# Considerations and Advice to Support the Placement of Children and Young People in Classes and Year Groups in Primary and Post-Primary Schools

## Introduction

The ongoing war in Ukraine has greatly impacted its children and young people. Across Europe schools continue to welcome and provide education for those suffering the consequences of the war.

As of mid-May 2022, just over 5,800 pupils have enrolled in Irish primary and post-primary schools. Schools have done tremendous work in welcoming Ukrainian children and young people into their classrooms. They have adopted a professional, prompt and pragmatic approach.

Many children and young people arriving in Ireland will have experienced disruption in their learning and they and their parents/ guardians may be unfamiliar with the Irish education system and the curriculum in schools. Schools have also sought further guidance on the placement of pupils and students in classes and year groups, including requests for guidance on supporting Ukrainian children and young people accessing online learning

This document aims to provide advice to primary and post-primary schools as they respond to the current situation.

In recognising prior learning and educational experience as crucial for successful integration and for informing inclusive approaches to progression in learning and educational outcomes. This document provides:

* Information on the Ukrainian education system
* Advice on class placement
* Key information on supporting students’ language learning
* Advice where students from Ukraine wish to follow the Ukrainian curriculum

## Information on the Ukrainian Education System

## Comparing the Ukrainian Education Model with the Irish Model

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade** | **Ukrainian Education System** | **Age** | **Irish Equivalent**  **(age based)** |
| 1 | Elementary Education | 6/7 | Primary Education |
| 2 | 7/8 |
| 3 | 8/9 |
| 4 | 9/10 |
| 5 | Basic Secondary Education | 10/11 |
| 6 | 11/12 |
| 7 | 12/13 | Junior Cycle |
| 8 | 13/14 |
| 9 | 14/15 |
| 10 | Upper Secondary Education  (General Stream/Vocational Stream) **\*\*** | 15/16 | Senior Cycle |
| 11 | 16/17 |
| 12**\*** | **17/18\*\*** |

**\***The 12 Year Grade model is currently being phased in. At present, students at upper secondary are expected to complete their Certificate of Completed General Secondary Education at the end of grade 11.

**\*\***Most students follow a General/Academic Programme in Upper Secondary.

## Ukrainian Curriculum Experience

### Elementary Education

Children can attend pre-school up to the age of 6 in Ukraine. Pupils attend elementary schools for four years from the age of 6 to 9 years. The curriculum includes reading, writing, mathematics, physical education, nature, art, and music. The curriculum is delivered through play-based pedagogy during grades 1 and 2. Pupils take state examinations at the end of Grade 4 in Ukrainian (or another native language), reading and mathematics.

### Basic Secondary (Middle School)

Students attend basic secondary school from the age of 10 to 14 years. The general core curriculum includes subjects such as Ukrainian language and literature, foreign language, history, mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, physical education, music and art.

Students take state examinations at the end of Grade 9 and are awarded a Certificate of Completed Basic Secondary Education.

### Upper Secondary

Students in upper secondary are generally aged between 15 and 17 years. The great majority of students follow a general academic curriculum including the core subjects of Ukrainian language and literature, mathematics or history of Ukraine, and one subject of choice. Some take more than these mandatory subjects. All students who pass the final state examinations receive a Certificate of Completed General Secondary Education.

A smaller number of students follow the Vocational stream which is often linked to progression to a specialist qualification.

Access to higher education is facilitated through students completing standardised tests that are externally assessed by the Ukrainian Centre for Educational Quality Assessment.

1. **Advice on Class Placement**
   1. **Overview**

Placing students[[1]](#footnote-1) in the most age-appropriate class, year group and programme is a key priority in supporting wellbeing, identity, belonging, educational progression and outcomes.

The decisions relating to curriculum provision and access to programmes and supports should place the needs of the child at the centre. Such considerations should also take account of the current and future needs of the students including their preparation for key transition stages in the Irish education system – primary to post-primary, junior cycle to senior cycle including Transition Year and the Leaving Certificate programmes. The decisions should be made by school management in consultation with the parents/guardians, the student, class teacher, year heads/class tutors and relevant support teachers/teams, as appropriate. Students’ age and learning needs, including their proficiency in the language of instruction of the school, will be central to decisions relating to access to programmes and supports. Translation apps may be a useful resource in facilitating communication with children and young people when they arrive in the school. Information on free digital apps that schools can use is available via the new dedicated scoilnet webpages and at [pdst.ie - advice on translation apps](https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/What%20free%20digital%20tools%20are%20available.pdf).

Schools should ensure students from Ukraine are integrated as quickly as possible into existing mainstream classes. New classes should not be created to solely accommodate students from Ukraine as this will lead to segregation of these students in the school community.

Schools should provide information to parents/guardians, who may not be familiar with the primary and post-primary education system in Ireland using the [Schooling in Ireland- A system overview](https://www.pdst.ie/cultural-and-linguistic-supports)guide available in Ukrainian and Russian. Information for students and parents regarding languages used and taught in the Irish education system is available on the Additional Information section of the webpage [Information for schools-Ukraine](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/48639-information-for-schools-ukraine/#additional-information) This section also includes information for schools on the Ukrainian education system.

* 1. **Considerations for Primary Schools**
* The pupil should be allocated a place in the class which is most suited to their age.
* For young children, given the importance of children being with their peers, the decision as to whether or not a child should attend an early learning and care setting or an infant class in primary school should reflect the age eligibility-rules for the ECCE programme, which are set out here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2459ee-early-childhood-care-and-education-programme-ecce/> . The ECCE programme is available to all children who have turned 2 years and 8 months of age before 31 August 2022. Children should not be in the ECCE programme if they turn 5 years and 6 months of age on or before 30 June of the programme year.
* Staff can use observations and insights from pupils and their families/guardians when considering the class to which the pupil will be placed and how best to meet the pupil’s immediate and emerging needs in wellbeing, communication, literacy and numeracy.
* Digital technology can be utilised to facilitate, extend and enrich learning opportunities for new pupils, to communicate with families and provide updates on pupils’ progress. Communication and partnerships with families may also be supported through the use of digital platforms.
* Schools can provide opportunities for peer interaction and support, for example, by using buddy systems and learning pairs.
* The [Summer Inclusion Programme 2022](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5d15a-summer-programme/) provides schools with an opportunity to address the English Language skills and integration needs of migrant students, including those who have recently arrived in Ireland from Ukraine.
* Resources to support social and emotional development are available on the NEPS webpage, [available here](https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/#behavioural-social-emotional-difficulties).
  1. **Considerations for Post-Primary Schools**
* Subject to the points below in this section, the student should be allocated a place in a year group that is most suited to their age. For those students allocated a place in junior cycle, it is important to note that the Level 1 and Level 2 learning Programmes (L1/L2LPs) are only for those who have been identified as having specific learning disabilities. Further information about such programmes is available on [www.curriculunonline.ie/home](http://www.curriculunonline.ie/home)
* Engagement with the students and their parents/guardians will assist in ascertaining the student’s educational experience to date and the subjects studied within the Ukrainian curriculum.
  + The school should provide students and their parents/guardians with information in relation to the language of instruction of the school, the curriculum and subject options available. The school should, as far as possible, aim to align the options with the students’ previous course of study, and within the overall requirements of the programme. In exceptional circumstances, consideration may be given, in consultation with parents/guardians, to placing a student in a class group not aligned with their age if language is a very significant barrier to them accessing the curriculum. It should be noted that additional English-language supports may be needed for Ukrainian students at this level along with their year placement.
  + Schools can provide opportunities for peer interaction and support through use of mentoring programmes and active learning methodologies.
  + Ukrainian students may find that Transition Year would provide opportunities for them to adjust to the system and the new school culture, and to develop interpersonal communication language skills. It would provide them with opportunities to bond with their peers and to feel a sense of belonging and connectedness in a year that is free from formal examinations. Schools with larger numbers of Ukrainian students could adapt aspects of the programme in order to provide appropriate learning experiences that will assist them in participating as fully as possible in Senior Cycle. In providing activities associated with TY, schools should prioritise low cost or no cost alternatives that all students can participate in.

* + Students in Ukraine typically complete upper secondary at a younger age than their Irish peers; however the principle of age-appropriate placement in post-primary school in Ireland still applies. If students opt for the Leaving Certificate (Established) programme or Leaving Certificate Vocational programme (LCVP) they should be advised that these are designed as two-year programmes and that fifth year is the most appropriate year group placement. This provides students with the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their learning across a range of practical and applied knowledge and skills.
* Students who opt for the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme must be placed in year one of LCA, so that they have the opportunity to complete all aspects of the programme.
  + Where higher and ordinary level classes exist in any year group, students should not automatically be placed in ordinary level classes because of their need for support in English/Irish. The student should be facilitated in using his/her home language to support and scaffold the assessment of their knowledge in the subject area. This can be done successfully by using translation tools or software.

1. **Key information on supporting students’ language learning**

Accessing the language through which the curriculum is mediated will be a key challenge for students arriving from Ukraine. Students will need to acquire new language and literacy skills in order to access learning. Planning for language support will need to take into consideration students’ learning needs in terms of basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency in the language of instruction in the school.

* 1. **English as an Additional Language (EAL) Supports**

Most children will likely need English language support. Schools may have capacity to provide support to some children from Ukraine within their existing teaching or EAL capacity. In circumstances where a primary or post-primary school does not have any capacity within their existing allocation , an application for EAL supports can be made to the Department using form U-EAL 22/23 at the following [link](https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/2d706-staffing-arrangements-at-post-primary-level-forms/#form-u-eal-2022). In the case of post primary schools who are unable to source a teacher to provide EAL supports, schools may avail of ESOL Tutor (English for Speakers of Other Languages) via the local ETB ESOL Tutor panel. Schools should contact their ESOL Co-ordinator in their local ETB to access ESOL supports.

In accordance with the PDST advice on EAL provision, it is essential that children from Ukraine are provided with necessary supports during lessons with their peers. Language acquisition is best achieved through inclusive, supportive in-class provision. However, for some students there may be a need for additional focused language and literacy interventions which are aligned to the curriculum that the student is following. This support should be provided in line with the guidance.

* 1. **Supports for students with additional and Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

The learning needs of most children and young people arriving from Ukraine will be adequately met through supporting them in acquiring English as an additional language. However, there will be a cohort of students whose additional and/or SEN needs will require a more comprehensive and individualised response. Resources provided to schools, through their allocation of SET and SNA supports, to support students with SEN should be used to facilitate the development of truly inclusive experience for students. All decisions and provision of additional support should be underpinned by the principles and guidance outlined in the Guidelines for primary and post-primary schools for supporting students with special educational needs available [here.](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/56c43-supporting-pupils-and-students-with-special-educational-needs-guidelines-for-schools/)

Supports provided to students with special educational needs should be based on identified needs and be informed by regular reviews of progress (in consultation with parents and students) as outlined in the continuum of support guidelines [primary](https://www.sess.ie/special-education-teacher-allocation/primary/continuum-support-primary) and [post-primary](https://www.sess.ie/special-education-teacher-allocation/post-primary/continuum-support-post-primary). Communication with the NCSE and NEPs representatives on the local REALT team may support this process.

Contact details for REALT teams are available [here](https://www.etbi.ie/regional-education-and-language-teams-for-ukraine/). The subject/class teacher has primary responsibility for the progress and care of all students in the classroom, including students with special educational needs. Special education teaching supports provided to schools should be used solely for the support of students with identified special educational needs, including those students for whom English is an additional language (EAL). The special education teaching supports cannot be used to reduce the student-teacher ratio for general subject teaching or, in the case of post-primary, to provide additional subject options for students who do not have special education needs. Students, should, as far as possible, be supported in the language rich environment of their mainstream classes. Students with the greatest levels of need should have access to the greatest level of support.

* 1. **Cultural and Linguistic supports**

A central repository of resources and supports are now available on [www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie) .

PDST, the NCCA, PPLI and a range of support services have come together to develop a dedicated space on [www.scoilnet.ie](http://www.scoilnet.ie) for schools and teachers to access a wide range of [cultural and linguistic supports](https://www.scoilnet.ie/go-to-post-primary/clsupports/). It is envisaged that additional resources and materials will be added over time. This is a very useful central repository of supports and resources for teachers and schools which includes:

* A range of Diversity and Inclusion guidelines;
* Teaching and Learning Resources and
* Access to PDST supports including recent webinars on *Leading the Inclusion of EAL Learners*

The links to the dedicated primary and post-primary spaces on scoilnet.ie are:

Primary: <https://www.scoilnet.ie/go-to-primary/clsupports/>

Post-Primary: <https://www.scoilnet.ie/go-to-post-primary/clsupports/>

Information on free digital apps is available via the new dedicated scoilnet webpages and at [pdst.ie](https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/What%20free%20digital%20tools%20are%20available.pdf)

A short guidance video prepared by PDST on how to use the Microsoft Translator app is available at the following link [www.youtube.com/watch?v=og5WbqV0RlM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=og5WbqV0RlM)

The maintenance of a student’s home language is central to their wellbeing and to the cognitive development and strength based approach to supporting their education. Schools should view their students’ home language as a key strength and as a competence which helps scaffold the acquisition of new knowledge and skills and also the language of schooling and other new languages. For information on how to support the maintenance of home languages, please refer to the primary intercultural guidelines published by Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) see [primary guidelines](https://ppli.ie/resources/?gresource=ppli-primary-guidelines).

In order to further support linguistic development in the language of schooling and in home languages there is a grant available to schools from the PPLI. This scheme gives primary and post-primary schools an opportunity to acquire books and other relevant home language resources for students who speak home languages other than English or Irish. Further information is available at [school library funding scheme 2022](https://languagesconnect.ie/school-library-funding-scheme-2022/)

Students can benefit from books in their own language as this supports their literacy, identity and heritage. Dual language books are particularly useful. Books in English/Irish and the home language are an ideal tool for all teachers to use. Dual language books are available for different age groups.

1. **Advice where students from Ukraine wish to follow the Ukrainian curriculum**

The policy position of the Ukrainian Ministry for Education and Science is that students are encouraged to continue to engage with the Ukrainian curriculum. Students and their families/guardians have been advised that they should link with their own school or, if not available, an alternative school in Ukraine and continue their education online. It is accepted, however, that this may not always be possible. Where students are linking in with Ukrainian schools online, the priority areas of learning are Ukrainian language and Ukrainian history.

With these objectives in mind, the Ukrainian government is supporting an e-learning platform for self-directed distance and blended learning for grades 5 – 11 (10 to 17 year old students). The platform is available [here](https://lms.e-school.net.ua/). (Typically the device’s browser should automatically offer the choice to translate the website into English in real time). Video lessons have been uploaded to YouTube channels for the All-Ukrainian School Online and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine website.

Schools are encouraged where possible to support students who wish to continue to engage with the Ukrainian curriculum online while at the same time providing opportunities to integrate with the school community. At the same time, it will be important to support Ukrainian children and young people in adopting a sustainable and balanced approach when blending engagement with school classes on the one hand and the Ukrainian online provision on the other.

A number of international resources are available to support schools in enabling Ukrainian students:

* The European Union’s [School Education Gateway](https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm) contains a variety of resources to support education systems across Europe responding to the needs of newly arrived students, an overview is available [here](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/document/print/en/statement_22_1823/STATEMENT_22_1823_EN.pdf).
* The European Council have shared an information guide in English and Ukrainian which contains links to educational resources that provide Ukrainian students with educational opportunities in Ukrainian. The guide has been developed by the Ukrainian Human Rights Commissioner and is available [here](https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/-/resources-supporting-ukrainian-children-s-right-to-education).

1. “Student “in this document refers to primary pupils and post-primary students unless otherwise specified. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)