

15th June 2015

To Each SNA Branch Secretary
Copy: Relevant Industrial Staff
Education Divisional Executive Committee

SNA Casualisation

Dear Colleague

Agreement has been reached with the Department of Education and Skills on a revised circular to deal with our dispute over the fragmentation of SNA posts. This followed our ballot for industrial action, comments of the Minister for Education Jan O' Sullivan at our Divisional Conference and subsequent negotiations with the Department and the various management bodies.

In our ballot we sought a firm commitment from the Department of Education and Skills that no Special Needs Assistant will have his/her working hours or income reduced once there is work available in the school as determined by the NSCE allocation prior to any new member of staff being recruited for that school."

The Education Divisional Executive Committee meeting on Wednesday 10 June 2015 received an update on the negotiations and expressed the view that the terms of the industrial action ballot had been met. The Department of Education and Skills placed a revised circular on its website on Friday 12 June 2015 in advance of the announcement of the allocations for the 2015/2016 school year.

Obviously, as was realised at the time of the ballot, there will be some situations where the Special Needs Assistant allocation to the school is reduced because of the particular circumstances. In such situations affected SNAs should ensure that the supplementary assignment arrangements are complied with so that the SNA has the opportunity of alternative employment.

The new circular will provide for "where a school/ETB has an additional allocation of SNA hours/posts (e.g. an additional allocation of SNA hours/posts or an SNA has left the employment) then that additional allocation of hours/posts must be offered to any existing part-time SNAs in that employment, in order of seniority, before the employer has recourse to these arrangements. In essence, this means that before an employer opts to recruit a further person as an SNA(s), they must ensure that all existing part-time SNAs in their employment, in order of seniority, have been offered a full-time position in the school or, in the case of ETBs, a full-time position in a school within the ETB scheme. This offer will be made subject to the SNA undertaking the full duties of the post, including any training/upskilling required to fulfil the duties of the post. If a part-time SNA turns down the opportunity of a full-time position and/or there are additional SNA hours/posts remaining then the employer should commence this process to fill such a vacancy(s). The only exception that can be made to this rule is where a school/ETB has a determination in writing from the NCSE / SENO stating that their allocation must be split amongst a specific number of SNAs and/or stating that the allocation must be implemented in a specific fashion. In cases where this exception

is being invoked by a school/ETB then this written determination from the NCSE / SENO must be provided to the existing part-time SNA(s) affected. It should also be noted that the position in relation to the allocation and distribution of Infant days, which is a distinct and specific feature of the SNA scheme, remains unaffected.”

The Department has indicated to IMPACT that the only exceptions will involve cases where there are genuine grounds for an alternative approach in the interests of a child or children. In these instances any SNA affected by this should receive a written explanation provided by the NCSE/SENO. Any SNA who finds himself/herself in this situation should immediately contact IMPACT so that the union can validate that the circumstances are indeed exceptional and the case is genuine.

Yours sincerely

Dessie Robinson
Assistant General Secretary