

Subject:

CLASS SIZES FOR PUPILS IN YEARS 1-4 (FOUNDATION STAGE AND KEY STAGE 1)

Circular Number:
2011/01

Date of Issue:
1 February 2011

Target Audience:

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided primary schools;
- Education and Library Boards; and
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools.

Summary of Contents:

This Circular is to remind schools of their statutory responsibility to ensure that class sizes for pupils in Year 1-4 do not exceed 30 pupils.

Enquiries:

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

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Governor Awareness:
Essential

Status of Contents:
Advice

Related Documents:
None

Superseded Documents:
None

Expiry Date:
Not applicable

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1. A recent monitoring exercise in relation to class sizes in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 highlighted that a small number of schools had class sizes in excess of the statutory maximum for pupils in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
2. The purpose of this circular, therefore, is to remind schools about their statutory duty under Article 16(2) of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (the 1998 Order) and Regulation 4 of the Class sizes in Primary Schools Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 to restrict class sizes in Years 1-4 (i.e., Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1) to a maximum of 30 pupils. Schools should note that under Article 16(3)(b) of the 1998 Order this limit also applies to any composite class that includes a majority of pupils in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
3. Under the Local Management of Schools arrangements, it is a matter for school Boards of Governors and Principals to plan and use resources to maximum effect in accordance with their own needs and priorities, including setting staffing levels.
4. If it is apparent that a class size will exceed the statutory limit of 30 pupils and it is the school's view that it is unable to deal with this through its LMS budget, the school can make an application to its Education and Library Board, or, in the case of a Maintained school, via CCMS to the appropriate Education and Library Board, for additional funding to allow it to meet its statutory duty. The Department issues a reminder letter to all primary schools in February each year to advise them of the need to submit such applications to their Boards.
5. Exceptions to the statutory limit are permitted by Article 16(4) of the 1998 Order, which provides that schools may exceed it in such cases or circumstances as education and library boards may direct. Regulation 5 of the Class Sizes in Primary Schools Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 further provides that, in exercising its power to issue a direction, a board must have regard to a number of prescribed matters. These relate to: a direction of an admissions appeal tribunal; a direction of a board to admit a child to a specified school; a school attendance order; a statement of special educational needs; and the need to avoid unreasonable public expenditure. Schools should only exceed the statutory limit of 30 pupils if they have the appropriate direction from their Education and Library Board.
6. The contact details of the relevant personnel within the Education and Library Boards and CCMS are:

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