



5 April 2022

Dear Principal,

Further to my letter to you on 15 March regarding the provision of support to children arriving from Ukraine, I would like to provide you with the following further updates.

In response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive, the Government has adopted a whole of government approach to supporting the people who arrive here.

The Department of Education is working with the whole education sector, including aegis bodies and education partners to advance planning in regard to access to education for school-aged children and providing supports both to their families and schools.

**Summary of key messages:**

- In this phase, people are being placed initially in short-term, temporary accommodation on an emergency basis. This may mean that families with children may move to longer term accommodation after initially arriving. Where you have capacity to enrol Ukrainian children, the Department is asking that you facilitate them.
- It is important to update such enrolments on the POD or PPOD databases as soon as possible. This will help with deployment of necessary supports and resources.
- Regional Education and Language Teams (REALT) have been established to support schools and Ukrainian families. Contact details are available [here](#).
- Schools can apply for additional EAL hours depending on the number of eligible children. Please see details below.
- Information for schools will be hosted on [gov.ie/schools](http://gov.ie/schools) in the Ukraine section, including this letter.

**Accommodation:**

The Department has been advised by the Department of Children, Equality Disability Integration and Youth, which has responsibility for providing emergency accommodation for people arriving from Ukraine, that people are being placed initially in short-term, temporary accommodation on an emergency basis.

Schools are advised that due to the emergency situation, families may be required to move location to access longer-term accommodation.



### **Regional Education and Language Teams for Ukraine (REALT)**

In order to streamline the alignment of supports for Ukrainian families arriving in Ireland the Minister for Education Norma Foley TD has established Regional Education and Language Teams (REALT).

These Education and Language Teams will be hosted by the 16 regional education and training boards (ETBs) and will be staffed by existing regionally-based education support personnel working together to ensure good coordination and alignment of supports for Ukrainian children. The Department will be liaising with the teams to ensure all necessary supports for the Ukrainian children are provided as quickly as possible.

The primary role of the REALT will be to assist children in finding school places and to support schools to meet the needs of these children as they emerge. The REALT will also advise and support the Department in developing new capacity where required, and to co-ordinate the provision of education services to children and families across their defined area. These teams will act as a liaison between schools, local education support services and national support structures in relation to Ukrainian arrivals.

The regional teams will be hosted and administratively supported within the ETBs and will lead a network of other key agencies, including Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), NEPS regional personnel, NCSE regional personnel and Management body local nominees working together with local schools. All of the key agencies working together in a holistic manner will bring added value and efficiencies to the process of supporting the Ukrainian children.

The teams will initially focus on ensuring that children find school places when they are ready to engage with the school system. The REALT will support existing services and co-ordinate the following work areas:

- Align current school capacity with the placement of Ukrainian families, as much as possible.
- Identify additional capacity within their geographic areas to prepare for situations where demand may exceed available school capacity, and work with the Department and other organisations as necessary with a view to making this additional capacity available.
- Assist schools and families with accessing information on school places for Ukrainian children and young people who have moved into the area.
- Assist schools and families with accessing information on the availability of School Transport Scheme services for Ukrainian children and young people who have moved into the area.
- Assist schools and families with accessing resources and supports for additional capacity, wellbeing, language and educational needs.



- Assist with work in the area of staff supply, including where required, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tutors who would assist with the English language needs of Ukrainian children, young people and their parents / guardians.
- Liaise with other local co-ordinating structures that may be established to coordinate the delivery of public services for Ukrainian families.

Information for parents in Ukrainian and Russian on accessing school places is available on [gov.ie/Ukraine](http://gov.ie/Ukraine).

### **School capacity:**

Where children of school-going age have arrived already and want to access the school system right away, the Department is asking schools that have current capacity locally to facilitate these children as best as possible. It is important that these enrolments, and any subsequent changes to them, are kept updated on the POD system at primary level or the PPOD system at post-primary level so as to facilitate the Department tracking overall enrolments at national level and to support the deployment of necessary supports.

While the overall position in relation to the war in Ukraine and its wider impacts continues to evolve, schools assessing their capacity should operate for now on the basis that the emergency/short-term requirement for facilitating children from Ukraine with a school placement is for the remainder of the current school year and also some or potentially all of the 2022/2023 school year. Given this short-term nature of the requirement and the pressing humanitarian needs, the Department is asking schools to consider all currently available accommodation in the most flexible way possible.

The Department is aware that schools are also working with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) on an ongoing basis to ensure there are sufficient special class placements available across the country for children with special educational needs. In areas where the NCSE has identified that special class placements are required it is important that schools continue to facilitate the establishment of those special classes.

The utilisation of accommodation capacity within existing schools across the country is key and will require good collaboration between all schools in a town or local area to help ensure that all available capacity is utilised to the greatest extent possible. The REALT will have an important role in supporting this process and schools should engage with these teams where potential enrolments exceed their available accommodation capacity. In such instances, the regional teams may be of assistance in identifying appropriate solutions, including potentially sourcing off-site accommodation solutions in local community or other facilities where required. This will be a more feasible approach for adding capacity in the short-term given the lead-in periods involved with delivering any additional accommodation solutions.



The Department already has high level data on potential capacity of individual schools from its National Inventory of School Capacity based on schools' annual enrolment returns under POD and PPOD systems, and utilises its Geographic Information System to facilitate spatial analysis of this and other data. In the coming days, in the context of known pressures at post primary level, the Department will additionally be asking all post primary schools to provide supplementary information, via an online portal, in respect of the potential places within the school's current accommodation that could be made available to facilitate children from Ukraine with school placements. Schools' early responses to this survey will greatly assist with the planning and preparations for facilitating children from Ukraine with school placements.

On a national level, total primary enrolments peaked in 2018 and have been reducing since. The net overall reduction in primary enrolments by 2022/23 was projected to be in the order of 25,000 pupils. At post-primary level, demographics are generally continuing on an upward trend. Nevertheless, at both primary and post-primary level there are significant variances in available capacity at local and regional level across the country, in both rural and urban areas. Ultimately, the location of the accommodation provided for the Ukrainian families will be the key factor in maximising the utilisation of existing school capacity to meet their education needs and the Department is coordinating with other Government Departments, with a view to ensuring alignment of our planning processes as much as possible.

**EAL Supports for schools:**

It is recognised that some children have already enrolled in schools. It should be noted as stated above that the initial accommodation arrangements in this phase are most likely to be temporary and that families may move from one area into more medium-term arrangements in a different location

Nevertheless it is understood that most children will most likely need English language support. Schools may have capacity to provide support to some children from Ukraine within their existing capacity. In circumstances where a school does not have any capacity within their existing allocation it is proposed to allocate additional hours for schools to support EAL provision for Ukrainian pupils/students in this phase in line with the table below:



No of EAL pupils	No. of Teaching hours per week
1 - 4	5
5 - 8	10
9 - 13	15
14 - 20	20
21 - 30	25
31 - 40	35
>40	50

Schools can access a form to apply for these resources at the following link <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/2d706-staffing-arrangements-at-post-primary-level-forms/#form-u-eal-2022>

If a school has other support requirements or queries the school principal can also contact the Department's helpline for principal by emailing [USupport@education.gov.ie](mailto:USupport@education.gov.ie) or by telephone 057 9324461.

### **School transport**

The Department in consultation with Bus Éireann is putting in place a new process to facilitate the provision of School Transport Scheme services for children arriving to Ireland from Ukraine.

When set up, there will be link to a form (which will also be available in Ukrainian and Russian) for families/host families to complete in order to apply for school transport. This form will be available on Gov.ie/ Ukraine and further information will be circulated shortly. Children will be accommodated quickly on existing services where there is capacity. Children will not be charged for their ticket and normal eligibility criteria will be waived. If there is no service or capacity, a remote area grant can be offered to the family as appropriate.

For children residing in accommodation centres, the Department is also putting in place a process to facilitate the provision of School Transport Scheme Services for children arriving to Ireland from Ukraine from the centre in which they are residing to their school of attendance.

Further details will issue shortly in regard to this process. In the meantime, Department is dealing with requests on a case by case basis. Queries/requests should be addressed to School Transport at [transportapplications@education.gov.ie](mailto:transportapplications@education.gov.ie) or by phone during office hours to 057 9325467



### **Wellbeing supports and NEPS guidance**

The Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has published:

- Guidance on supporting all children who may be experiencing distress in relation to current events – Supporting Children and Young People in a time of war.
- Guidance for primary and post-primary schools in relation to supporting the wellbeing of Ukrainian children/young people at this time.

All of the NEPS wellbeing supports for the Ukrainian crisis are available on the Wellbeing in Education webpage on gov.ie at the following link [here](#).

NEPS is delivering a series of wellbeing webinars via the Education Support Centres of Ireland, to further support schools, and will develop further advice and resources as needs emerge.

In addition, NEPS psychologists are available on the ground to consult with schools and provide support as needed. Contact details for the NEPS regional office structure can be found [here](#).

### **Cultural and Linguistic supports – central repository of resources and supports now available on scoilnet.ie**

PDST, the NCCA, PPLI and a range of support services have come together to develop a dedicated space on scoilnet.ie for schools and teachers to access a wide range of cultural and linguistic supports. 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.

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/>

Included among the wide array of resources, is information in relation to free digital tools, including apps that can assist with text and voice **translation**. These resources are particularly useful in terms of making school forms accessible to all and for assisting with communication between schools and parents.



Information on free digital apps is available via the new dedicated scoilnet webpages and at <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=og5WbqV0RIM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=og5WbqV0RIM)

Language mats in Ukrainian and Russian are now available for schools to access in digital format through the scoilnet webpage or the PPLI website <https://languagesconnect.ie/language-mats/>

They provide commonly used classroom language in Ukrainian and Russian.

Deirdre Shanley  
Assistant Secretary