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Association of Community
and Comprehensive Schools

Cumann na Scoileanna Pobail
agus Cuimsitheacha

20th March, 2024.

**The Secretary,
Board of Management and
School Principal in
each Community and Comprehensive School.
Members of the Executive of ACCS.**

ACCS/Info Bulletin 04/24

Re: Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme.

The Department of Education has informed us that the following information issued to schools today:

The Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme grant funding has now issued to post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme.

The Department is aware that many Voluntary Secondary and Community and Comprehensive schools may have limited experience in public procurement, where the total contract value exceeds €50,000, excluding VAT.

The Department will therefore provide additional procurement resources and support to schools following the Easter break.

Below is a summary of the Free Schoolbooks Scheme:

Junior Cycle (JC) Schoolbooks Scheme Guidance for the 2024/25 school year

- **Free Schoolbooks Scheme:**
 - Extension to all Junior Cycle students, aiming to ease financial burden on families and ensure equal access to educational resources.
 - Schools will own the schoolbooks and classroom resources and they will be provided on loan to students for either the duration of a school year or for the entire three years of JC. (Note: calculators, dictionaries etc. remain with student for duration of education.
 - Schoolbooks will be available for re-use in subsequent years therefore schools will not usually need to buy a complete new set of schoolbooks for each school year.
 - Students in 2nd & 3rd year have the majority of books and some related classroom resources. The scheme covers any additional books and core classroom resources required.
- **School Autonomy:**
 - Schools retain the freedom to select schoolbooks and resources that best meet their students' needs.
 - Schools should determine whether it is more cost effective to print/photocopy examination papers, available on the SEC website, or to purchase these.
- **Maintenance and Upkeep:** Recommendation that books are covered and tracked.

- **Special classes where learning supports are required in addition to or as an alternative to schoolbooks:** Once scheme has been used to eliminate cost of schoolbooks and core classroom resources for these students, any surplus may be used to provide additional and related classroom resources in these classes.
- **Use of grant for digital devices:**
 - Scheme does not extend to include the purchase of digital devices by schools.
 - Schools may use the funding for **eBooks** and for **digital media support**, which relates to teaching and learning within curricular requirements.
- **Teacher generated resources and content:**
 - Where schools have generated their own bank of resources for students, students access these resources in the main through a digital device. Such schools may still require a small number of schoolbooks each year, such as English plays and novels.
 - When these schools have eliminated the cost of all required books and classroom resources, they may use the funding to cover other resources associated with teacher-generated content such as **purchasing or subscribing to educational apps**.
 - If surplus funding remains, schools may use the funding to facilitate the provision of **school-owned digital devices** to students on a **temporary** basis, as needed.
 - Schools that use teacher-led resources in some, but not all, subjects will need to consider any requirement to provide new books in the following year before spending surplus funding in any one year.
 - Schools that are wholly or largely reliant on teacher led resources may be asked to provide details of their implementation of the scheme to the Department.
- **Communication with Parents/Guardians:**
 - Schools will be required to communicate with parents/guardians in relation to the scope of the scheme in their school.
 - Parents/guardians must not be asked to purchase schoolbooks and core classroom resources or to contribute to the school towards the cost of these items.
 - The manner in which any voluntary contributions are sought and collected is a matter for school management. (not compulsory)
 - This scheme is ring-fenced for schoolbooks and classroom resources but is **not for school-based activities**.
 - For classroom resources not covered by the school, parents/guardians must be given a detailed list of what they are required to purchase and/or for what materials the school is charging a fee.
 - Reminder to parents/guardians re. upkeep and care of books loaned to students.
 - Where student changes school, books are retained by the original school and a new set is provided by the new school.
- **Financial Management:**
 - Proper financial administration is required for the scheme's funding, with detailed records including annual book lists, and vouching of expenditures necessary for potential audits.
 - To facilitate an evaluation of the Scheme ahead of 2025/26 all schools will be required to complete and submit an income and expenditure report in respect of the scheme.

- **Grant Funding:** Schools receive €309 per student for purchasing schoolbooks and core classroom resources, with discretion on expenditure across the three Junior Cycle years. (Rate: 2024/25 school year)
- **Grant** for Scheme to be paid to schools by 31st March based on Sept. 2023 enrolment figures.
- Schools can purchase **second-hand schoolbooks** under this scheme.
- The Scheme does not include any costs associated with Junior Cycle mock exams.
- **Surplus funding:**
 - Additional classroom resources are the supporting materials for any JC subject or short course required by students to complete projects and practical elements of the curriculum, beyond schoolbooks and core classroom resources.
 - Where surplus funding permits, schools are requested to consider providing items across a range of different subjects.
 - In the event that after providing schoolbooks and eliminating the cost to parents/guardians of classroom resources, schools have schoolbook grant funding remaining, this may be carried forward to the next school year.
 - Schools should consider the need to replace or purchase new schoolbooks in the following year when deciding how to use any surplus grant.
- **Book Rental Scheme:**
 - Where schools have recently introduced a book rental scheme and obtained a loan to meet the start-up costs, surplus funding from the Scheme may be used to meet the 2024 loan costs, but only in respect of the element of the loan relating to JC students.
 - Schools should note that the Free Schoolbooks Scheme will operate in 2025/26.
 - **Senior Cycle:** Schools that previously received **book rental grant funding** under Circular 46/2013 will continue to receive schoolbook grant funding for students enrolled in **Senior Cycle** years for the 2024/25 school year.
 - Schools that have unspent book grant remaining from years prior to the 2024/25 school year may use this surplus funding for any of the Junior or Senior Cycle years.
 - The DE encourages all schools to consider putting in place book rental schemes for students in Transition year, fifth year and sixth year.
- **Developing Schools:** (Sept. 2019 + which have significantly increased their enrolment size each year) The schoolbooks grant for the Scheme will be calculated/paid based on the projected enrolment.
- **Exceptional circumstances:** As a general rule, an additional payment to schools will only be made by the DE in situations where the number of new students enrolled after 30 September is equal to or greater than 10% of the 30 September JC enrolment figure or greater than 15 students, and where the school has insufficient JC Schoolbooks Scheme funding to meet the additional costs. Email: jcschoolbooks@education.gov.ie
- **Procurement Guidelines:**
 - Schools must follow public procurement rules when purchasing books and resources, with support available from the Schools Procurement Unit.
 - See Guidelines when these issue.
- **Protection of copyright (see section 7.8):** As of September 2022, the Department of Education holds a central Educational License (ICLA) on behalf of all post-primary schools.

- **Administration Support Grant:**

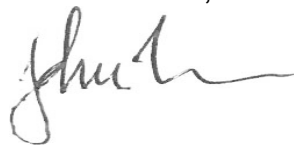
- Each school will receive a separate Administrative Support Grant to assist with the implementation of the scheme.
- The grant amount is based on the **total number of students enrolled in a school's Junior Cycle years** on 30 September 2023.
- The daily rate sanctioned for the Administration Support Grant is €160.62 (this includes holiday pay) and the Department will provide an additional 11.05% to cover employer PRSI cost.
- Schools have the autonomy to use the equivalent number of hours over the course of the school year as they consider most suitable for their needs.
- Specific duties are to be determined by school management – see Appendix 3.
- This Administration Support Grant can be used to employ a person/s to assist with the implementation of the scheme or it can be used towards **other administration costs** such as purchasing a tracking/barcoding system for books, purchase of storage cabinets, or for covering or storage of books.

Size of School (Junior Cycle enrolment September 2023)	No of Days
0-300 students	10
301-600 students	13
601-900 students	16

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Core Classroom resources.
- Appendix 2 – Draft communication to parents/guardians of JC students.
- Appendix 3 – School task list.
- Appendix 4 – Procurement requirements.
- Appendix 5 – Irish Educational Publishers' Association (IEPA) Code of Practice.

Is mise,
le mór mheas,



John Irwin,
GENERAL SECRETARY.