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Guidance on the 2025 Summer Programme
For Post-Primary schools

Summer Programme 2025

Introduction

The main priority in Summer Programme 2025 is to ensure young people with the most complex needs have access to a school based summer programme. This year's programme was designed and developed to ensure supports are targeted to assist students with complex special educational needs and those at greatest risk of educational disadvantage.

The programme's aims are to support young people's wellbeing through building their confidence and enhancing their sense of connection with their school and their peers. It also strives to support young people who are at key transition stages in their education to progress to their planned educational placement in September.

This guidance from the Department of Education provides a framework for a summer education programme in post-primary schools for students with special educational needs and/or those most at risk of educational disadvantage. The programme will run for two weeks and schools have flexibility to offer the programme at any point during June, July or August. In considering when to offer the summer programme, schools should consider the advantages of offering a programme close to the beginning of the new academic year 2025/26. When young people are provided with a summer programme close to the beginning of the new school year, it facilitates the transition back to school in a very supportive manner for the young person.

The desired outcomes for young people are that as a result of their participation in the summer programme, they will experience a sense of ongoing engagement with education alongside peers, a better sense of their own wellbeing, strengthen connections with peers and teachers, and an increased skillset to continue with their learning.

Theme for Summer Programme 2025

The theme for this year's programme continues to be '**Building Confidence and Connections'**.

The Summer Programme is intended to be an enjoyable educational experience for the young people and staff. The range of activities should reflect this year's theme and include opportunities for student-centered engagement in learning, active learning opportunities, peer collaboration and learning.

It should be designed to provide children and young people with a high-quality opportunity to experience learning and school life in a very supportive way. It should help children and young

people to realise their potential, to be resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their lives, to take care of their physical wellbeing and to have a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to their school community.

This guidance provides a general instructional framework for school staff to assist in the design and delivery of the school-based Summer Programme. It affords school staff members the autonomy and flexibility to modify the programme to suit their particular school context.

Each school's Summer Programme Organiser will be required to attend online training which will be facilitated by Tralee Education Support Centre.

Supports and training material will be provided to schools and staff to help develop and deliver this year's programme. Links to previous support and training materials are available here.

What's continuing for 2025

This year's programme maintains the **Organiser role** to help support schools in their planning and participation in the Summer Programme. Also, the **Summer Programme Manager** role and the functions for this role remain largely the same as previous years. Full details in relation to these roles are provided in the 2025 Summer Programme in Post Primary Schools Overview Terms and Conditions which is available on www.gov.ie/summerprogramme.

As recommended by the Department's Inspectorate, some new elements were added to the design of the 2024 Summer Programme and will continue for Summer Programme 2025. While schools retain flexibility and autonomy to design programmes appropriate to students' needs and their particular educational setting, it is also important for schools to have meaningful engagement with the young people themselves and with their parents/guardians. In addition, to support continuity in the students' learning, the outcomes of the programme for each young person should also be shared effectively in written form with the school and the parents in a timely manner. These elements include:

1. **Advance consultation with Students and their Parents/Guardians (See Appendix A).** In advance of starting the summer programme and as part of the planning process, a pre-programme consultation survey should be issued to the students and to their parents/guardians to establish the young person's priority learning needs, strengths, interests and how they could be best supported.

2. **Summer Programme Report (See Appendix B).** At the end of the programme, the programme manager should ensure that a concise written report of the progress of each student is prepared. The report should provide a brief overview of the skills and successes achieved by the student during the summer programme. This report should be provided to parents/guardians, the class teacher/year head, and where

applicable, the report should also be included in the Student Support File of each young person on the school's provision plan.

3. **Reflection on Learning (See Appendix C).** The programme organisers, managers and teachers should promote the role of student voice by planning for and facilitating discussions about learning both before and after activities.

Templates to support schools with this work on these important elements are provided in the Appendices at the end of this guidance document.

Developing a summer programme

The rationale, aims, guidance, programme content and approaches outlined in this document are intended to assist teachers in providing a school-based educational programme to support young people to move forward in their learning by Building Confidence and Connections.

RATIONALE FOR PROVIDING A SUMMER PROGRAMME

Children and young people with complex special educational needs and those most at risk of educational disadvantage experience ongoing challenges to their participation and outcomes in education. Learning disruption typically occurs during school holiday periods, when young people are without the regular routines which they experience during term time. In addition, holiday times can bring a period of isolation with little or no contact with peers of their own age. These factors can impact on the educational progression and wellbeing of young people. The summer programme provides children and young people with a valuable opportunity to reconnect with peers and school staff, form friendships and learn new skills. During focus group meetings with inspectors who evaluated the summer programme in 2024, the children and young people who participated in the programme, their parents and the teachers who worked on the programme spoke very eloquently about the benefits of the summer programme. For example, a post-primary student told inspectors that they '*would tell everyone to do it, it has changed my life, in that I feel much more confident in school now."* A post-primary teacher noted how 'students who would previously have hidden are now more noticeably confident walking into a room alone' and a parent of a post-primary student described what the summer programme gave to families as 'invaluable.'

In light of this rationale school leaders are encouraged to consider availing of the opportunity to run the school-based summer programme in 2025.

AIMS OF THE SUMMER PROGRAMME

The aims of the Summer Programme are aligned to the theme of the programme: **Building Confidence and Connections.**

These aims are to:

- Provide students with opportunities to build and nurture relationships with their schools, their teachers and their peers.

- Consolidate their prior learning, their readiness for learning and, to the extent that is possible, minimise the risk of regression in learning.

- Support students' physical, social and emotional wellbeing and develop their resilience and self-assurance.

- Develop skills and routines to ensure they successfully transition into the next stage of their schooling.

- Provide opportunities to enjoy learning and skills development during the summer months in a less formal environment than during the school year.

WHICH STUDENTS SHOULD BE INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THE PROGRAMME?

The Post-Primary School Scheme is open to students in special classes, students who have complex special educational needs in mainstream classes and those who are most at risk of educational disadvantage.

Post-primary schools running a Post-Primary School Scheme should first give priority to those young people with the most complex special educational needs, including students in special classes, when assigning places for their programme.

Through a variety of systems and structures in the school, for example, through the work of the Special Education Teachers (SET) and the Student Support Team (SST), schools will have already identified a list of those students with identified SEN, additional learning needs and those most at risk of educational disadvantage.

The principal, in conjunction with other relevant members of staff, will need to decide which students should avail of this programme and should ensure that the resources provided are targeted at those most in need.

When selecting students for the programme, the school may need to determine who should be offered a place. This is more challenging if there are many students that schools believe could benefit from this provision. In order to prioritise students to access the programme, relevant criteria should be considered to identify students most in need of the support of the Summer Programme. Where there are raised levels of concern on more than one criterion these students should be prioritised for inclusion. The suggested criteria below may be modified or extended to suit the school's own context.

Students can be prioritised using the following scales aligned to criteria below:

Area of concern	Level of concern				
	Low				High
	1	2	3	4	5
Special Educational Need					
Risk of Educational Disadvantage					

These areas of concern can be further broken down using the selection criteria identified in the 2025 Summer Programme in Post Primary Schools: Overview Terms and Conditions.

Students who are not availing of any other summer programmes (for example, in DEIS schools those run by the School Completion Programme) should be prioritised for selection. Students participating in SCP programmes, however, can be supported on the summer programme, provided this does not prevent another student from availing of this opportunity. This will ensure avoidance of duplication of supports and resources for some students at the loss to another student, who is also in need of support.

PARAMETERS OF A SUMMER PROGRAMME

All post-primary schools will be offered the opportunity to provide a summer programme. This will allow schools a block of time to nurture important relationships with students and to allow students to build confidence across a range of skills, thus enabling them to be better placed to transition to the next year of schooling. Participation by schools in the scheme is voluntary.

When running the programme, the time allocated should be based on the existing school timetable in terms of beginning and end times each day. Teachers should use time at the beginning and end of the day for planning and review. Students should begin no later than 10.00 am and finish no earlier than 3 pm. Time spent on different activities should be flexible, and therefore it is not necessary to adhere to forty minute or one-hour lessons. Time for lunch should be factored into the day. In this context, students should be encouraged to be involved in the preparation of food and eat together and with those delivering the programme. This will contribute to their sense of social wellbeing and connectedness.

In order to support schools to provide the summer programme, materials including webinars and suitable resources will be made available to school personnel who will be involved in running and delivering the programme. The link to previous supportive materials is [here](#).

CONTENT OF SUMMER PROGRAMME

The content of a programme that the school devises should be underpinned by the theme for this year's programme**: Building Confidence and Connections**. The programme is delivered at school level, and schools therefore have the autonomy to design their own programme within the guiding framework that is presented in this document.

The most important focus of the summer programme at school level is to ensure that students are provided with the skills necessary to engage in a productive way with the new school term. Therefore, it is suggested that less focus is placed on subject areas or subject content, as it is not within the scope of this programme to mitigate potential learning loss that has taken place across the curriculum. Consideration should be given to providing opportunities for students to participate in cross-curricular project-type activities in areas such as music, art, sports etc. with a particular focus on building students' confidence in their learning.

The guidance in this document is intended to form a framework or a menu of options. The suggested content of the summer programme can be drawn from the following components in line with the students' prioritised needs and the schools' resources:

- A. Student Wellbeing
- B. Technology
- C. Learning to Learn
- D. Literacy
- E. Numeracy
- F. Academic Content
- G. Teaching approaches
- H. Suggested resources

A. STUDENTS' WELLBEING

Wellbeing is both a prerequisite for, and an outcome of, successful learning as students need to have a sense of wellbeing in the first place to engage with education. It is an outcome of learning, as students' wellbeing is enhanced thorough experiencing success in school. This sense of success in learning is key to building students' self-esteem and self-confidence.

Schools will already be aware of the challenges that may be posed for young people by ongoing anxiety, poor attendance, school refusal, limited opportunities for developing friendships and challenges in achieving success in learning. These can be areas of concern for all students but

particularly those with complex special educational needs or for those at risk of disengaging with education.

Measures to support students to have a positive attitude towards learning will be necessary and should be included in the summer provision. These measures might include a holistic wellbeing plan drawn up to support students in the coming school year. Physical, social, and emotional wellbeing activities should be integrated into the summer programme to develop resilience.

Managing myself as part of wellbeing

Students selected for the programme may need to be re-oriented towards a more positive view of themselves as learners. Rather than merely address difficulties experienced by students, interventions should enhance future functioning of students. Self-management strategies which encourage students to have greater ownership of their learning goals will lead to improved overall wellbeing.

Students should be supported to:

- Set personal short-term and medium-term education, life and career goals which are obtainable and will give the student a sense of success and confidence.
- Identify what they need to do to achieve their goals and develop an action plan.
- Ask for help and know where to go to get help, both academic and other types of emotional support.
- Reflect on their own learning and the progress they are making.
- Improve their remote and in-school study and organisation skills.

Physical, social, and emotional wellbeing

Students should be supported to:

- Feel safe
- Be healthy
- Stay physically active
- Eat nutritious food
- Manage their sleep and screen time.
- Demonstrate care and respect during interactions with teachers and other students
- Learn effective strategies to manage their behaviour
- Have fun during positive social interaction activities.
- Make new friends and maintain those friendships
- Identify and expand their emotional support network
- Use a range of strategies to support themselves when feeling anxious

There is a comprehensive range of supports available from National Educational Psychological Service to support student wellbeing including guidance on promoting a sense of safety, calm, social connectedness, hope and a sense of sense of efficacy in self and community.

B. TECHNOLOGY

Some children and young people with complex special educational needs may use assistive technologies and devices such as alternate keyboards, voice recognition software, monitor magnification software and text to speech options, to maintain, or assist them with learning, communicating and interacting. When engaging with children and young people around the Summer Programme, assistive technologies and devices may assist children and young people with complex educational needs by:

- Supporting learning (e.g., using a laptop to research, using spellcheck, text reading or speech recognition software, providing practice and consolidation opportunities).

- Supporting transitions (e.g., calendars, schedules, alarms, organisational apps).

- Supporting communication (e.g., various software, messaging apps).

- Increasing social opportunities (e.g., appropriate social media apps).

- Reducing stress (e.g., music players, calming apps).

- Supporting recreational interests (e.g., researching areas of individual interest).

It is very likely that some students will need upskilling on the use of technology to support their learning. Ensuring that students have the necessary digital skills to continue their learning is a key enabler of participation in education and a vital outcome of this summer programme. Students may also require inputs on online safety.

In the first instance, teachers delivering this programme need to assess the areas where students need the most support in terms of learning digitally with a view to closing the digital gap as much as possible.

For some students, managing online learning platforms is a challenge. Students may need further training in how to use digital devices optimally. Some students may need to learn how to navigate the school's learning platform in order to become sufficiently proficient to be able to access assignments, upload completed work, communicate with their teachers, engage with online lessons and engage with peers.

In some schools, a digital pupil leadership programme is in operation, in which students who have very good technical skills support fellow students to develop their own skills. The development of such a peer support system merits consideration as part of this programme where feasible.

Students should be provided with as many opportunities as possible to engage with digital technology in a meaningful way throughout the programme. Tasks should be devised to ensure that students practice a variety of digital interactions that include pupil-content, as well as pupil-teacher and pupil-pupil content.

C. LEARNING TO LEARN

In order to support young people who may have experienced interruptions to the continuity of their learning, it will be very important for teachers to focus on skills associated with learning to learn.

Suggestions for supporting young people with additional needs or those most at risk of educational disadvantage during the Summer Programme include:

➢ Working to consolidate routines that help young people to succeed in daily school life.

➢ Building upon social skills and self-regulation strategies for the school context.

➢ Focusing on developing effective task and organisational skills.

➢ Reinforcing communication skills and approaches to ensure that young people have a voice, can indicate choices and give their opinions.

➢ Reflecting on past successes (particularly those documented in the student support files) and how these were achieved to help young people to become more aware of their existing good strategies.

➢ Modelling the use of metacognitive strategies by providing young people with opportunities to talk about how they are learning, what helps them learn best and give them opportunities to present learning in a variety of ways.

➢ Teach students how to organise and manage their learning independently through guided practice.

D. LITERACY

Good literacy skills remain the foundation of all learning. Encouraging students to focus on improving literacy skills will be very important in the programme, and this can be done through any subject area or any task assigned to students.

Some guidelines for developing good literacy skills:

➢ Build in discussion time to learning tasks and activities to promote oral literacy.
➢ Develop students' oral skills by asking them to talk about their learning.
➢ Teach skills of reading comprehension in an explicit manner.
➢ Use pre-reading strategies such as activating prior student learning, prediction techniques and questioning in advance of reading any text.
➢ Build student vocabulary through encouraging them to reuse newly acquired words.

> ➢ Provide lots of opportunities for students to explain the meaning of new words and concepts orally.
> ➢ Give students opportunities to read for pleasure and to read materials that they are interested in.
> ➢ Increase student motivation by having competitions for a short story/ a short poem or a film or book review.

E. NUMERACY

Developing students' numeracy skills is vital to improving their outcomes in a wide range of subjects. It is important therefore to ensure a strong numeracy component, ideally in cross-curricular components, in the programme.

Students should be supported to:

> ➢ Use mathematical understanding across a range of subject areas and contexts.
> ➢ Encourage a problem-solving approach to tasks.
> ➢ Estimate time/length/space and guess outcomes.
> ➢ See patterns, trends and relationships.
> ➢ Gather and use data.
> ➢ Apply mathematical understanding to a range of contexts.
> ➢ Develop positive attitudes to numeracy and to the value of studying Mathematics and subjects with a strong numeracy foundation.

F. ACADEMIC CONTENT

The priority learning needs of some students may be deemed to be more academic in nature. In such cases, catch-up strategies in relation to academic content could be provided where resources permit. Teachers are encouraged to integrate the other components, such as digital strategies, literacy or numeracy skills, skills associated with learning to learn, into subject areas. Taking such a cross-curricular approach will support many of the students' needs associated with learning loss. However, it is important to stress that the summer programme should not be designed only on the basis of academic content. Where the programme is underpinned by some academic content, an emphasis on enjoyment in learning and student wellbeing should be included in the parameters of the programme. Evidence provided from research into previous summer programmes demonstrated that an over emphasis on academic content correlated with lower student participation and attendance.

TEACHING APPROACHES

When devising the programme effective pedagogical approaches will be key to supporting learners to achieve and to experience success.

Guidelines for effective teaching approaches:
> ➢ Clear identification of the needs of the learners

> ➢ Provision of clear learning intentions and time for reflection on learning
> ➢ Incremental scaffolding of knowledge and skills
> ➢ Letting students know that it is not only acceptable to make a mistake, but it is a fundamental step in the process of effective learning
> ➢ Asking open questions
> ➢ Provision of wait time for thinking and answering questions
> ➢ Use of graphic organisers and mind maps
> ➢ Use of pedagogical approaches which require active learning
> ➢ Use of technology wherever possible and appropriate
> ➢ Provision of opportunities for the learner to work collaboratively with peers in the digital setting
> ➢ Promotion of autonomous student learning
> ➢ Provision of regular feedback to encourage the student to the next steps
> ➢ Use of quizzes and competitions to encourage motivation and make learning fun
> ➢ Provision of opportunities to consolidate and reflect on learning.

Teacher professional learning and resources for the Summer Programme will become available at this link https://ncse.ie/summer-programme on the NCSE's website following an information training webinar for teachers.

External Facilitators /Guest speakers

The use of external facilitators can play a role in supplementing, complementing and supporting a planned approach to programme delivery including wellbeing promotion. If guest speakers or visitors to the Summer Programme are used, it will be necessary to adhere to Circular No. 0043/2018. The programme manager may need to seek Board of Management approval prior to inviting a guest speaker into the school and ensure that that the appropriate procedures in relation to Child Safeguarding and garda vetting have been adhered to. Prior to the guest speaker visiting the school, please ensure they have read your school's child safeguarding statement.

H. SUGGESTED RESOURCES

To support and further develop literacy and numeracy skills:

- Literacy and Numeracy resources such as workbooks are available to download from the website of the Junior Certificate School Programme at under JCSP workbooks.
- The NCSE website outlines a wide range of resources suitable for the general development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. The site contains a section for teachers: of which learners can access and avail of the resources. There is also a section for parents. The website has links to many useful educational websites to direct parents and teachers

towards further online supports. There is a short section on useful [apps for home](#) use which is currently updated twice a week.
- The [national library system](#) is providing free online access to get eBooks, audiobooks, online magazines and newspapers for free.

To support learners' wellbeing and guidance:

- The [National Educational Psychological Service](#) (NEPS) website provides valuable advice for schools and families on topics such as wellbeing, distance learning and provision for student routine and structure.
- [Tusla Education Support Service](#) (TESS) is the school supports service under Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. Important information is available from Tusla for schools, parents and guardians and young people.
- [Webwise](#) provides a range of free primary and secondary school teaching resources addressing a range of topics including cyberbullying, image-sharing, social media and more. Webwise offers a range of resources to help teachers integrate internet safety into teaching and learning and information and advice for parents and young people themselves.
- [HSE website](#) Mental Health Support Services for Young People where a range of services and resources are listed to help young people cope and manage themselves in the current crisis: Jigsaw; BeLong To; Reach Out; Spunout; Childline; etc. like the others listed here. Topics include; Leaving Certificate in a time of COVID-19, exercise, managing routines, COVID-19 anxiety, family conflict, and staying connected. There are also resources for parents.
- The [Scoilnet](#) website identifies resources for learning across all subject areas, including literacy and numeracy, and provides links to the Department's support services.

Key roles in delivering a Summer Programme

SUMMER PROGRAMME ORGANISER

In 2025, there will be a dedicated role of School Organiser in each school offering the Summer Programme. The School Organiser will receive additional remuneration for their role. This is envisaged to be a key leadership role that will offer development opportunities for staff in schools. The School Organiser in all schools will develop the school's Summer Programme and have responsibility for recruitment of staff.

Collaboration will be needed between the Organiser and the school's Summer Programme Manager prior to commencement of each scheme to support the delivery of the Summer

Programme in the school. This handover of duties to the Summer Programme Manager is needed as part of the Organiser's preparation work.

SUMMER PROGRAMME MANAGER

Each school must appoint one Summer Programme Manager to manage the summer programme. The role of the Summer Programme Manager is to manage/oversee the summer programme and they must be present in the school for the full duration of the programme in order to deal with any issues that may arise. The role of the Summer Programme Manager in ensuring successful educational outcomes for participants is paramount.

Further details as to the role of the Summer Programme Manager are available in the 2025 [Summer Programme in Post Primary Schools Overview Terms and Conditions](#). This role can be undertaken by any permanent or fixed-term teacher, including the principal and/or Summer Programme Organiser in the participating school.

At the end of the programme, the Summer Programme Manager should ensure that **a concise written report** on the young person's progress is provided to each parent and is also retained in the school. A detailed outline of the role of the Summer Programme Manager is provided in Section 4 of the 2025 Summer Programme Overview for Mainstream Post Primary Schools.

THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

The principal has an important role in ensuring successful outcomes for participants in the Summer Programme. The principal should ensure that optimal use is made of available funds and resources to support and enhance students' learning. It is also necessary for the principal to liaise closely with the Summer Programme Manager in relation to the most important aspects of the Summer Programme, in particular to oversee that the programme has a strong educational focus.

At the end of the programme, the principal should ensure, in collaboration with the Summer Programme Manager, that there is a coherent structure in place to transfer the data gathered on individual students to the relevant school personnel and that the data is transferred appropriately. This data should be used to inform any extra supports in relation to the ongoing wellbeing and learning needs of students when the school officially reopens.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

It is acknowledged that available personnel will shape the components of the programme that can be delivered.

Teachers delivering this programme will typically be very familiar with their students, will be experts in their field, and will already have strong relationships with their students. This relationship is crucial in helping students reconnect with school and progress in their learning.

Ideally, schools offering the Summer Programme will be assisted by the participation of teachers who are familiar with the needs of the young people attending. Where teachers have this familiarity, it will be easier for them to establish learning priorities aligned to existing support plans and which are focused on maintaining and consolidating connections to the school. Where other teachers are employed, teachers should seek access to the most recent support plan for the young person to help with establishing learning priorities.

Post-primary teachers are subject specialists and, depending on how many teachers can be available to teach on the programme in any individual school, there will be a limit to the subject content that can be delivered. For that reason, it is very important that in conjunction with the subject expertise, teachers plan to provide the students with opportunities to learn the other skills referred to in the content section.

Teachers should maintain a record of content and skills taught during the Summer Programme and use this to inform the completion of the concise written report at the end of the programme.

THE ROLE OF SPECIAL NEEDS ASSISTANTS (SNAS)

Where possible, schools offering the Summer Programme should seek to secure the participation of SNAs who are familiar with the young people attending the school-based programme. The roles and duties of the SNAs during the Summer Programme should continue to be in line with roles outlined in the school's Special Educational Needs' Policy (SEN) policy and reflect existing care plans for the young people. There should be a particular emphasis on attending to health and care needs and on fostering independence.

PRE-PROGRAMME SURVEY

In advance of starting the summer programme, a **pre-programme survey** should be issued to teachers, students and their parents/guardians to establish the young person's priority learning needs, strengths, interests and how they could be best supported.

In some cases, students with significant additional needs may require other ways of expressing their interests, strengths and learning needs. This should enable teachers to individualise support by devising a Summer Programme Support Plan. Consideration should be given to including key aspects of literacy and numeracy into the plan together with supports for social development and enjoyable activities across various other areas of the curriculum. The challenge and pitch of the plan should be realistically achievable within the short timeframe of the programme.

REPORT ON PROGRESS

At the end of the programme, the programme manager(s) should ensure that **a concise written report** of the progress of each young person is prepared. The report should provide a brief overview of

- the skills and successes achieved by the student during the summer programme
- any particular challenges the student experienced during the summer programme and how the student overcame these challenges
- how teachers use this information to help the student in the next school year

This report should be provided to parents at the end of the Summer Programme and provided to their teachers. Where applicable, the report also be should also be included in the Student Support File of each young person on the school's provision plan following their participation on the summer programme. A sample template for producing this written report is provided in **Appendix A**.

Where a young person is transferring to a different school, this information should be retained by the parents/guardians and provided to their year head when the transfer occurs. This will help inform future educational planning for the 2025/2026 academic year.

THE ROLE OF THE VOICE OF THE YOUNG PERSON

Involving young people in setting learning targets and in monitoring their progress, can be empowering and motivating for them. The young people who engage in the programme should be actively encouraged to express their learning needs and to assess their own progress. This approach aligns with the rights-based approach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to involving young people in decisions that affect them, and the principles of the Lundy Model of Participation. Some young people may have language and communication difficulties; therefore, it is important to use appropriate means to enable them to communicate their views and to provide their input (e.g. use of visual supports, choice boards, assistive technology). Adopting a child-centered approach which places the individual at the center of educational planning helps to ensure that their specific learning and wellbeing needs are addressed. This process enables the young person's voice to be included in the planning and decision-making process in relation to their path through education.

Resources that are available on the web that may be useful in this regard include:

- Lundy Model of Participation
- National Framework for Children's and Young People's Participation in Decision making
- Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit
- Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth's initiative Our Voices Our Schools

When engaging with young people around the Summer Programme, schools should listen to input regarding:

- The activities* in which they engage.

- The nature and level of adult support.

- The use of technology to support learning.

- The social aspects of their education (managing their emotional state, managing transition or change).

- Regular feedback should be provided to young people in relation to their progress during Summer Programme activities.

*As recommended by the Department's Inspectorate arising from their findings from inspections and follow-up visits carried out in 2023 and 2024, the programme organisers, managers and teachers should also plan for and facilitate discussions about learning both before and after activities. This can involve, for example, discussing what the young people would like to learn before they go on an excursion or undertake an activity; talking about the skills the young people developed at the end of a day and considering what further skills they would like to develop. Sample prompt questions that teachers might use to support this reflection before and after activities are provided in **Appendix B**.

THE ROLE OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Parental involvement and engagement with their children's learning and strong partnerships between home and school have immediate and long-term effects on aspects such as young people's behaviour, their social and emotional development and their enjoyment of school. Summer programmes should therefore put systems in place to encourage effective parental engagement before, during and after the programme and in a way that does not place undue demands on parents, young people or organisers, programme managers or teachers.

For summer programme 2025, all organisers and managers are asked to consider the most appropriate and practical means of

- Gathering information from parents about their child's strengths, interests and needs before the programme commences
- Communicate very clearly with parents about the value of engaging in such a programme for their child.
- Be mindful of parents for whom English is an additional language and seek to support their communication needs.
- Provide positive reassurance that participating in the programme is a real opportunity for their child to maintain connection with the school during the summer holidays in a positive way.

- Providing appropriate opportunities for some parents to assist with activities during the summer programme in which they have particular expertise; *note, this is subject to Child Safeguarding procedures including Garda vetting.*
- Share the timetable of the summer programme and other related organisational information with parents.
- Ensuring all parents receive information on their child's progress once the summer programme is finished.

A sample form for consulting with parents is included as **Appendix C.**

Evaluation of Summer Programme 2025

Special Education Section will request the Inspectorate to visit a sample of schools offering the summer programme.

The focus of these visits will be on enquiring into the extent to which summer programmes correctly prioritised those young people for participating on the summer programme. During the visits, inspectors will also enquire into the extent to which summer programmes:

- contain activities designed to develop young people's ability to reflect on their learning, their motivation to learn, and their sense of progress and achievement in learning.
- allow for the appropriate involvement of young people in programme planning and in the review of programme successes
- have appropriate and practical means of promoting effective parental engagement with the summer programme in place
- have a system in place to ensure that a concise, written report on the progress of each young person is completed at the end of each programme

During an inspector's visit to the Summer Programme, the inspector will ask to see the **school's provision plan for students with special educational needs**. The school provision plan template is contained on p. 35 of the [Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools / Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes](#).

The inspector will meet with the programme manager, visit a range of activities, discuss the provision with the teachers and engage with the young people.

Conclusion

The guidance in this document is designed to support teachers in post-primary schools on the design and delivery of a summer education programme which supports students with special educational needs and/or at significant risk of educational disadvantage. The desired outcomes for the students are that they will build their self-confidence and connections with their peers. As a result, the students will experience a better sense of their own wellbeing and an increased skillset to continue with their education. Through the delivery of this summer programme, principals, organisers, summer programme managers and teachers should work towards instilling in students a strong sense of self confidence, connectedness to their school community and a positive mindset to continue their education.

All schools retain flexibility and autonomy to design learning programmes appropriate to young people's needs and their particular educational setting. It will be particularly important for schools to engage with parents/guardians so that expectations about the nature of the young person's programme are agreed in advance, and that good communication is maintained

throughout the programme. To support continuity in the young person's learning, the outcomes of the programme for each young person should also be shared effectively in written form with the school and the parents in a timely manner.

Through the delivery of Summer Programme 2025, principals and teachers should strive to support the prioritised young people to consolidate their engagement in learning and social activities, and to build their confidence in preparation for a smooth transition to their new classes in September 2025.

Appendices

Appendix A – Summer Programme Report Template. This sample report template can be used in producing a written report on each student's progress at the end of their participation the Summer Programme.

Appendix B – Reflection on Learning: Sample prompts. The sample questions could be used to prompt students' reflection on learning.

Appendix C - Summer Programme Consultation Template. This can be used by schools in consulting with the students' parents/guardians in advance of the programme**.**

APPENDIX A – SUMMER PROGRAMME REPORT TEMPLATE

Insert school logo here
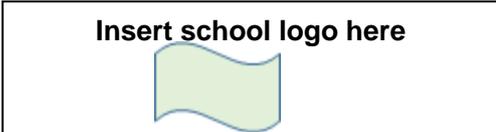
STUDENT SUMMER PROGRAMME REPORT

"BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND CONNECTIONS"

To be completed by the Summer Programme teacher(s) in consultation with the Summer Programme manager/organiser as a review of the Summer Programme plan and as a guide for future actions.

Student's name	Class/ Year	
Student's date of birth		
Date of Summer Programme report		
What were the skills and successes achieved by the student during the summer programme?		
Were there any particular challenges the student experienced during the summer programme? If so, how was the pupil/student helped to overcome these challenges?		
How can the subject and/or support teachers in the school use this information to help the student in the coming school year?		
Any comments from the student:		
Any comments from the parent(s)/guardian(s) on their child's progress during the programme:		
Signature of teacher who completed form		

Actions arising from Summer Programme report (tick as appropriate)			
	Report forwarded to parent		Report placed in Student Support File and reviewed by SET teacher
	Report reviewed and retained by class teacher/year head		Report used to form future planning for student

APPENDIX B – REFLECTION ON LEARNING: SAMPLE PROMPTS

Examples of questions that could be used by teachers before and after the Summer Programme activities to prompt students' reflection on learning.

The content of the summer programme and the activities organised should be underpinned by the aims and programme content outlined in the *Guidance on the 2025 Summer Programme for schools*, including the guidance on teaching approaches, learning to learn, wellbeing, skills, technology, etc. Teachers should place a focus on the integration of key skills that are appropriate for the student's age and stage of development as well as their phase of schooling.

Prompt questions teachers could ask students before they engage in an activity

These questions should be designed to help students focus on how to prepare for an activity and to elicit what the students might like to learn during the activity.

1. *What do you think is the intended learning during this activity?*
2. *What would you like to learn during the activity / is there any particular skill or area of interest you would like to explore or develop further?*
3. *How can we prepare for this activity? Is there any equipment or resources that you might need to help you during the activity?*
4. *If the young people are conducting a visit which will involve meeting someone outside school or a visitor to the school, include particular questions about that person's work. For example, what questions could we ask the (librarian, guard, fire warden, author, shop keeper) when we meet them?*
5. *How can we make sure that everyone is safe during the activity?*

Prompt questions teachers could ask students after they have engaged in an activity.
These questions should be designed to help students reflect on their learner outcomes and experiences from the activity.

- *Describe some of the things you learnt during that activity?*
- *What skills did you explore during the activity? What strengths did you display?*
- *What was the most enjoyable parts of the activity? What made this the most enjoyable part for you?*
- *What else would you like to have learnt about during that activity?*
- *What were some of the challenges that you experienced during the activity? What did you do to overcome these challenges? What might you have learnt from having to overcome these challenges?*
- *Looking back at what you expected to happen during the activity were you happy, surprised, or disappointed at what you experienced. If so, why?*
- *Did you enjoy this activity? If not, why not. Would you want to do this activity again? Was there a way the activity could have been made more enjoyable for you?*
- *How could you tell others about what you did? What way would you like to tell them about this activity? e.g. artwork, writing, creating a digital presentation, role playing a scene*

APPENDIX C – SUMMER PROGRAMME CONSULTATION TEMPLATE

Insert school logo here
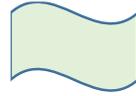
Dear Parent/Guardian,

The 2025 Summer Programme in our school is designed to provide young people with opportunities to experience school life in a very supportive way by placing a particular emphasis on enjoyable activities, positive learning and on promoting their self-confidence and wellbeing. Taking part in the programme will support your child to develop their essential skills even further during the summer months in a less formal environment than they would during the school year. The Summer Programme is based on the theme "Building Confidence and Connections". The activities that the teachers will organise will provide chances for your child to learn and to develop social and emotional skills. It will provide them with chances to make and develop friendships, improve their confidence about school and learning, and strengthen their familiarity with school layout and routines.

In order to help our school to organise activities that are enjoyable and worthwhile for your child we are asking you to provide us with the following information.

Child's Name: _____ Child's date of birth: _____

Class/Year level: _____

1. Skills and strengths

Can you list some of your child's skills and strengths that could be explored even further during the Summer Programme?

2. Areas of Interest

Can you list any area of interest for your child that could be included as part of the Summer Programme?

3. Areas of need

Can you list some of your child's current learning needs that you would like to see developed during the Summer Programme?

4. Helping your child move into the next class/year

Is there anything you think the Summer Programme teachers might do to help your child settle even better into their new school class/year in September?

5. Sharing of your talents and skills

Do you have any particular skill or talent that you would be willing to come to the school to share with the pupils/students in our school?

Please note prior Garda vetting will apply.

Signature of parent/guardian: _____

Date: _____

Sincere thanks for taking the time to complete this form