

Subject:

**SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT DAYS 2016/17 TO 2017/18
SCHOOL YEARS (inclusive)**

Circular Number:
2016/04

Date of Issue:
25 February 2016

Target Audience:

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools;
- Education Authority;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta;
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
- Governing Bodies Association
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment;
- General Teaching Council Northern Ireland;
- Teachers' Unions.

Summary of Contents:

This Circular, issued by the Department of Education, sets out the arrangements for schools to take up to five School Development Days in the 2016/17 and 2017/18 school years (inclusive) to provide additional non-contact time to devote to school improvement matters.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

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Governor Awareness:
Essential

Status of Contents:
For information and
action by schools.

Related Documents:
DE Circular 2011/21

Superseded Documents:
This Circular cancels and replaces
Circular 2011/21 and Circular
2011/21 Addendum, which
superseded Circular 2010/05.

Expiry Date:
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SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT DAYS 2016/17 TO 2017/18 SCHOOL YEARS (INCLUSIVE)

1. This Circular is to advise schools that in the 2016/17 – 2017/18 school years (inclusive) they may again take up to five additional days (referred to as School Development Days or SDDs) for the purposes of school improvement and school/staff development. School Development Days, if taken, should be used for the purposes of development activities generally taking place during the hours that constitute a normal school day. Taking account of 'Baker' days, this means that each school has up to 10 days available for these purposes. **All grant-aided schools must be open to pupils for 190 days, less any SDDs which the school decides to take. Where a school decides not to use all or some of the 5 available SDDs, it must be open as normal to pupils.**
2. These days should continue to be used for self-evaluation and continuing professional development in pursuit of school improvement and raising of standards. The continuation of this provision recognises the time that is needed to devote to matters identified in School Development Plans as priorities for school development and improvement including:
 - schools' engagement in rigorous self-evaluation, taking account of data and other evidence, in support of school improvement and the raising of standards, particularly standards in literacy and numeracy;
 - the continued delivery of the statutory curriculum, the embedding of revised assessment arrangements and arrangements for reporting to parents;
 - the continued implementation and delivery of the entitlement framework in post-primary schools;

- the development of whole-school strategies and systems for early identification of all barriers to learning for children with special and other additional needs;
 - the development of school-based provision to meet the individual needs of all children presenting with barriers to learning, including the promotion of pupils' emotional health and well-being;
 - issues related to the professional development, health, attendance and well-being of staff, including Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD);
 - the use of ICT in enhancing learning, teaching and assessment, continuing professional development and school leadership and management; and
 - promoting effective links with parents and the community.
3. As part of the framework for Special Educational Needs (SEN) support, the Education Authority (EA) is developing training modules to support schools in relation to updated procedures for identifying, assessing and putting in place appropriate intervention and support to enable children with SEN to meet their full potential during their school years. These training modules will support schools in meeting requirements resulting from new provisions in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill, new Regulations and a new Code of Practice. Schools should consider setting aside at least one SDD to avail of training and professional development in this important area.
4. Such whole school and staff development should link to, and support, the priorities identified in the School Development Plan. In order that maximum benefit is derived from each day, schools should involve all staff, teaching and non-teaching, in the planned activities or in other appropriate

development activities. Staff development sessions should also be regularly and systematically evaluated to ascertain their impact and effectiveness on school improvement, with the outcomes of evaluation feeding in to the SDP process.

Allocation and Management of SDDs

5. School Development Days are days on which pupils are not engaged in learning and can be disruptive to parents and guardians who may be required to make alternative arrangements for their children. It is therefore essential that schools reflect carefully before deciding on the number of SDDs they wish to take and also satisfy themselves that the closure minimises disruption to pupils' learning. Parents and pupils should be given as much advance notice of closure dates as possible.
6. Schools should submit written proposals each year for SDDs to the School Development Service (SDS) in the Education Authority (EA). In the case of Catholic maintained schools, schools should copy their proposals to CCMS. In considering proposals, the EA, along with CCMS where appropriate, will take account of how each school intends to use its Baker Days and SDDs, and how the proposals link to the school's priorities in the School Development Plan. The education support bodies will also use the information to co-ordinate operational planning to ensure efficient provision of services such as school transport and meals.
7. In the case of voluntary grammar schools, grant-maintained integrated schools and other maintained schools the information sent to the EA will be for the purpose of enabling the education support bodies to plan the most effective and efficient delivery of advice and support and also to enable the EA to co-ordinate and plan transport and school meals.
8. As well as recording the details in their School Development Plan, schools should also include information about School Development Days in their Board of Governors' Annual Report. The report should include details of the

days on which the school was closed and outline the main activities carried out on each day.

9. The Department and its partner bodies will continue to monitor and review the uptake and use of SDDs. It is anticipated that ETI will be asked to carry out an evaluation on the impact of SDDs during 2017/18.

Karen McCullough
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