

Director of Human Resources Report 2020/2021

There is no doubt that 2020 will go down as a historic year and one of the toughest years our schools have known. The outbreak of the COVID pandemic has resulted in unprecedented disruption to our lives and to workplaces everywhere. We have all had to adapt rapidly in our ways of working and respond to restrictions that few would have thought possible. In our schools, we have learned at scale how we can work and learn in completely different ways and be productive. We have seen the huge benefits of technology, the importance of skills development, caring for staff and students and looking after our wellbeing.

Schools have excelled at the challenges of the past year and senior management has done tremendous work in supporting their staff and students through these times. Work, learning patterns and routines have become vastly different to our normal experience, but school management has always worked to ensure that the health and safety of staff and students is at the heart of every decision made.

HR Service

The HR Service in ACCS is there to assist and support school management in employment related issues and queries. As Director of Human Resources at ACCS I provide support, advice and guidance to Boards of Management and Principals in the following areas:



The queries and issues that arise can vary from being routine and straightforward to complex and difficult. 2020 has however, been a year like no other with many new HR challenges arising from the pandemic and much of my work in HR in 2020 has revolved around responding to COVID related HR challenges.

The following chart highlights the range of queries that I have dealt with throughout 2020.

Table of Phone Call Statistics



QUERY	
13.25%	Contracts of Employment
4.3%	Employment Law
13.25%	Grievance/ Discipline
19.3%	Leave
4%	Other
2.4%	Salary/Pension
40.9%	Staff Appointments includes Post of Responsibility Queries
2.6%	Workplace Investigations

2020 in Review

During this past year, we in ACCS have worked hard to support our Boards and schools with many new HR challenges – the move to remote working in a short period of time, the challenge of managing virtual teams, on-line interviewing and the induction of new staff, data security, communicating and engaging in a virtual world, returning to the workplace, the appointment of Lead Worker Representatives, health, safety & well-being, managing leave in COVID times, understanding governments supports to the many new regulations to keep staff and students safe in the workplace.

On-line Interviewing

Restrictions due to COVID-19 forced schools to move to online interviewing for both internal promotion posts and other appointments in 2020. In April we issued guidance to schools on recruitment and selection during COVID-19, with tips on remote interviewing. Although in person interviews are undoubtedly preferable, being able to conduct on-line interviews and continue the recruitment and selection process for all positions has been a lifesaver for schools.

Teacher Supply

Teacher supply has been an ongoing challenge for schools for a number of years. There is no doubt that the pandemic has put extra pressure on schools in filling substitute vacancies and in the granting of career breaks and job-sharing.

The filling of vacancies continues to be problematic in certain locations, including Dublin. Teachers of particular subjects, such as Gaelige, modern European Languages, Home Economics, Resource and teachers with the capacity to teach through the medium of Gaelige have been most difficult to recruit. Absences associated with COVID-19 and the lack of substitute teachers, has put particular pressure on schools.

ACCS is acutely aware of the difficulties being experienced by schools, and continues to engage with the DES, in conjunction with the other management bodies, through the Teacher Supply Steering Group on measures to alleviate the situation.

Some of the measures that have been put in place to support recruitment include;

- The removal of the restrictions on job-sharing teachers and teachers on career break to undertake substitute work
- Abatement provision to incentivise retired teachers to return to teaching
- The development of recruitment portals including Turas Abhaile and Sub-Seeker
- The expansion of initial teacher education programmes
- A voluntary Redeployment scheme for teachers seeking to move to Dublin
- In addition, increased flexibility was given in the employment of student teachers on placement in the school for hours outside of their placement requirements

These measures have gone some way to easing the problems facing schools in hiring qualified teachers and substitutes in 2020.

ACCS, in conjunction with the other management bodies, will continue its work with the DES on measures to improve the teacher supply situation.

New Clerical Officer and Caretaker Positions

Many of our schools filled vacancies for clerical officer and caretakers arising from the alleviations given in Budget 2020. These positions came on stream on 1st September 2020 as follows:

- Schools with enrolments of 626 to 699 students were allowed to fill clerical officer vacancies provided they have fewer than two clerical officers.
- Schools with enrolments of 500 to 625 students were allowed to fill clerical officer vacancies provided they have fewer than 1.5 clerical officers.
- Schools with enrolments of 700 or more were allowed to employ an additional caretaker provided they have fewer than two caretakers.

These alleviation measures have been greatly welcomed by schools and ACCS will continue to work with DES to get further alleviations on the moratorium in clerical officer and caretaker positions.

Upgrading of Grade III Secretary Posts to Grade IV Posts

In December 2020 the Department issued Circular Letter 81/2020 on the revised criteria and procedures for the upgrading of Grade III secretary posts in DES approved posts or on the 1978 Scheme to Grade IV posts. ACCS issued an Information Bulletin with guidance for schools on the eligibility criteria and the process for filling Grade IV posts.

In order for the upgrade of eligible Grade III posts, the school must:

- have 40 or more permanent whole-time equivalent (WTE) teachers in each of the previous two years and forecast to remain at this level in the current school year. Appendix 2 of the circular letter has some useful worked examples for upgrade eligibility to guide schools. The procedures are effective from 1st September 2018.
- not have a Grade IV secretary already in the school. A school may have one Grade IV post only.

A secretary who receives an upgrade to Grade IV will retain the Grade IV post on a personal basis for the full duration of their employment in their eligible school. On upgrading, the Grade IV post will replace the Grade III post and no new or additional Grade III posts will be authorised in the school as a result of the upgrading from Grade III to Grade IV level.

All Grade IV posts should be filled by competition except in circumstances where a school employs only one existing Grade III secretary in a Department approved post or on the 1978 scheme and satisfies the criterion of having 40+ teachers as outlined in the circular letter, then this existing Grade III secretary can be upgraded to Grade IV level without competition. Where a school employs 2 or more existing Grade III secretaries in Department approved posts or on the 1978 scheme, a competitive process should be held.

The upgrade to Grade IV is effective from the date on which the successful candidate is appointed to the upgraded post during the school year.

Secretaries in Grant-funded Posts

There was a significant development in the pay claim on behalf of secretaries in grant funded posts in 2020. In 2019 the FÓRSA union had initiated a pay claim on behalf of secretaries in grant funded (Schools Services Support Funded – SSSF) posts which resulted in strike and some industrial action in schools in 2020.

The claim is for public service pay scales, increments, pension, sick leave scheme and year round working patterns for secretaries and caretakers who are employed directly by schools and whose salaries are funded by state grants (SSSF in the community and comprehensive sector). Talks took place at the Workplace Relations Commission during the year to try to resolve matters. There was a significant development in the dispute in the autumn when the Tánaiste stated in the Dáil that *'the government really does value the essential work that's done by school secretaries and school caretakers' and 'it is the objective of this government to regularise their employment, their terms and conditions and their pension rights as well. But that can only be done going forward, it can't be done retrospectively'.*

This changed the situation considerably and an understanding has now been agreed on a pathway to progress the issue of regularisation of pay, conditions of employment and pension provision of school secretaries and caretakers in grant funded posts. This will take some time given the complexity of the work involved. Work will initially begin with pay scales, then terms and conditions and the final issue will involve pensions.

Competency Based Recruitment Training – Principal and Deputy Principal Appointments

Twelve new Principals (including acting) and twenty-three new Deputy Principals (including acting) were appointed in our sector in 2020. Due to COVID restrictions, we welcomed all newly appointed Principals and Deputy Principals to a virtual induction programme in August 2020.

We are grateful to Ciarán Flynn and Antoinette Nic Gearailt for their continued work with ACCS, Boards of Management and members of Selection Committees on appointments at Principal and Deputy Principal level. Their work is greatly appreciated.

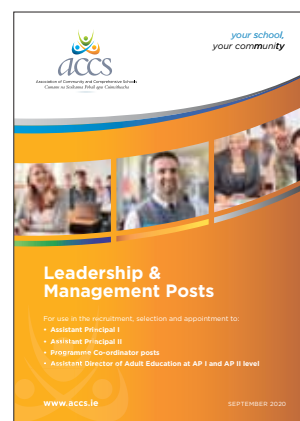
Training and support continue to be available to Boards of Management and Selection Committee members on the appointment of a Principal or Deputy Principal. Board members wishing to avail of this training or support should contact ACCS Head Office.

The Manual on the appointment process is available on request from ACCS.



Leadership and Management Posts

Circular letter 03/2018 which issued in January 2018 on Leadership and Management posts began the process of the restoration of Posts of Responsibility in our schools. Many schools made appointments in 2020 at both Assistant Principal I and II levels under the provisions of circular letter 03/2018. The ACCS Guide to Leadership & Management posts is available on the ACCS website to assist schools in the process. Additional materials have been added this year on preparing for the Report and Review meetings as provided for in CL 03/2018. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, circular 03/2018 is amended through a TTC Information Note (0001/2020) on interviews for leadership and management positions. This Information Note addresses the biennial review process, the annual review, the advertising and filling of current vacant posts of responsibility, documentation, definition of school days and appeals. The period of school closure, during which tuition continues to take place, is considered as school days for the purpose of circular 0003/2018. Therefore, schools have been able to continue with appointments to leadership and management posts during the COVID-19 period.



Appeals

We did not have any appeals in the community and comprehensive sector in 2020. We would like to express our appreciation to Selection Boards members working in our sector in ensuring that appointments to posts are done in a fair, equitable and transparent manner.

The **agreed Independent Panel** for post of responsibility appointments consists of 29 members as follows:

Dublin / Leinster Region:	Munster Region:	Connacht Region:	Ulster Region:
Brian Cannon	Seán Kelleher	Malachy Molloy	Andrew Kelly
Valerie Mc Cormick	Mick Mc Nulty	Mary Mullarkey	Gerry Breslin
Catherine Gralton	Mary Jones	Michael Brett	Joe Carolan
Maureen Black	Mary Scriven	Tommy Glynn	Patsy McVicar (Irish speaker)
Frank Moran	John Hourihan		
Patricia McDonagh	Seán Ó Broin		
Austin Naughton	Antoinette Nic Gearailt, (Irish Speaker)		
Eileen Salmon	Rock Kirwin		
David Dwyer	Anne MacMahon		
John O'Reilly			
Denis Magner			
Eleanor Parks			

ACCS greatly values the work of the panel members in appointments to leadership and management posts in schools.

A New Circular Letter on Leadership and Management Posts

ACCS is engaged with the DES, other management bodies and unions on a revised circular letter on leadership and management posts in schools. This circular letter will encompass Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal posts in schools.

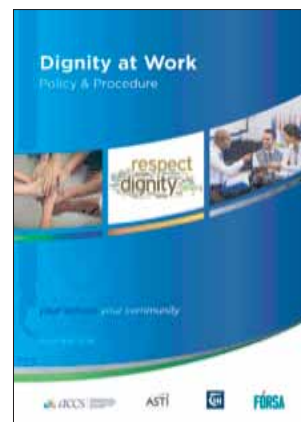
Dignity at Work Policy and Training

The Dignity at Work Policy was communicated to schools in 2019. Since then, schools have nominated Contact Persons for their schools and training took place regionally in 2019 for both the Contact Persons and Designated Persons (i.e. Deputy Principals).

Specific training for Deputy Principals in their role as Designated Persons under the Dignity at Work Policy began in March but, unfortunately, we were unable to continue with this programme in the regions due to the pandemic. It is our intention to provide this training as soon as it is possible and safe to do so. This training will focus on the Designated Person as a key point of contact in ensuring that concerns are dealt with in a timely, fair and appropriate way.

A new 'Code of Practice for employers and employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work' came into effect on 23rd December 2020. This new Code replaces the WRC 2002 Code and the HSA Code of 2007. The new Code serves to meet the original objective of having one Code reflecting best practice and evolving case law in the area.

We will be updating our existing Dignity at Work Policy, if necessary, in light of the new Code. Any changes to the exiting policy document will be communicated to schools.



Redeployment

There was limited redeployment out of the community and comprehensive sector in 2020.

A total of thirty-four teachers were redeployed in 2020 in the post primary sector, four of which were redeployed into community and comprehensive schools from the other sectors. Two teachers were redeployed within the sector. Six teachers were redeployed from a community and comprehensive school under compulsory redeployment.

The 2020 pilot voluntary redeployment scheme was available to all teachers employed in a post primary school in counties outside of

Dublin who wished to be considered for redeployment to a post primary school in Dublin. 25 counties have been included in the pilot scheme to date.

The compulsory redeployment scheme (where a school is closing or has teachers in employment surplus to its overall allocation or surplus in specific subjects) will operate as usual in 2021 and schools will have been notified of this during the month of January.

2021 Pilot Voluntary Redeployment Scheme

The Pilot Voluntary Redeployment Scheme 2021 will be available to permanent/CID teachers who are employed in a post primary school:

- in counties Galway, Roscommon and Wicklow who wish to be considered for redeployment to a school in any location.
- outside of Dublin and who wish to be considered for redeployment to a school in Dublin.

Health and Wellbeing

The year 2020 has shown all of us how crucial wellbeing is and we encourage school management to ensure that details of the Employee Assistance Service (as detailed below) are made available to employees so that they know what resources are available to support them during these challenging times.

There are two strands to the DES Occupational Health Strategy - the Occupational Health Service and the Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme.

Occupational Health Service

Medmark is the current provider of the Occupational Health Service (OHS) to schools. The service provides professional occupational health advice and services on employee medical fitness as follows:

- pre-employment health assessments,
- sickness absence assessment,
- medical fitness to return to work assessments,
- ill health retirement assessments and
- Critical Illness Provisions (CIP).

The service can be accessed by logging on to www.medmark4teachersna.ie or contacting the telephone advice line at 1890 235 711.

This service is also available for clerical officers and caretakers employed in Department approved posts.



Employee Assistance Service

Spectrum.Life was awarded the new Employee Assistance Service contract in July 2020 replacing Inspire Workplaces as the provider of the Employee Service to schools.

The service offered by Spectrum.Life is available to all employees in the school.

It is a self-referral confidential service where employees have access to a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Each telephone call is answered by a Case Manager who is a qualified counsellor.

The EAS provides advice to employees on a range of issues including wellbeing (work related stress, work-life balance, conflict, retirement, bereavement, remote working, returning to the workplace after a prolonged absence – e.g. due to COVID-19 illness or Parental Leave). Areas of support beyond counselling include, legal, financial, consumer advice and others.

Where appropriate, short-term counselling is available to employees and their family



members. A family member includes a spouse, civil partner or dependent, where the family member can be described as a person over the age of 18 and residing at the family home. In addition, online cognitive behavioural therapy is also provided to employees.

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available offering a host of online services with access to live chats, videos, podcasts and blogs on topics around mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition.

Leave

There are many different types of leave to which teachers, SNAs and other non-teaching staff may be entitled to in the course of their employment. Boards are reminded that a summary of the leave types for both teachers and SNA is available in the HR section of the ACCS website. We are aware of the practical difficulties that can sometimes arise with managing the various types of statutory and non-statutory leave in the workplace, especially in the context of current teacher supply situation. ACCS is always available to provide practical advice as to how best to manage requests for leave. Circular letter 54/2019 is the relevant circular letter for most leave types for teachers.

Changes to Career Break and Job-Sharing Scheme for School Year 2020/21

In order to increase flexibility and the supply of teachers at post-primary level, changes were made to the Career Break and Job-Sharing Schemes for the school year 2020/21.

Career Break Scheme:

- Teachers on career break may be employed without the restrictions of Circular 54/2019 in a substitute capacity (as per Information note TTC 007/2020).

This means that teachers on career break can be employed as substitutes without a restriction on the days/hours worked.

Job-Sharing Scheme:

- Job-sharing teachers may work additional hours in their own school in a substitute capacity. Job-sharing teachers are not permitted to exceed the maximum number of weekly contracted hours of a full-time teacher (as per Information Note TTC 005/2020).

These measures have gone some way to easing the problems facing schools in hiring qualified teachers and substitutes in 2020.

Increase in Parental Leave

Entitlement to Parental Leave increased from 22 to 26 weeks since 1st September 2020.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Arrangements for Teachers and SNAs employed in recognised Primary and Post Primary schools (CL 49/2020)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Arrangements for Teachers and SNAs employed in recognised Primary and Post Primary schools (CL 49/2020) was published by the DES in August 2020 replacing circular letter 24/2020. The arrangements outlined in this circular letter apply also to clerical officers and caretakers employed in DES approved posts.

This circular letter advised Boards of the arrangements for employees on the re-opening of schools in August and the management of COVID-19 including the safety and welfare of employees and the minimisation of the impact on teaching and learning. It referenced the requirement to have a COVID-19 Response Plan in place, the requirement to issue a COVID Pre-Return to Work Form for employees to complete at least 3 days in advance of their return confirming that they have no symptoms of COVID-19, not self-isolating or awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test.

The Circular also advises employers of the arrangement for employees who have:

- a COVID-19 diagnosis
- symptoms of COVID-19 and have been advised by the HSE/doctor to self-isolate while s/he waits for a COVID-19 test appointment and test results
- no symptoms of COVID-19 but have been medically advised to restrict his/her movements if s/he is a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case or lives with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms
- undertaken non-essential travel overseas

- a very high risk of serious illness from COVID-19
- a high risk

The circular letter also deals with alternative working arrangements, ordinary sick leave, employees with caring or childcare responsibilities or living with high risk or very high-risk individuals and pregnant employees, all of which have been challenging for schools to manage.

The DES also issued circular letter 54/2020 **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Arrangements for certain employees of recognised post primary schools employed using grant funding.**

The special arrangements set out in this circular letter apply to employees employed using grant funding (SSSF funding) - school secretary, caretaker, cleaner and bus escort and advises employers of the arrangement for employees who are in the **Very High Risk Group** and **High Risk Group**. The circular letter also advises on alternative working arrangements and the application for payment of a substitute where required.

We have dealt with many queries relating to the application of these two circular letters and on the many HR COVID related challenges regarding vulnerable and high-risk personnel.

COVID-19 Illness Benefit

The government introduced a COVID-19 Enhanced Illness Benefit Scheme for employees for absences due to COVID-19 illness, symptoms or self-isolation. This may apply where an employee does not have a contractual right to sick pay. Unlike the usual Illness Benefit available from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for a reason unrelated to COVID-19, Illness Benefit for COVID-19 absences is paid from the first day of sickness rather than after 6 days.

Increased Staffing Allocation and the Sequence for Filling Available Teacher Posts/Hours for the 2020/2021 School Year

Schools received details of additional teacher posts for the 2020/21 school year in a revised staffing schedule in August. Schools were reminded of the existing sequence for filling available teacher posts/hours through an ACCS Information Bulletin. As a reminder to Boards, the sequence for filling posts/hours operates as follows, having regard to the curricular needs of the school and the qualifications required for the post:

1. The mandatory procedure and sequence for filling available teacher posts/hours set out in Circular 59/2016 must be completed (apart from the step involving advertisement of posts). This requires that available hours be offered in the first instance to teachers employed in the school who hold (a) **a part-time CID** or (b) **a part-time fixed-term contract**, in accordance with the provisions of the circular.
2. Remaining hours after Step 1 could be offered to **job-sharing teachers in the school**, willing to teach additional hours.
3. Any remaining hours will be advertised and filled through a formal recruitment process using the standard procedures and criteria for the filling of such hours and filled in the following sequence:
 - (a) The employment of an **appropriately qualified registered teacher** who is not retired. This may include a teacher who is on career break from their teaching post.
 - (b) Hours remaining after step 3(a) could be filled through the employment of a **retired appropriately qualified, registered teacher**. This means a teacher who has qualifications suitable to the post and is registered with the Teaching Council for the sector for which they are to be employed (under Route 2 post-primary for Community and Comprehensive schools).
 - (c) Hours remaining after Step 3(b) could be filled through the employment of a **teacher who is not appropriately qualified**, giving preference wherever possible to one who is not retired. Remuneration will be at the unqualified rate of pay.
Such hours could be filled by offering them to a PME protocol teacher, registered with the Teaching Council and where the teacher is in the school undertaking school placement as part of their PME programme.
 - (d) After the above steps have been exhausted, remaining hours may be filled through the employment of an **unregistered person**, at the unqualified rate of pay, in accordance with the existing rules (i.e. the unregistered person may not be paid in respect of more than one week's continuous employment at any one time).

It is important that the above sequencing is followed to avoid any industrial relations/employee relations issues arising in schools.

Additional Supervision Arrangements and External Supervisors

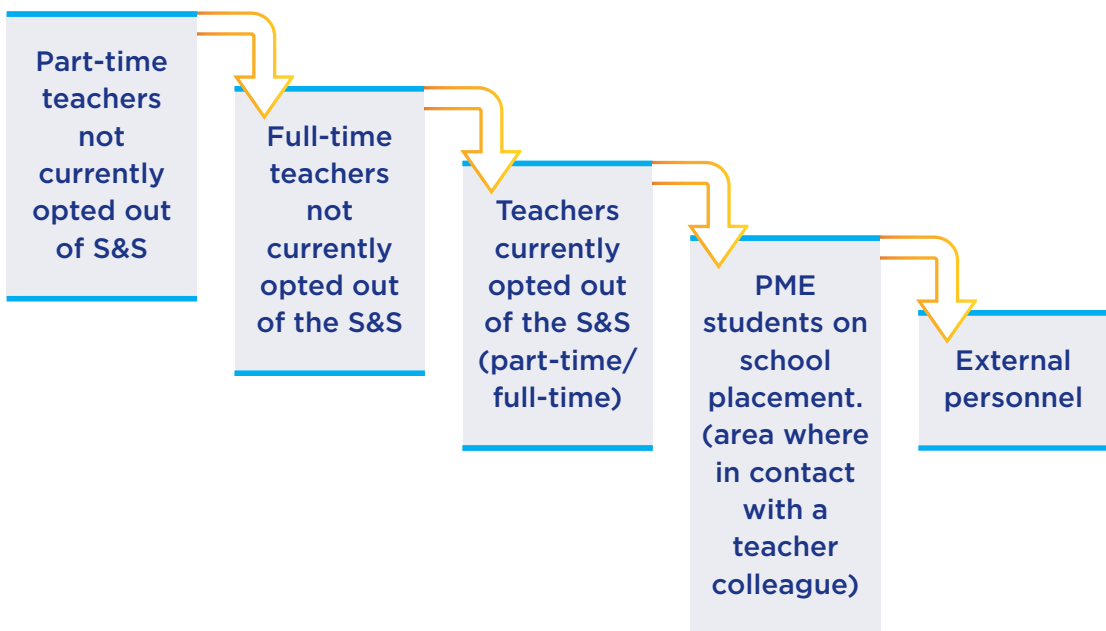
Given the exceptional circumstances arising from COVID-19, additional supervision measures were given for the 2020/2021 school year. The additional funding provided to the school is used to pay teachers for additional supervision on a voluntary, casual and non-pensionable basis for the 2020/2021 school year only, in addition to the teacher's compulsory Supervision & Substitution liability.

Circular 53/2020 sets out the arrangements and sequence to be followed in offering additional supervision hours and it is important that school management adhere to this sequencing.

SNA Industrial Relations Forum

An SNA Industrial Relations Forum was established in 2019 to provide a means for dealing with claims and proposals relating to the pay and conditions of service of SNAs. This Forum is operated by the DES and meets four times per year. It is made up of representatives of the DES, management bodies and unions representing Special Needs Assistants.

OFFERING ADDITIONAL SUPERVISION HOURS



Items discussed at the Forum in 2020 included the additional 72 hours working required each year of SNAs, SNA education requirements, leave, partial return to work, job-sharing, breastfeeding breaks and substitute work.

A *Partial Return to Work* following a period of sick leave has now been made available to SNAs and has been communicated to schools. It is available for a maximum period of one school term and must be undertaken for a minimum period of **2 full school days** every week.

A new National Training Programme was launched for SNAs in 2020. It will be delivered by UCD School of Education and funded by the Department of Education. The new online programme will begin in January 2021 and will consist of five modules delivered over ten months. In total, there will be 3,500 places available over the next 4 years, with an enrolment of 500 SNAs in the first year. Notification of this programme issued directly to schools in the autumn.

SNA Supplementary Assignment Panel

The SNA Supplementary Assignment Panel has been in operation for the past 9 years to facilitate eligible Special Needs Assistants who are being made redundant by a school in filling SNA vacancies that may become available in another school. The SNA Panel has worked well for SNAs and schools affected by redundancy to date. A review of the operation of the Panel takes place on an annual basis and any changes are notified to schools via circular letter.

SNA Allocation in 2020

The proposed new Frontloaded Allocation Model for Special Needs Assistants for students in mainstream classes in post-primary schools, was deferred in 2020 until the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year.

Interim measures were put in place for the school year 2020/2021 as follows:

- 2019/20 mainstream class SNA allocations were frozen and automatically rolled over into the 2020/21 school year. This meant that no school received an allocation less than what they have on the date of issue of the Circular and existing SNAs currently in posts continued in post for the 2020/21 school year in the normal way.
- Schools were able to apply to the NCSE for additionality where they could demonstrate that the current allocation did not meet additional care needs within the mainstream classes in the school.

SNA allocations for special classes and schools were, however, not impacted by this interim arrangement and continued to be allocated in the normal way.

In terms of the appointment and redundancy of a Special Needs Assistant, schools are reminded to work within the provisions of circular letter 51/2019 and 36/2020.

Garda Vetting and Employment

Boards are reminded that it is compulsory to have a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau in respect of persons in the school who are carrying out *relevant work or activity, a necessary and regular part of which consists of having access to or contact with children* in the school. This vetting disclosure must be obtained **prior to commencement of employment/work. Failure to comply with vetting requirements is a criminal offense.**

The Teaching Council is the authorised body for administering vetting for teachers. ACCS is the registered organisation for the processing of garda vetting applications for all non-teaching employees/volunteers/host families/TY students and others in Community & Comprehensive schools.

The Use of Social Media

The rapid development of social media over the last decade has presented many challenges at school level. The Teaching Council's Draft Guidelines for Teachers on the Use of Social Media provides useful guidance and best practice for teachers on the use of social media.

DES Circular Letters – HR Related, Revised Salaries and Other Measures for Staff

A number of circular letters issued in 2020 relating to the revision of salaries for staff in our schools and other HR matters, see table below. A full list of circular letters issued by the DES can be found in the Appendices section available on www.accs.ie. Full details of these circular letters can be found on the Department's website. In addition, the FSSU website has also some useful guidance for schools on payroll related circular letters.

HR Related Circular Letters issued in 2020	
81/2020	Revised procedures for the upgrading of Grade III secretary posts in DES approved posts or on the 1978 Scheme to Grade IV posts
64/2020	Revision of Clerical Officer and Caretaker salaries in the 1978/79 scheme with effect from 1 October 2020
62/2020	Revision of salaries of all staff from 1 October 2020

HR Related Circular Letters issued in 2020 cont'd

61/2020	Revision of salaries for SNAs with effect from 1 October 2020
60/2020	Revision of teacher salaries with effect from 1 October 2020
54/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Arrangements for certain employees of recognised post primary schools employed using grant funding.
53/2020	Additional Supervision Arrangements for the 2020/21 School Year
49/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Arrangements for Teachers and SNAs employed in recognised Primary and Post Primary schools (CL 49/2020)
46/2020	COVID-19 Operational Supports for the full return to school
39/2020	Calculated Grades Aides 2020
36/2020	Recruitment of SNAs – Supplementary Assignment Arrangements for the 2020/21 School Year
33/2020	Revision of 2011 Entrant Teacher Salaries with effect from 1 March 2020
30/2020	SNA Allocation for 2020/21 School Year for mainstream classes
27/2020	COVID-19 – temporary assignment arrangements for certain staff in the education and training sector
24/2020	COVID-19 Delay Phase arrangements for teachers and SNAs
20/2020	COVID-19 Arrangements for teachers and SNAs

In-Service Programme

I was involved in the delivery of a number of HR related In-Service programmes in 2020, the details of which are in the Report of ACCS Continuous Professional Development Programme on page 84 of this handbook. Most of the In-Service delivered was through a virtual platform. We appreciate that remote delivery is very different to face to face sessions but we hope that participants found these programmes beneficial and worthwhile nonetheless.



Budget 2021 from a HR Perspective

- The National minimum wage increases to €10.20 per hour from 1st January 2021.
- The state pension age will not rise to 67 in January 2021. A Pension Commission is to be established to consider pension age for the future. Therefore, the eligibility for the state pension remains at 66.
- Details of tax reliefs associated with remote working.
- The Pandemic Unemployment Payments will continue as planned until April 2021 and remains open to new applicants.
- The Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme, which pay a proportion of the wages of those on the scheme, will continue (if required) in an amended form to the end of 2021.
- Parent's Leave will be extended by a further 3 weeks for parents of children born or adopted from November 2019 bringing the entitlement to 5 weeks paid at a rate of €245 per week. This will require legislation and is unlikely to come into effect until April 2021.

Staff Changes in ACCS

We have had significant changes in the ACCS team in 2020. Susan Cunniffe retired as Office Manager in July 2020 but continues to work with us as Vetting Administrator. We welcomed David Cahill to the ACCS team in January as Web & IT Support Officer and we look forward to working with him in the months ahead.

Key Employment Development to Watch Out for in 2021

- In January the Government published its strategy 'Making Remote Work' and its intention to legislate to give employees the right to request remote working as part of a national Remote Working Strategy under a permanent framework after the pandemic ends. Included within the strategy are proposals on the "Right to Disconnect", the establishment of remote working hubs and tax treatment. The Government has pledged to implement the proposals by the end of 2021.
- In November 2020, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment launched a public consultation on the introduction of a Statutory Sick Pay Scheme to bring Ireland in line with other OECD countries. This may require employers to provide full pay for the first two weeks of medically certified illness.

I would like to thank our General Secretary, John Irwin for leading us through a very turbulent and challenging year. His constant support, guidance and commitment to our work is greatly appreciated. A huge thanks to Áine, Hilary and Catherine for their advice and collegiality as we work our way through the many issues and queries that come our way.

My sincere thanks also to Debbie, Eileen, Elaine and Susan for their support and a special word of appreciation to our President, Paul Fiorentini for his leadership, wisdom and support. Thanks also to the members of the ACCS Executive, colleagues in the other management bodies and the staff of the DES who are always helpful and obliging.

We know the pandemic is not over and 2021 is hard to predict. As the situation continues to develop and change, we will continue to provide updated advice, resources and support to our Boards and school management. For now, good health and wellbeing have to remain high priorities as well as investing in our skills, so we are all fit for the future.

I look forward to working with our schools throughout 2021.

**Anne Marie Dillon,
Director of Human Resources, ACCS.**