



Circular Letter 0093/2024

**To: The Managerial Authorities of Recognised Primary,
Community and Comprehensive Schools and
The Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards**

Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes for Special Needs Assistants employed in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools

The Minister for Education, pursuant to the power contained in Section 24 of the Education Act (as amended), directs employers to implement the regulations and procedures, as stated in this Circular, for eligible SNAs employed in approved posts funded by monies provided by the Oireachtas.

All employers and SNAs must adhere to the agreed terms and conditions as stated with immediate effect.

Please ensure that the contents of this Circular are brought to the attention of all members of the Board of Management/Education and Training Boards and all SNAs in your employment, including those on leave of absence.

All queries should initially be brought to the attention of the employer who may wish to consult with their representative organisation. Any further queries may be directed to the Department at the following email addresses:

- a) Queries on terms and conditions for Leave: - teachersna@education.gov.ie
- b) Queries on recording of leave on OLCS: - onlineclaims@education.gov.ie
- c) Queries on salary: - [Payroll Query Form \(education.gov.ie\)](#)

This Circular can be accessed on the Department's website at www.gov.ie.

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Principal Officer
Teacher/SNA Terms and Conditions Section

11 December 2024

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Definitions and Abbreviations

For the purposes of this Circular, the following terms shall have the meanings assigned to them here unless the context indicates otherwise:

Employer – means an Education and Training Board (ETB) for vocational schools/community colleges, community national schools, and a Board of Management/Manager in the case of primary (excluding community national schools), voluntary secondary, community, and comprehensive schools. The ETB or Board of Management/Manager may delegate as appropriate responsibility for matters set out in this Circular.

ETB – means an Education and Training Board, established under and governed according to the Education and Training Boards Act 2013.

On Line Claims System (OLCS) – means the system for recording absences and claiming substitution currently operating in primary, voluntary secondary, community and comprehensive schools.

Paymaster – means the organisation in charge of paying salaries. This is the Department of Education in the case of primary (including community national schools), voluntary secondary, community and comprehensive SNAs, and the ETBs in the case of ETB/vocational/community college SNAs.

Recognised School – means a school which is recognised by the Minister for Education in accordance with Section 10 of the Education Act 1998.

SNA – means Special Needs Assistant

Sport Ireland - means the authority tasked with the development of sport in Ireland

The Department – means the [Department of Education](#).

1. Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes

1.1 Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes may be granted to an SNA who is either representing Ireland as a competitor in an international sporting event or who is a coach of a national team for those events listed at 2.1.

2. Eligibility

2.1 Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes may be granted to an SNA who is representing Ireland in the following sporting events:

- The Olympic Games
- World Championship Events
- European Championship Events
- Pre-Olympic Qualifying Competitions

2.2 The term Pre-Olympic above applies to those sports in which there are specific pre-Olympic qualifying events.

3. Entitlement

3.1 Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes is a period of leave consisting of the number of school days required to represent Ireland at International Sporting events listed at 2.1 above. The sport must be governed by a National Governing Body (NGBs) and affiliated with Sport Ireland.

3.2 An SNA who is absent on another form of statutory or non-statutory leave may not be granted Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes instead of that leave.

4. Application Procedures

4.1 The approval of the employer must be sought 6 weeks in advance of the start date of the proposed leave. Late applications may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

4.2 An SNA who plans to apply for Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes is required to complete the Application Form at [Appendix A](#) of this Circular. The Application Form should be completed and submitted to the employer, along with a letter from the governing body confirming the event details, as soon as is reasonably practicable but no later than 6 weeks prior to the start date of the leave. The letter from the governing body should be on headed paper, confirm the start and end date of the competition and detail any official travel details to and from the event.

4.3 Where an SNA is employed by an ETB, there may be an online facility to make an application for Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes, rather than completion of the Application Form at Appendix A.

4.4 The employer must provide the SNA with a written acknowledgement confirming receipt of the leave application and their decision to approve/refuse the request. Where an application is refused, the employer must include the grounds for refusal.

4.5 Where an application is approved at school/ETB level, the employer must send the completed application form, approval from the board of management/ETB and the

letter from the governing body on headed paper to teachersna@education.gov.ie for final approval, no later than 4 weeks before the start date.

- 4.6 Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes is not a statutory entitlement. While the employer should take reasonable measures to facilitate the request, they must ensure the educational, welfare and care needs of students takes precedence.

5. Recording of Leave

- 5.1 Following the department's approval of Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes, the department /ETB will record the absence on the relevant system.

6. Status during Leave

- 6.1 An SNA on Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes is deemed for all purposes to be in employment at that time including remuneration and superannuation. Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes is fully reckonable for seniority and progression on the incremental salary scale.

7. Replacement SNA

- 7.1 The employer may appoint a substitute SNA, paid by the Paymaster for the duration of this leave. The claim for substitution should be made by the employer via the OLCS/relevant ETB system.

8. Employment while on Leave

- 8.1 An SNA on Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes may not engage in any type of other paid employment.

9. Leave Entitlements for Fixed Term/Fixed Purpose Appointments

- 9.1 An SNA who is on a fixed term/fixed purpose contract of employment shall, during the term of the contract, have full entitlement to apply for Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes. The granting or taking of this leave will not affect a fixed term/fixed purpose appointment or the renewing of such an appointment.

10. Data Protection

- 10.1 All documentation relating to the SNA's Leave absence must be retained by the employer with the relevant personnel records in a safe and secure manner and in line with the employer's data protection policy and data protection regulations. These records may be selected for inspection by nominated Department officials.

11. Compliance

- 11.1 Failure to abide with the regulations and procedures set out in this Circular may be dealt with under the agreed disciplinary procedures and may lead to cessation of salary for an SNA or withdrawal of substitute cover for a school.

Appendix A - Application for Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes

Employees seeking Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes should submit the completed application form below to their employer. The application form and supporting documentation, as detailed in paragraph 4.2, should verify the status of the competition for which the leave is sought. A copy of the application form and supporting documentation should be retained in the school/ETB for record purposes. Paid leave should not be granted, without the prior authority of the Department.

PART 1 – SNA APPLICATION

Name: _____ Address: _____

School Name: _____ Roll No.: _____

School Address: _____

No. of Days Leave Required: _____ Date from: _____ Date to: _____

Name of National Governing Body of Sport (of which applicant is a member):

Address: _____

PART 2 - COMPETITION DETAILS

Title of Competition: _____

Location of Competition: _____

Organising Body's Name: _____

Address: _____

Date from: _____ Date to: _____

Status of Competition:

Olympic Pre-Olympic Qualifying Competition

European Championship World Championship

PART 4 – For completion by an Officer of the Olympic Council of Ireland

This section need only be signed if the event is Olympic or Pre-Olympic.

Name of Governing Body _____

Competitor's Name _____

Event _____

The above Governing Body must send a team to the event named by the applicant. The applicant has been selected to represent Ireland in that event.

Signed _____ Date _____

President /Secretary/Treasurer/Director

Data Protection Privacy Statement

The main purpose for which the Department requires you to provide this personal data to your employer is to enable your Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes application to be processed. Your employer will retain your application form and accompanying documents in accordance with their Data Protection policy. Further information in relation to this policy is available on request from your employer.

The Privacy Notice outlining further information in relation to this Application Form can be found on gov.ie. Full details of the Department's Data Protection policy setting out how we will use your personal data as well as information regarding your rights as a data subject are available on gov.ie. Details of this policy are also available in hard copy from Teacher/SNA Terms & Conditions Section, Department of Education, Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, N37 X659, or teachersna@education.gov.ie, upon request.

PART 5– EMPLOYER DECISION

I certify that I have approved/refused the application for Special Leave with Pay for Sporting Purposes in accordance with Circular 0093/2024. The following documents have been retained on file for audit purposes:

- 1) Copy of Application for Leave under Circular 0093/2024 Including Supporting documents.
- 2) Copy of Decision Notice issued to SNA

Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Employer)