

This ground-breaking, permanent measure eases some of the financial burden facing families with the back-to-school costs.

It ensures equity of opportunity in education, where all pupils are supported to fulfil their potential and reflects the importance this Government places on education. It benefits children and young people, across every county in Ireland.

Resourcing our primary schools and our special schools to provide schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and related classroom resources will ensure that all children and young people have, at a minimum, the schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks they need for each school year. I appreciate that the continued implementation and maintenance of this scheme requires significant co-operation from our school leaders, boards of management and staff. I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your work in this regard.

This guidance was originally developed in advance of the 2023/24 school year to assist primary schools and special schools to implement the scheme. It has since been reviewed to assist schools as they continue the scheme into the 2024/25 and subsequent years, with the assistance of the education partners and other key stakeholders, including schoolbook publishers and schoolbook shops and schoolbook suppliers, primary management bodies, unions, the National Parents Council and Barnardos and St Vincent De Paul. I would like to note my gratitude to all partners for their work on these guidelines.

Norma Foley TD  
Minister for Education  
May 2024

# 1. Introduction

The cost of preparing children and young people for back to school each year can be a challenging and worrying time for many families who are under increased financial pressure to provide the range of items required for the return to school. One of the significant outlays is the cost of providing schoolbooks and related classroom resources.

This guidance is designed to support primary and special school leaders in administering the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme. It should help to answer any questions about the scheme and support school planning for the 2024/25 school year and for future years.

This new scheme was first introduced for the 2023/24 school year and is designed to remove the cost from families of funding schoolbooks for children and young people in primary and special schools. Parents/Guardians will no longer be required to make any contribution towards the cost of schoolbooks, including the cost of any workbooks and copybooks. Where the funding allows, related classroom resources may also be provided by schools under the scheme. Schools will communicate with parents/guardians in relation to the scope of the scheme in their school each year.

Schools are assured that the scheme is a multiannual scheme.

As the scheme is now implemented in every recognised primary and special school it is expected that schools have used the funding provided to purchase stocks of schoolbooks and other resources (such as calculators) which are now available for re-use in the 2024/25 and in future school years. The funding allocated to the scheme in the 2024/25 school year takes account of this and is calculated to build on existing stocks and provide sufficient funding for additional schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks.

## 2. Benefits for parents/guardians

The main benefit for parents/guardians is that the cost of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks will be borne by the State. Parents/Guardians will also have peace of mind that their child will have the same schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks as all other children and young people in their class.

All schoolbooks purchased by schools under the scheme will remain the property of the school and will be provided on loan to pupils for the school year.

The Department has produced an information leaflet for parents/guardians which is published at [www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes](http://www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes) and has been emailed to all primary schools.

Schools should circulate this information leaflet to all families with children entering or currently attending the school.

### **3. Benefits for primary schools and special schools**

Providing funding directly to schools to purchase schoolbooks and related classroom resources for children and young people has many benefits for primary schools and special schools.

Primary schools and special schools will retain the discretion to implement the curriculum by choosing the schoolbooks and resources that best meet the needs of their children and young people.

All children and young people will now start the school year having a full set of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks. Where the funding allows some schools may also be in a position to provide additional classroom resources (see section 4.3 on additional classroom resources).

Primary schools and special schools that previously operated book rental schemes will no longer need to organise for the collection of book rental charges from parents/guardians of pupils.

Schools may be able to achieve cost savings by purchasing in bulk and by re-using schoolbooks in future years.

Schools will also own the schoolbooks and they will be provided on loan to pupils for the school year. This means that schools will not usually need to buy a complete new set of schoolbooks each year.

## **4. Scope of the scheme**

### **4.1 Use of grant by schools**

Schools will have discretion in how the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme grant funding is used on the understanding that it eliminates the overall cost for parents/guardians of schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and, where possible, additional classroom resources.

It is essential that timely information is made available to teachers for the efficient administration of the scheme. In this regard, class lists need to be made available to teachers as early as possible to enable them to quantify their book requirements/lists for the next school year.

### **4.2 Schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks**

At a minimum the scheme will provide schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks for all children and young people enrolled in recognised primary schools and special schools. It will eliminate the cost of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks for parents/guardians of children and young people enrolled in these schools.

Thereafter the grant should be used to eliminate costs of additional classroom resources such as pens, pencils and erasers.

Any surplus grant can be used to purchase shared books, audiobooks and other material to increase the literacy (in English, Irish or other languages) and numeracy resources in a school. Alternatively, the surplus grant can be carried forward to the next school year. Schools should consider the need to replace or purchase large quantities of new schoolbooks in the following year when deciding how to use any surplus grant in the current year.

Parents/Guardians will not be asked to purchase or to make a contribution to the school towards the cost of schoolbooks, workbooks or copybooks.



### 4.3 Additional classroom resources

The Department does not propose to provide a prescriptive list of all items to be included by schools under 'additional classroom resources'. It is expected that such items will differ from school to school.

For the main part, this will refer to the resources a pupil will require to carry out curricular based literacy and numeracy schoolwork and should include, where funding permits, such items as pencils, pens, erasers, sharpeners, colouring pencils and whiteboard markers. For pupils in more senior classes, such resources may also include dictionaries, mathematical sets and calculators.

Additional classroom resources may also include, where funding permits, items provided by primary schools and special schools where a charge was previously levied on parents/guardians, for example, art materials and photocopying.

Additional classroom resources does not include any items currently provided in primary and special schools though existing funding streams, either from the Department of Education or from other Departments and agencies.

If, in Year 2 and in subsequent years of the scheme, schools are unable to cover the cost of all additional classroom resources from within the grant funding, they must communicate with parents/guardians and inform them of the additional classroom resources which are not covered under the scheme. A draft communication to parents/guardians is available at **Appendix 1**.

### 4.4 Shared books, audiobooks and other material to increase the literacy and numeracy resources in schools

The Department acknowledges that a library of books, audiobooks and other material to increase the literacy (in English, Irish or other languages) and numeracy resources in a school, can play an important part in a school's teaching and learning. In certain circumstances therefore, the book grant may be used to purchase such resources. Funding should only be used for this purpose where all other schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and additional classroom resources costs have been met for the school year. It is a school's priority to ensure that costs for these items are, in so far as possible, eliminated for families. Where surplus grant remains, a school has the discretion to purchase such literacy and numeracy resources for the school's use.

Schools should consider the need to replace or purchase large quantities of new schoolbooks in the following year when deciding how to use any surplus grant in the current school year.

Schools are assured that funding will issue to schools each year to maintain this scheme and will be at a level deemed sufficient to provide, at minimum, the necessary schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks.

## **4.5 Special schools and special classes in primary schools**

### **4.5.1 Children and young people enrolled in primary programmes in primary schools and in special schools**

The Department recognises that in some circumstances children and young people enrolled in special schools and in special classes in mainstream primary schools may not use schoolbooks and/or workbooks or copybooks or may require a broader range of schoolbooks and resources, including audiobooks alongside text versions of schoolbooks, to meet their educational needs.

The main aim of the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme is to eliminate the costs of providing schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks to parents/guardians. When this has been realised by special schools and for special classes in mainstream primary schools, any surplus grant may be used to provide related classroom resources. Special schools and primary schools operating special classes are best placed to identify related classroom resources required for their individual setting and to meet the learning needs of their children and young people.

### **4.5.2 Children and young people enrolled in Junior Cycle programmes in special schools**

Special schools that have children and young people enrolled in Junior Cycle programmes will receive the per capita rate allocated to post-primary schools in respect of each student enrolled in Junior Cycle programmes. Details of the funding for the 2024/25 school year is set out in the guidance for the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme which is published at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5652a-schoolbooks-scheme-for-junior-cycle-in-post-primary-schools/>

The Department recognises that in some circumstances students enrolled in Junior Cycle programmes in special schools may not use schoolbooks or classroom

resources as set out in the guidance. Special schools are best placed to identify additional classroom resources required for their individual setting and to meet the learning needs of their students. A broader range of schoolbooks and classroom resources may be required in these settings to meet the educational needs of the students, including the need to provide an audio version of a schoolbook alongside the text version of the book or resource to allow students to access a more individualised curriculum.

The main aim of the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme is to eliminate the costs of providing schoolbooks and core classroom resources to parents/guardians. When this has been realised for students in Junior Cycle programmes in special schools, any surplus book grant funding may be used to provide additional classroom resources as detailed in the guidance for the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme.

## **4.6 Surplus funding**

After the costs of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks, as set out in this guidance, have been met for all pupils, any remaining grant funding can be carried forward to the next school year.

Schools should be aware that a scheme of free schoolbooks for pupils will operate in 2025/26.

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## 5. Funding Arrangements

### 5.1 Allocation to schools

The per capita funding to be provided for 2024/25 is as follows;

Rate per capita €80 (all primary schools and special schools) in respect of pupils enrolled in primary programmes.

Rate per capita €309 in respect of students enrolled in Junior Cycle programmes (special schools only)

Please note that the above rates are applicable to the 2024/25 school year only.

The Department will publish an updated rate in advance of each new school year and communicate the rate to all primary and special schools under this scheme. The rate will also be published alongside this guidance at ([www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes](http://www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes)) in advance of the payment of funding each year.

Special schools that have students enrolled in Junior Cycle programmes will have received a per capita rate of €309 in respect of each student for the 2024/25 school year.

### 5.2 Payment of grant

It is envisaged that the book grant for the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme will be paid to schools in early May so that schools will have the necessary funding in place to implement the scheme in advance of the commencement of the 2024/25 school year.

The grant will be calculated based on validated September 2023 enrolment figures.

#### Worked example of funding provided under the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme 2024/25

On 30 September 2023 School A has 240 pupils enrolled.

The total grant that will be paid to this school in spring 2024 for the 2024/25 school year in respect of these 240 students is €19,200.

A full breakdown of how the scheme is applied over the full duration of a primary pupil's attendance in a primary school **see Appendix 5**.

Therefore, each year, any change an increase or decrease in enrolment figures since the previous year will be captured in the next year's grant funding. It is important to be assured that, on this basis, funding is provided for each pupil for the full duration of their primary school lifecycle. In other words, where funding is based on the previous September enrolment data this means that each pupil will be included for funding for the total years that they remain in the school.

### 5.2.1 Additional enrolments

Please note that for year 2, and subsequent years, of this scheme, **schools will be expected to absorb the cost of additional enrolments which occur within the normal course of fluctuations which take place throughout any given year in all schools.** Schools will *not* receive additional funding for any increase to enrolments which might be considered in the normal operation of the school in the same way that schools who experience a decrease in enrolments since the previous September will not be asked to refund any excess grant funding where they experience a decrease in enrolments in a given year (with the exception of Developing Schools: see Developing Schools section of this guidance). Funding will, as outlined above, balance out to match enrolments year on year. See **Appendix 5** for a worked example of how the grant funding is calculated.

It is planned that the book grant will be paid in April each year so that the funding is in place to implement the scheme in advance of the commencement of the following school year.

## 5.3 Primary schools, including special schools under the patronage of Education and Training Boards (ETBs)

Book grants will issue directly to the relevant ETB.

## 5.4 Developing schools

The Department recognises a specific number of schools as developing schools. These are schools that have newly opened since September 2017 and have significantly increased their enrolment size each year.

An initial payment of the book grant will be made to all primary schools that have developing school status in April each year and this will be calculated based on the previous September's validated enrolment data.

When developing schools have provided the Department with projected enrolment data for the September to which the funding is applicable, and where this enrolment projection shows an increase from the validated enrolment of the previous September, a "top up" book grant payment will issue.

Where the validated September enrolments are less than the projected September enrolments developing schools will be required to return the excess schoolbook grant to the Department. Schools in this situation should email [primaryschoolbooks@education.gov.ie](mailto:primaryschoolbooks@education.gov.ie) for instructions and bank details for making the repayment.

#### **Worked example of additional funding provided to developing schools under Primary Schoolbooks Scheme 2024/25**

A school with developing school status has 150 pupils enrolled on 30 September 2023. The book grant will issue in April 2024 in respect of 150 pupils. The school projects September 2024 enrolments of 180 pupils. A top-up book grant will issue in respect of 30 pupils.

## **5.5 Exceptional circumstances**

Like many grants, the payment structure for this grant is such that funding is paid to schools in advance of the coming school year and is therefore based on the previous September's validated enrolment figures.

Any increase or decrease in enrolment figures since the previous year will be captured in the next year's grant funding. It is important to be assured that, on this basis, funding is provided for each pupil for the full duration of their enrolment in the school.

While pupils who enrol in junior infants in the 2024/25 school year are not captured for Primary Schoolbooks Scheme in 2024/25 (as it is based on validated enrolment on 30 September 2023) they are counted for the grant for the 2031/32 school year.

This is when they will have completed primary school and will most likely be in post-primary.

Schools will be expected, for the main part, to absorb the cost of additional enrolments that occur within the normal course of fluctuations which take place throughout any given year in all schools. Schools will not receive additional funding for any increase to enrolments which might be considered in the normal operation of the school. Schools that experience a decrease in enrolments since the previous September will not be asked to refund any excess grant funding (with the exception of developing schools: see section 5.4). Funding will, as outlined above, balance and will be accounted for year on year.

In certain and limited circumstances, however, where a school enrolls a large number of new pupils after 30 September and where funding was not originally allocated to take account of these pupils, the school may contact the Department to make an application for additional funding. As a general rule, an additional payment will only be made by the Department in situations where the number of new pupils enrolled after 30 September is equal to or greater than 10% of the 30 September enrolment figure or greater than 15 pupils, and where the school has insufficient Schoolbooks Scheme funding to meet the additional costs.

Schools that wish to apply for additional funding under “exceptional circumstances” should email [primaryschoolbooks@education.gov.ie](mailto:primaryschoolbooks@education.gov.ie) setting out the detail of the additional enrolments.

Such applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## 5.6 Administration support grant

In recognition of the work associated with implementing this scheme and successfully maintaining it into Year 2 the Department of Education has, again, put in place a grant payment, for schools, for administrative support in year two of the scheme.

The ongoing requirement for this grant in years after the 2024/25 school year will be kept under review. Any change to the Administration Support Grant after 2024/25 will be communicated to all primary and special schools and will be published in the scheme guidance.

This grant can be used to employ a person/s to work for a specified number of days to carry out administrative work on the scheme. The daily rate sanctioned by the

Department for this work is €160.62 for 2024 which includes holiday pay. The Department will provide an additional 11.05% to cover the employer PRSI cost. The payment must be processed by the school as it would the payment of any person carrying out work for, or in, the school.

Although the rate is based on a daily rate, schools have the autonomy to use the equivalent hours over the course of the school year as they consider most suitable for their needs.

The specific duties are to be determined by the school management but can include placing orders with schoolbook shops and suppliers, checking delivery of orders from schoolbook shops and suppliers, covering schoolbooks, preparing and tracking sets of schoolbooks and classroom resources for individual classes/pupils, liaising with schoolbook shops and suppliers and classroom teachers.

**Appendix 2** contains a list of some of the key tasks involved in the implementation of the scheme at school level. This is not an exhaustive list and will differ from school to school

The person/s paid for this work can be an existing member of staff of the school/ETB such as: the principal/deputy principal, a teacher, a special needs assistant (SNA), the school secretary, an ETB head office staff member or an individual deemed suitable by the school management to carry out this role effectively.

Where a school does not require this grant for the payment of a person/s they may use it for other administrative purposes related to the scheme such as cost of storage, covering of schoolbooks, purchasing of labelling or tracking items or for unforeseen costs such as schoolbooks or classrooms resources for newly enrolled pupils during the year.

The number of days allocated are based on the enrolment size of the school and are as follows;

Size of School (enrolment September 2023)	No of Days
0-100	3
101-300	4
301-599	6
>600	7



The ongoing requirement for administrative support will be kept under review after each year of the scheme.

For developing schools, the Administration Support Grant will be calculated based on projected enrolment figures for the September of the school year to which the grant refers.

The Administration Support Grant will be paid separately to the schoolbook grant and will issue to primary schools before the end of June each year.

A school can opt out of receipt of this grant payment by emailing [primaryschoolbooks@education.gov.ie](mailto:primaryschoolbooks@education.gov.ie) before 31 May each year.

## 6. Administration of the scheme

### 6.1 Key principles

The board of management/ETB will be responsible for ensuring the effective administration of the scheme within the following key principles:

- Schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks will be chosen to support the implementation of the teaching and learning in the school and the provision of an appropriate, modern and stimulating curriculum to children and young people.
- All children and young people will have access to free schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and where possible, some related classroom resources.
- While schoolbooks remain the property of the school, children and young people should be allowed to bring schoolbooks home in order to complete homework or to allow parents/guardians stay connected with their child's learning in school.
- No costs for schoolbooks, workbooks or copybooks will be sought from parents/guardians.
- Parents/Guardians will not be asked to purchase schoolbooks, workbooks or copybooks.

### 6.2 Selection of schoolbooks and workbooks

Primary schools and special schools will continue to have autonomy to choose schoolbooks and related classroom resources that meet curricular requirements. In the case of special classes in primary schools, they have autonomy to choose resources that meet the learning needs of the pupils.

**A school's policy on the selection of schoolbooks should include the careful consideration of the need for schoolbooks and/or workbooks, the criteria used in selecting schoolbooks and a commitment to keeping a schoolbook on the booklist for a specified period of time.**

Schools are reminded of the importance of recycling and sustainability and are asked to consider this in their selection of workbooks, which are generally not reusable.

## 6.3 Digital devices

Funding under the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme does not extend to including the purchase of digital devices by schools. However, schools may use the funding for digital media support, which relates to teaching and learning within curricular requirements.

Decisions regarding the use of digital technology, such as ebooks, in schools is a matter for the board of management/ETB of each school. Schools are advised to consult with members of the school community including parents/guardians when planning for the introduction of digital technologies, with cost and other implications being fully considered.

You can access advice on the use of digital media at:  
<http://www.pdst.ie/DistanceLearning/DigitalLibraries> and,  
<https://www.pdst.ie/distancelearning/othersources>

## 6.4 Resources that support the teaching of Irish

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) compiles a list annually which provides up-to-date information on publications and teaching materials that support the teaching of Irish and the teaching of other subjects through the medium of Irish in primary schools. This list can be accessed on [www.cogg.ie](http://www.cogg.ie). COGG also organises workshops and exhibitions from time to time to inform teachers about the material available for Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools. This information can be very valuable when decisions are being made on possible schoolbooks for individual subjects/class groups.

## 6.5 Early ordering of books and resources

It can take time for orders to be fulfilled and delivered to schools. It is important that class teachers decide as early as possible what schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and additional resources are required by their pupils to allow sufficient time for ordering and delivery. The board of management/ETB and school management need to ensure that all practical tasks relating to the administration of the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme are concluded in time for the beginning of the new school year. Some of these key tasks involved are outlined in **Appendix 2**.

Schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and classroom resources can be stored in classrooms or any other area of the school as deemed suitable over the summer

period. Schoolbooks used in rental schemes generally have a life span of three to five years.

Schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and where possible, related classroom resources should be distributed to pupils at the beginning of the school year. Name tags/barcodes (where used) should be placed on each book in advance.

Schoolbooks and workbooks remain the property of the school and children, young people and their parents/guardians should be reminded of schoolbook care and maintenance throughout the school year.

At the end of the school year schoolbooks should be collected and checked. Damaged schoolbooks should be repaired if possible.

## 6.6 Ownership

**All schoolbooks remain the property of the school and are provided on loan to pupils.** Schoolbooks can consist of both new and second-hand schoolbooks. Pupils should retain schoolbooks for one school year, at the end of which, they must be returned to the school.

While schoolbooks remain the property of the school, pupils should be allowed to bring schoolbooks home in order to complete homework or to allow parents/guardians to stay connected with their child's learning in school.

Where a child leaves the school during the school year the schoolbooks must be returned to the school.

## 6.7 Deposits, lost and damaged books

Parents must not be charged any type of deposit to participate in the scheme.

Where schoolbooks and/or workbooks are lost or damaged beyond repair, parents must not be charged for replacements.

## 6.8 Reduce waste

As far as possible, schools should make every effort to reduce wastage under the scheme. Schools are expected to adopt a cost-conscious and an environment conscious approach to the selection of schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and related classroom resources.

It is strongly recommended that a cover is placed on all schoolbooks. Schoolbook shops and suppliers may provide a book-covering service at a cost or a school may decide to provide its own book-covering service or consider requesting parents/guardians to assist with this task.

Parents/Guardians should be reminded that children and young people are expected to mind their schoolbooks and keep them in good condition during the year.

## 6.9 Communication with parents/guardians

Primary and special schools are required to communicate as early as possible each year with parents/guardians in relation to the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme. This is to ensure all parents/guardians are fully aware of the scheme and parents/guardians do not incur any unnecessary expenditure before the start of each new school year.

The communication with parents/guardians **should solely reference the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme for children and young people enrolled in recognised primary and special schools**. To avoid any confusion the communication should not include reference to any other fees or charges levied on parents/guardians by the school, for example, fees for extra-curricular school activities or voluntary contributions. Where they exist, other fees and charges should be covered in a separate communication from schools to parents/guardians.

Parents/Guardians must be informed of the additional classroom resources covered by the school under the scheme for the school year in question.

Where additional classroom resources are required but cannot be covered under the scheme, parents/guardians must be advised of how these items will be provided. Schools should either provide parents/guardians with a list of the specific items that they are required to purchase or provide them with information of the fee that the school will charge and a list of items that the school will provide for this fee. A draft communication to parents/guardians is available at **Appendix 1**.

Parents/guardians must also be informed of the arrangements in place for the distribution of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks to pupils.

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## 7. Procurement

Schools have obligations that stem from both EU and national public procurement rules when sourcing goods and services.

Schools have access to the Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services published by the Office of Government Procurement (OGP). These Guidelines promote best practice and consistency of application of the public procurement rules in relation to the purchase of goods and services. The guidelines are available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c23f5-public-procurement-guidelines-for-goods-and-services/>

The Office of Government Procurement also aims to promote schemes to facilitate Small and Medium sized Enterprise (SME) participation in Public Procurement. DPER Circular 05/2023 refers to initiatives to assist SMEs in Public Procurement and outlines the schemes which schools may consider as part of their procurement process. It can be accessed here <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/9e7bf-circular-05-2023-initiatives-to-assist-smes-in-public-procurement/>.

Schools can use the Office of Government Procurement Office Supplies Framework for stationery requirements (<https://buyerzone.gov.ie/> or contact the helpdesk at [support@ogp.gov.ie](mailto:support@ogp.gov.ie)). Some items which may be required by schools under this scheme are listed on the framework and schools are encouraged to engage the services of the Office Supplies Framework which aims to achieve value for money on the items included on the framework.

Further information and assistance on accessing the OGP Office Supplies Framework as well as a summary of procurement thresholds is set out at **Appendix 4**.

Additional information and supports have been produced to assist schools in determining their own procurement obligations and requirements. These are available on <https://www.spu.ie/schoolbooks-scheme/>.

### 7.1 Schools procurement unit

The Schools Procurement Unit (SPU) is the central support resource for providing guidance to all recognised primary schools, including special schools, and post-primary schools (except ETB schools) on any procurement-related issue. The SPU delivers free advice and practical support to schools to help them achieve improvements in their procurement processes, practices and outcomes. The Unit

has produced Guidance for Schools on Good Procurement Practices which is available at; <https://www.spu.ie/schoolbooks-scheme/>.

The guidance does not place any additional responsibilities upon schools that are not already in legislation. They offer guidance for schools on ways to satisfy their obligations to the OGP guidelines and the legislation which governs public procurement in Ireland when sourcing goods and services.

The SPU has a dedicated webpage containing procurement support for the Junior Cycle schoolbooks scheme and the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme, see <https://www.spu.ie/schoolbooks-scheme/>.

In 2024 many of these supports were specifically developed around the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme. This procurement information is also relevant for primary and special schools.

## **7.2 Primary schools, including special schools under the patronage of Education and Training Boards (ETBs)**

These schools are supported in their procurement activity by their local ETB.

## **7.3 Green public procurement**

The public sector has a vital role to play in leading Ireland's transition to a sustainable and carbon-neutral economy and society. Public procurement is one of the primary ways in which public bodies will help to shape this transition, and to meet the 2030 targets for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and improving energy efficiency.

The Green Public Procurement Guidance for the Public Sector provides step-by-step instructions and criteria for implementing green public procurement (GPP), in line with Irish and EU policy and legislation. All tenders using public funds must include green public procurement (GPP).

The guidance is available at: <https://www.epa.ie/publications/circular-economy/resources/GPP-Guidance-for-the-Irish-Public-Sector.pdf>

A green criteria search tool developed by the OGP and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is also available which allows users to search for specific green criteria in relation to a particular item which they are buying. One of the main

subcategories that schools review is the “Paper products and printing services” green criteria. The tool can be accessed here: <https://gppcriteria.gov.ie/>.

## 7.4 Annual booklists

Annual booklists should continue to be compiled by primary and special schools arising from the decisions of class teachers and school management based on the requirements of the school. These should be maintained for audit purposes.

Annual book lists should be available for schoolbook publishers, to aid the publishers in their yearly planning process and to ensure that any associated teacher resource materials and appropriate licences are provided to the school.

Please note that book publishers will require proof of purchase in order to provide teacher resources that accompany schoolbooks. Any cost associated with acquiring a teacher resource, where a school does not need to purchase the accompanying textbook, is a matter for schoolbook publishers to determine. Schools will need to consider this and clarify with respective suppliers when budgeting and ordering each year.

## 7.5 Template for quotations where total contract is under €50,000 (exclusive of VAT)

The Department engaged with a range of stakeholders when developing this scheme, including Bookselling Ireland. One of the key issues identified by bookshops is the lack of a standardised process used by schools to obtain quotations from bookshops. This results in increased time required by bookshops to respond to requests for quotations.

Contracts under €50,000 (exclusive of VAT) may be awarded on the basis of written quotations from three suppliers.

Where the total value of a contract is less than €50,000 (ex VAT), the use of a standard template by schools will assist to streamline the process whereby schools obtain three quotations. The template is available at the following link: <https://www.spu.ie/schoolbooks-scheme/>. While schools are not obliged to use this template, it is considered beneficial to both schools and suppliers to increase efficiency in the procurement process where the total value of the contract is less than €50,000 (ex VAT).



## 7.6 Irish Education Publishers Association (IEPA) code of practice

The main Irish educational publishers have agreed to apply a code of practice designed to help reduce the cost of schoolbooks for parents/guardians and schools. As part of this code, publishers have given commitments to maintain new editions of schoolbooks in print for a minimum of six years, to co-operate with individual schools in the development of schoolbook schemes and to have improved engagement with school communities, parents/guardians, teachers, and other stakeholders. **See Appendix 4.**

## 7.7 Irish Copyright Licensing Agency

In Ireland, books, magazines, journals, digital publications and websites are protected by Irish copyright law, and that law applies to everyone.

It is mandatory for any educational establishment wishing to make multiple copies of a variety of copyright-protected works to have a licence. Therefore, when a teacher wants to provide copies of content from a website or a book or magazine for their students, they need permission to do so. As of September 2022, the Department of Education holds a central Educational Licence on behalf of all primary and post-primary schools recognised in the Free Education Scheme. This allows schools to re-use content in lessons without having to clear permissions to do so.

Further detail of what schools are permitted to use under the schools license is provided at the following link <https://www.icla.ie/licences/primary-and-post-primary-schools-licences>.

## 7.8 Schoolbook shops and schoolbook suppliers

In the past, many parents/guardians purchased schoolbooks directly from schoolbook shops and schoolbook suppliers over a number of months. Schoolbook shops, schoolbook suppliers and suppliers of classroom resources for pupils with special educational needs will now engage directly with a number of schools in relation to the scheme. Such shops and suppliers may now be required to process large orders from a number of schools, including post-primary schools implementing the new Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme.

In order to ensure a smooth implementation of the scheme, schools are requested to continue to finalise their booklists, tender requests and other requirements for the following September as early as possible to ensure that schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks are available, delivered to schools and provided to pupils in advance of the new school year.

Schools must follow public procurement guidelines (**see Appendix 3**).

It is planned that funding will be disbursed in April each year to facilitate both prompt ordering from, and prompt payment to, schoolbook shops and schoolbook suppliers.

It is accepted that there are certain circumstances where some schools may need to place orders after the start of the new school year, for example, where there is a requirement to purchase additional books or resources. Schools are encouraged to pay for all items purchased under this scheme as early as possible following delivery and checking of the items.

## 8. Financial management

### 8.1 Financial administration

Proper financial management procedures need to be applied at all times to the funding provided to schools under the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme. The schoolbook funding is ring-fenced for schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and additional classroom resources. Transactions in relation to the scheme should be identified as such in the schools accounts.

If schools have surplus grant under the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme at the end of the school year such funding may be carried forward into the following school year. It is important that schools consider their requirements to replace schoolbooks or purchase new schoolbooks in the following year when deciding how to use any surplus grant.

As with all Exchequer grant aid, school authorities must be able to provide detailed records on how funding, provided under this scheme, was spent. All expenditure in connection with the scheme must be vouched and schools must be able to prove that expenditure was used on the purchase of materials allowed under the scheme.

Invoices and receipts must be retained for the purposes of potential audit/inspection by the Department, the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) / Internal Audit Unit-ETBs as appropriate and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General. It is necessary for schools to retain, on school grounds, booklists, and details of quotations received, invoices, receipts and any other relevant records in respect of all expenditure for a period of seven years.

All schools, or ETBs if applicable, will be provided with an income and expenditure report to be completed in order for outputs from the scheme to be determined, This will issue to schools in due course. Return of this report is a requirement for all schools.

If a school closes permanently, any balance held in the account must be surrendered to the Department on the date that the school ceases operation. Where a school closes permanently, due to an amalgamation, any balance held in the account shall transfer to the new school.

The Department reserves the right to recoup funding issued from other grant funding for non-compliance with any of the terms of this scheme. Schools must ensure compliance with [DPER Circular 13/2014](#), Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds.

## 8.2 Financial support services unit (FSSU)

In accordance with Department Circular 60/2017 *Roll out and operation of the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) at Primary Level*, the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) provides advice and support to Primary and Special schools in financial governance. This circular can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/61f0c1b613f241329c11673e95ee681a/>.

This includes standardising arrangements for compliance with accounting requirements under Section 18 of the Education Act 1998 and enhancing current financial support structures for schools. The FSSU also supports boards of management in meeting their compliance requirements to other regulatory and statutory bodies. The FSSU has produced guidance to assist schools with their accounting requirements. It can be accessed at the following link;

<https://www.fssu.ie/primary/>.

Schools may be subject to audit by the FSSU as part of its ongoing programme of work in supporting schools on financial governance matters and enabling them to comply with the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

Funding to ETB schools may be subject to audit by the Internal Audit Unit-ETBs.

## 9. Scheme evaluation

The Department carried out an evaluation of the scheme in a sample of primary schools and special schools in year one (2023/24 school year). Schools selected for the evaluation were required to submit a return of information relating to administration and financial aspects of the scheme to the Department. In order to fully and accurately assess the ongoing requirements of the scheme it will be necessary to further evaluate the scheme in future years or periodically.

**To facilitate this all primary and special schools will be required to complete and submit an income and expenditure report in respect of the scheme.** The Department will communicate with schools over the coming period in relation to the income and expenditure report. Schools will be required to co-operate with the process.

The ongoing evaluation of the scheme may also involve selecting a sample of schools to participate in additional evaluation measures.

Schools selected for any future evaluation will be informed in advance and will be required to co-operate with the process. The evaluation will aim to, among other things:

- review the operation of the scheme, including compliance with relevant legislation, Circulars and the scheme guidance;
- identify possible improvements to the operation of the scheme;
- review expenditure under the scheme;
- consider measures to improve efficiency for future years;
- assess the wider impacts of the scheme in relation to (1) reducing the cost of education to households (2) removing barriers to education for some students (3) promoting value for money, such as, through joint procurement at school-level (4) promoting environmental and cost efficiency through the reuse of books and where appropriate other resources.

The views of school management, teachers, parents/guardians and students, schoolbook publishers, schoolbook shops and other relevant stakeholders will be considered in the development of any evaluation.

**NOTE:** It is essential that schools retain all documentation pertaining to the scheme including proof of compliance with EU and national procurement rules, and details of all items purchased under the scheme to ensure valid information is provided to the evaluation process.

## **10. Review of this guidance**

Any updates carried out to the original scheme guidelines have been conducted as a result of the year one evaluation and in collaboration with all stakeholders.

These guidelines may be reviewed from time to time as required. Any review will be notified to schools and education partners.

## 11. Queries

All queries on this guidance or in relation to the primary schoolbook scheme should be sent to [primaryschoolbooks@education.gov.ie](mailto:primaryschoolbooks@education.gov.ie).

The Department has produced a Quick Reference Guide for schools to assist with general queries on the scheme. It can be accessed at:  
[www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes](http://www.gov.ie/schoolbookschemes)

## Appendix 1 – Draft communication

Draft communication to parents/guardians of pupils enrolled in recognised primary schools and special schools (amend as appropriate)

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As you may know Minister for Education Norma Foley TD commenced the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme in September 2023 which provides schoolbooks, including workbooks and copybooks, for all children and young people in primary and special schools. This scheme will eliminate the cost to parents/guardians of providing these resources each year.

For the 2024/25 school year funding is being provided directly to primary schools and special schools by the Department to implement the scheme and schools have responsibility for providing schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks to all children and young people at the start of the school year.

All schoolbooks will remain the property of the school so that schoolbooks can be reused in future years. Schoolbooks will be provided on loan to children and young people for the duration of the school year and must be returned to school at the end of the school year.

Parents/Guardians are requested to remind their children and young people to take care of their schoolbooks and keep them in good condition during the year. It is not permitted to write on schoolbooks.

\*For the 2024/25 school year all related classroom resources will also be provided by the school and parents/guardians are not asked to purchase any items or pay a fee towards these items.

\*For the 2024/25 school year parents/guardians will be required to purchase certain additional classroom resources/\*pay a fee of (insert amount) towards the purchase of additional classroom resources. Please find attached a list of items which you are required to purchase before the start of the school year/\*please find attached a list of items which will be provided to your child at a fee of xx.

*\*delete as appropriate*

Yours sincerely

Chair of BoM



## Appendix 2 – School task list

- Compile booklist received from each individual class teacher and related classroom resources required for each class
- Establish, and list, the total number of schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks that need to be purchased
- Establish budget breakdown
- Determine what related classroom resources will be covered by the grant
- Adhere to public procurement guidelines including seeking and receiving the required number of quotes from schoolbook shops and suppliers and adhering to advertising and tendering requirements where applicable
- Decide on a supplier(s) for schoolbooks, workbooks, copybooks and any related classroom resources being provided and place order/s
- Furnish schoolbook publishers with details to satisfy requirements for digital supports such as proof of purchase of schoolbooks to obtain eBook licences or teacher resources
- Ensure all the necessary teaching resources/copyrights are provided by the relevant publishers
- Liaise with shops and suppliers in relation to any issues
- Check all invoices against orders
- Check stock delivered against orders/invoices
- Arrange a suitable place to store stock
- Arrange for payment to issue to shops and suppliers in a timely manner
- Arrange for a cover to be placed on schoolbooks to help extend their lifespan
- Ensure that there is an adequate system in place to catalogue schoolbooks for example label/barcode/scanner system
- Sort schoolbooks and related classroom resources by class grouping and within classes as appropriate
- Ensure all the necessary teaching resources/copyrights are provided by the relevant publishers
- Maintain financial records
- Communicate with parents/guardians in relation to Primary Schoolbooks Scheme
- Compile a mandatory income and expenditure report and return it to the Department
- Cooperate with the Department if selected to participate in the evaluation of the scheme
- As required during the year, order additional stock (both schoolbooks and related classroom resources)
- Organise for the return of schoolbooks and other reusable resources, such as calculators, from children at the end of each year

## Appendix 3 – Procurement Requirements

The Office of Government Procurement (OGP) is one of five Central Purchasing Bodies in Ireland. This means it can put together procurement arrangements for a group of public sector bodies (PSBs). A framework is one of the procurement arrangements used between one or more contracting authority and one or more supplier.

The Office Supplies Framework is designed with a number of geographical lots to allow more suppliers gain access to public sector business.

Schools can register to access the OGP Buyerzone for full information about this Office Supplies framework. The Buyerzone is accessible to Public Sector Bodies only. It holds all the information about procurement arrangements that PSBs can use.

Public Sector Bodies sign up to the lot in which their offices/buildings are located.

Each school should chose the geographical lot in which their school is located. On the Buyerzone, you will find associated documentation which will explain, in detail;

- How to use the framework on the user guide document (by completing Notification to Activate Goods Form or NAGF and sending it to the supplier to co-sign. You can then discuss how the contract will operate with the supplier and arrange payment method, delivery days, assigning contact person/persons)
- What items are available to purchase from this framework. Each Lot will have an Excel catalogue with line items and cost for each item. The items available range from foolscaps, pens, pencils to wallcharts and whiteboards.
- The suppliers' obligations as members of this framework (such as delivery turnaround times, processing returned items)

Schools may only order products under this contract that are included in the catalogue.

If a school requires additional stationery items that are not part of the catalogue for the Lot, then they are required to follow proper public procurement guidelines in obtaining these items.

## How to use the OGP Stationery Framework



The table overleaf sets out the procurement requirements when not using the OGP Stationery Framework.

<b>Schoolbooks and Classroom Resources – Expenditure Threshold Guide</b>			
Below €5,000	€5,000 to €50,000	€50,000 to EU Threshold (€220,999)	Above EU Threshold (221,000)
Can be awarded on the basis of verbal or written quotes from one or more competitive supplier	Minimum of 3 Quotes (or eTenders)	eTenders	eTenders & OJEU
Email request or RFQ Template	RFQ Template from SPU	OGP Template or CFT template document from SPU	OGP Template or CFT template document from SPU
Quote submitted in writing or email	Submission response by email	Submit tender response via tender postbox on eTenders platform	Submit tender response via tender postbox on eTenders
1 – 2 weeks to respond	14 days	21 days	Minimum 35 days Open Competition
Lowest Price	Most economically advantageous tender (MEAT)	MEAT	MEAT
Select Lowest Price	Evaluate offers against spec, qualification and award criteria	Evaluate offers against spec, qualification and award criteria	Evaluate offers against spec, qualification and award criteria
Email results	Email results with reasons	Standstill period of 14 days is recommended by the CSSO  Issue Standstill Notices	Standstill period of 14 days is mandatory Remedies Directive applies  Issue Standstill notice
	Publish contract award notice on eTenders for contracts above €25,000	Publish contract award notice on eTenders	Publish contract award notice on eTenders

## **Appendix 4 – Irish Educational Publishers’ Association (IEPA)**

### **IEPA CODE OF PRACTICE - Revised May 2022**

**Members of the Irish Educational Publishers’ Association subscribe to the following Code of Practice which is designed to help reduce the cost of schoolbooks and improve the education experience for parents/guardians and schools.**

- Publishers will not revise any text within at least four years - unless there is a change in the curriculum, the state examination or methods of assessment, or there is recognised teacher-led demand to do so.
- When a revised edition of a textbook is produced, the old edition will be kept in print for a two-year period, unless annual sales fall below 500 copies. This means that a new edition of a textbook will be available for a minimum of six years.
- Members of the IEPA will co-operate with the Department of Education and the various charitable organisations in the development of initiatives to improve access to educational materials for disadvantaged children and young people both in Ireland and overseas.
- Apart from the commitment to maintain editions in print for a minimum of six years, the publishers will co-operate with individual schools in their development of textbook rental schemes
- Member publishers will continue to engage actively with school communities, parents/guardians, teachers and government agencies to improve the educational experience for children and young people in Irish schools

Adopted in October 2011 and revised in June 2015, this Code of Practice is supported by the following publishers: CJ Fallon, Educate.ie, Folens, Gill Education, An Gúm, Mentor Books, Prim-ed, The Educational Company and Veritas.

## Appendix 5 – How the Primary Schoolbooks Scheme grant is calculated for primary and special schools – worked example

On 30 September 2023 185 pupils enrolled in School A

30 <sup>th</sup> September 2023 Enrolments School A	Total Pupils Enrolled	8 School Years Counted for calculation of book grant
Junior Infants*	27	2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28, 2028/29, 2029/30, 2030/31 and <b>2031/32</b>
Senior Infants	22	2023/24, 2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28, 2028/29, 2029/30 & <b>2030/31</b>
First Class	18	<b>2022/23</b> , 2023/24, 2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28, 2028/29 & <b>2029/30</b>
Second Class	17	<b>2021/22, 2022/23</b> , 2023/24, 2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28 & <b>2028/29</b>
Third Class	24	<b>2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23</b> , 2023/24, 2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/27 & <b>2027/28</b>
Fourth Class	26	<b>2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23</b> , 2023/24, 2024/25, 2025/26 & <b>2026/27</b>
Fifth Class	27	<b>2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23</b> , 2023/24, 2024/25 & <b>2025/26</b>
Sixth Class**	24	<b>2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23</b> , 2023/24, <b>2024/25</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	
<b>1 September 2024 projected junior infant enrolments</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28, 2028/29, 2029/30, 2030/31, 2031/32 and 2032/33</b>

\*30 September 2023 junior infants are not counted for the calculation of the 2023/24 book grant. In the 2031/32 school year the junior infants who started school on 1 September 2023 will be starting first year post-primary. They will be counted for the calculation of the 2031/32 book grant in School A and thus they will be counted for book grant calculations for a total of 8 school years.

\*\*In the 2024/25 school year the sixth-class pupils in School A on 1 September 2023 will be starting first year post-primary. They are counted for the calculation of the 2024/25 book grant in School A.

**2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23** – school years before the introduction of the new Primary Schoolbooks Scheme when a book grant was paid by the Department.

## Useful links

[Home - SPU – Schools Procurement Unit](#)

[Gov.ie - Public procurement guidelines for goods and services \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

[Guidance for Schools on Good Procurement Practices - SPU](#)

[Green Public Procurement \(epa.ie\)](#)

[COGG | An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta](#)

[PDST.ie/DistanceLearning/DigitalLibraries](#)

[PDST.ie/distancelearning/othersources](#)

[Support Service for Teachers & School Leaders](#)

[Irish Educational Publishers Association/code-of-practice](#)

[DPER Circular 10/2014 - SMEs in Public Procurement](#)

[DPER Circular 13/2014 - Management of Grants from Exchequer Funds](#)

[DE Circular 0060/2017 - Roll Out and Operation of the Financial Support Services Unit at Primary Level](#)

[Primary - FSSU <https://www.fssu.ie/primary/>](#)

[<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9aeb8-book-grants-2022/>](#)