



## **Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme Quick Reference Guide for Schools**

### **1. Scheme aim and minimum requirements (see section 4)**

The main aim of the new Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme is to eliminate the cost of schoolbooks and core classroom resources for parents/guardians. The minimum items that are to be provided under these areas are included in Section 4.3 and Appendix 1 of the guidance.

### **2. Students commencing second and third year in September 2024 (see Section 4.4)**

Students in second and third year already have the majority of schoolbooks and some related classroom resources needed for the Junior Cycle programme.

Under the new scheme, schools are required to provide any additional schoolbooks and core classroom resources required by students commencing second or third year in September 2024.

### **3. Students registered in Junior Cycle programmes in special schools**

Special schools with students registered in Junior Cycle programmes will now receive the same per capita rate (€309) that post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme receive. Special schools that will be in receipt of this grant should refer to the post-primary guidance for details of the scheme. Information in relation to this change for special schools will also be contained in the 2024/25 guidance for primary and special schools.

### **4. Funding (see section 5)**

The grant is paid directly to Community and Comprehensive and Voluntary post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme at a per capita rate of €309. Schools will receive funding in respect of each student they have enrolled in first, second and third year of Junior Cycle programmes. This includes students in the JCSP (Junior Cycle Schools Programme) in dedicated special educational needs classes. Funding is based on enrolment figures on 30 September 2023.

For ETB schools payment will issue directly to the relevant ETB, which will distribute the funding to those schools under its remit.

Funding under this scheme is for use in **Junior Cycle years only**.

### **5. Exceptional circumstances (see section 5.5)**

Schools will be expected, for the main part, to absorb the cost of additional enrolments which occur within the normal course of fluctuations which take place throughout any given school year.

As a general rule, an additional payment will only be made by the Department in situations where the number of new students enrolled after 30 September is equal to or greater than 10% of the 30 September Junior Cycle enrolment figure or greater than 15 students, and where the school has insufficient Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme funding to meet the additional costs.

Schools that wish to apply for additional funding under “exceptional circumstances” should email [jcschoolbooks@education.gov.ie](mailto:jcschoolbooks@education.gov.ie). The Department will send the school an application form where schools can provide relevant information about additional enrolments. Such applications will be considered on a case by case basis.

### **6. Administration Support Grant (see section 5.6)**

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.

Although the rate is based on a daily rate, 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.

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

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 or for covering or storage of books.

## **7. Second-hand schoolbooks (see section 6.6)**

Schools can purchase second-hand schoolbooks under this scheme. This is a matter for the school management in each school when budgeting each year in order to achieve best value for money.

## **8. Surplus funding (see section 4.7)**

In the first instance, the grant for the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme must be used to eliminate the cost of schoolbooks and core classroom resources for parents/guardians.

Once these have been provided, the grant should be used to eliminate other costs for additional classroom resources where a charge may have otherwise been paid by the parents/guardians.

Additional classroom resources covers resources used in many practical subjects such as Visual Art, Home Economics, Graphics, Engineering, Wood Technology, Applied Technology, Science and Music. In essence, additional classroom resources are the supporting materials for any Junior Cycle subject or short course required by students to complete projects and practical elements of the curriculum, beyond schoolbooks and core classroom resources.

Additional classroom resources does not include any items currently provided in post-primary schools through existing funding streams, either from the Department of Education or from other Departments and agencies. When deciding what items to purchase under additional classroom resources and 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.

## **9. Developing schools (see section 5.4)**

The Department recognises a specific number of schools as developing schools. These are schools which have newly opened since September 2019 and which have significantly increased their enrolment size each year. The schoolbooks grant for the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme will be calculated/paid based on the projected enrolment.

However, if the validated enrolment on 30 September 2024 is less than the projected enrolment, the school is liable to refund any excess schoolbooks grant to the Department.

The Department will be in contact with these schools before the end of the 2023/24 academic year to seek projected enrolment figures.

#### **10. School based activities (see section 4)**

The schoolbook funding is ring-fenced for schoolbooks and classroom resources. The cost for any school-based activity is not considered a legitimate expense under the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme.

#### **11. Voluntary contributions from parents/guardians (see section 4.2)**

Section 64 of the Education (Admissions to schools) Act 2018, which was commenced in 2018 explicitly **prohibits** the charging of admission and enrolment fees for admission to or for continued enrolment in a school, with some exceptions such as boarding or fee-charging schools.

The manner in which any voluntary contributions are sought and collected is a matter for school management, however their collection should be such as not to create a situation where either parents/guardians or students could reasonably infer that the contributions are compulsory.

This funding is being provided to schools to provide schoolbooks and classroom resources. Parents/guardians must not be asked to purchase schoolbooks and core classroom resources or to make a contribution to the school towards the cost of these items.

#### **12. Movement of a student to a new school during the school year (see section 6.6)**

If a student moves to another school during the school year, the schoolbooks are retained in the school. The new school will provide the student with a complete set of schoolbooks and any classroom resources that were provided for other students at the start of the school year.

### **13. Maintenance of schoolbooks loaned to students under this scheme (see section 6.7)**

The maintenance and upkeep of supplies is a matter for each school. In the interests of prolonging the lifespan of schoolbooks it is strongly recommended that a cover is placed on all schoolbooks.

Parents/guardians should be reminded that students are expected to take good care of their schoolbooks and classroom resources and keep them in good condition during the year.

Schools should also devise a mechanism for keeping track of schoolbooks that best suits their needs.

### **14. Communication with parents/guardians (see section 6.8 and Appendix 2)**

The main aim of the new scheme is to eliminate costs to parents/guardians of providing schoolbooks, and core classroom resources.

Schools are required to communicate with parents/guardians as early as possible in relation to this new scheme. To avoid any confusion, it is recommended that schools communicate separately with parents/guardians in relation to any other fees, for example, fees to cover school trips.

Parents/guardians must be informed of the classroom resources now covered under the scheme. 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.

In the unlikely event that a parent/guardian indicates that they do not wish to receive free schoolbooks and core classroom resources under this scheme, the parent/guardian must be provided with the relevant class booklist(s). They can then make their own arrangements to source the necessary schoolbooks and any other classroom resources provided by the school under the scheme.

In such instances the school is **not obliged to refund the parent/guardian** the cost of such purchases as the parent/guardian has clearly expressed their wish not to participate in the scheme.

### **15. Special classes where learning supports are required in addition to or as an alternative to schoolbooks (see section 4.5)**

The main aim of the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme is to eliminate the cost of schoolbooks, and core classroom resources for parents/guardians. When this has been achieved for students in Junior Cycle special classes, any surplus funds may

be used to provide related classroom resources. Schools operating special classes are best placed to identify related classroom resources required for their individual setting and to meet the learning needs of their children and young people.

### **16. Use of grant for digital devices (section 6.3)**

With the exception of post-primary schools that use teacher generated content and resources in place of schoolbooks (refer to section 4.6), funding under the Junior Cycle Schoolbooks Scheme does not extend to including the purchase of digital devices by schools. However, schools may use the funding for digital media support, which relates to teaching and learning within curricular requirements.

Decisions regarding the use of digital technology, such as ebooks, in schools is a matter for the board of management/ETB of each school.

### **17. Using the grant for online resources (see section 4.3)**

In the first instance the grant must be used to eliminate the cost of schoolbooks, and core classroom resources to parents/guardians. The term 'schoolbooks' defined in the guidance includes the purchase of ebooks.

Any additional online resources acquired using grant funding under this scheme must primarily be to fulfil the aim of reducing costs that would have been borne by parents/guardians, either by providing the item or paying a fee to the school to provide the item. The Department provides open access to digital resources through Scoilnet.ie, through which all primary and post-primary learners can access an array of resources.

### **18. Procurement of schoolbooks and classroom resources (see section 7)**

Schools have obligations that stem from both EU and national public procurement rules, when sourcing goods and services. Schools have access to the Public Procurement Guidelines for Goods and Services published by the OGP.

Schools should familiarise themselves with the public procurement guidelines before undertaking to purchase goods. These guidelines can be downloaded at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c23f5-public-procurement-guidelines-for-goods-and-services/>. Further information about procurement is set out in the scheme guidance.

## **19. Protection of copyright (see section 7.8)**

It is mandatory for any educational establishment wishing to make multiple copies of a variety of copyright-protected works to have a licence. As of September 2022, the Department of Education holds a central Educational Licence on behalf of all primary and post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme. This allows schools to re-use content in their lessons without having to clear permissions to do so.

Information, including a School Licence User Guide and how to make the most of your ICLA School Licence can be accessed on the ICLA website

<https://www.icla.ie/licences/primary-and-post-primary-schools-licences>

## **20. Book rental grant funding for Senior Cycle students under Circular 46/2013 (see section 8.2)**

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. This will continue at a per capita rate of €39 for DEIS schools and €24 for non-DEIS schools. As far as possible, schools should make every effort to achieve value for money and reduce wastage under the scheme.