

EPV / Course Days Policy



Lurga National School
Gort,
Co Galway

Introduction

This policy aims to strike a balance between the welfare and educational needs of our pupils and the welfare and wellbeing of our teaching staff. The Board seeks to encourage continuous professional development among its teaching staff and is positively disposed to facilitating teachers in availing of EPV days arising from same, subject to the smooth and efficient running of the school.

Under Rule 58 of the Rules for National Schools, teachers are eligible to apply to their Board of Management for Extra Personal Vacation (EPV) days on foot of attending approved summer courses. The granting of such leave is at the sole discretion of the Board as employer. The fact that a teacher has completed a course or has paid for a course, does not automatically entitle the teacher to EPV Days. This should be understood by all.

As per the guidelines set out in Department of Education Circular 0035/2009, leave may be sanctioned on the basis of 3 days for attendance at a 5-day course or as approved by Department. It should be noted that no EPV entitlement arises where attendance at any specific course amounts to 3 days or less, and, in particular that 5 days EPV is the maximum which may be awarded in any school year.

Under Rule 58, EPV days are subject to the prior approval of the "Manager" i.e. Board of Management. The Board of Lurga NS has empowered the School Principal and, in her absence, the Deputy Principal, to sanction EPV days. However, if referred to the Board, the Board will have the final decision.

Under normal circumstances, substitute cover is not paid by the Department for EPV Leave.

Further information in relation to number of days permitted can be found at:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/4754b2-extra-personal-vacation-days/>

Rationale

- To encourage teachers to undertake professional development courses which enhance their teaching and promote a standard of excellence throughout the school
- To assist in the smooth operation of the school
- To minimize disruption to classes
- To ensure that all staff members are clear on their entitlements to days 'in lieu' of courses (EVP days)
- To ensure that no teacher has too many children from other classes in their classroom
- To mitigate the effect of teacher absences on pupils

Selection of Department Approved Courses

In selecting a course, teachers are encouraged to prioritise their own professional development as educators, with due regard to and consideration for the needs of the school and of the children in their care. Particular value attaches to courses that are mutually beneficial to the teacher and the children, from the point of view of teaching, learning and wellbeing.

It should be noted that completion of multiple online courses, offered by different institutions, and attended during the same period, will not be considered by the Board as a valid basis for a teacher to apply for more than 3 EPV Days and in such cases, a maximum number of 3 EPV Days will be sanctioned.

Eligibility

All permanent and fixed-term teachers are eligible to be considered for EPV leave.

Substitute teachers on non-casual contracts (more than 40 days) are eligible to be considered for EPV leave in the same way as other teachers.

Operation of the Policy and Procedures

Application for EPV Days

Requests for EPV days are made verbally, in the first instance, to the Principal. Following a discussion, the formal application for an EPV day is made via email. Approval of the application will be made by the Principal, via email. If sanctioned, the day is noted on the School Calendar.

All primary teachers participating in approved summer courses are, on completion of the course, provided with a certificate confirming attendance and completion of the course. A teacher claiming EPV days must present this certificate to the school principal at the beginning of the school year, as evidence of completion of an approved summer course.

Applications for EPV Days will not be considered until a teacher has submitted a certificate of attendance.

When discussing/applying for EPV Days, where possible, prior notice of at least 1 week is appreciated.

Sanctioning of EPV Days

In principle, EPV Days will be sanctioned on a 'first come, first served' basis. In the event of two or more applications for the same day, the Principal will consult with the teachers concerned. In exceptional circumstances, where it is absolutely necessary for both teachers to absent themselves on the same day, in the case of class teachers, both classes will be split. With the exception of Junior Infant teachers, teacher absences will not be covered by SEN.

Apart from in exceptional circumstances, no more than 1 EPV Day per class teacher will be sanctioned on any given day. To ensure the smooth running of the school, only one class will be split on any particular day.

Apart from in exceptional circumstances, no more than 1 EPV Day per SEN Teacher will be sanctioned on any given day.

It is possible for EPV Days in respect of 1 class teacher and 1 SEN Teacher to be sanctioned on any given day.

Apart from in exceptional circumstances, a maximum of 1 EPV Day will be sanctioned in any school week in respect of individual teachers, i.e. teachers are requested not to apply for more than 1 EPV Day in any given week or more than 2 EPV Days in any given term.

In availing of 2 EPV Days in the same term, teachers are requested to avoid applying for EPV Days that straddle the weekend, i.e. on Friday and the following Monday.

Teachers in the Junior Infants classroom(s) will have their classes covered by SET, in rotation, during the Infant School Day.

Due to the necessity for the SEN to cover the absences of Junior Infant class teacher, a maximum of 3 EPV Days per year will be sanctioned in respect of Junior Infant teacher.

A maximum of 1 EPV Day per teacher, per year will be sanctioned in respect of each of a pair of teachers sharing a post, whereby the class must be split and is without a teacher for the day. Teachers sharing a post may apply for further EPV days which, if sanctioned, must be covered by the teacher's partner teacher, i.e. post sharing teachers must arrange to cover each other's absences on 2 of 3, 3 of 4 or 4 of 5 EPV Days.

Apart from in exceptional circumstances, EPV Days will not be sanctioned in the following circumstances:

During the first 2 weeks of the school year

During the week following Christmas and Easter

On Planning Days/Staff Training Days, e.g. Primary Language Curriculum, Primary Curriculum Framework that have been scheduled to take place and for which advance notice has been given.

On days when other classes are scheduled to be away on School Tours, Sports Day or attending events, advance notice having been given

For the purposes of extending certain other forms of approved leave, i.e. Maternity Leave (including Statutory and Non-Statutory Leave) Parental Leave, Parents' Leave.

Preparation for EPV Leave

Consultation

Teachers taking EPV Leave should consult with the Office and with the teachers to whom they propose to send pupils, to ensure that there are no issues in the destination classroom.

Class Split

Teachers must prepare a Class Split, with due consideration to the needs of their own pupils and to the teachers and pupils to whom they will be sending their pupils.

In preparing the Class Split, teachers must refer to the Class Split Guidelines, available from the Office.

A copy of the Class Split must be given in advance to the Office and to the SEN Teacher attached to the class.

Clear instructions should be given to pupils regarding what they should do and where they should go on the day that their teacher will be absent. Pupils should be clear regarding where they are to go for the toilet and at breaktimes and The Principal/Deputy Principal will convey the class to their own classroom in the morning and supervise their distribution as per the Class Split.

Pupils' Work

Teachers are requested to have a minimum of three day's work prepared and photocopied in their classrooms. In preparing work for children for EPV Days and other unexpected absences, teachers are requested to:

- Prioritise work that is based on use of textbooks, workbooks, library books, etc. to avoid unnecessary photocopying
- Ensure that there is sufficient work for the children to do for the entire day. For the children who tend to finish their work quickly, please compile a list of further activities for them to engage in.
- Differentiate the work so that each pupil is working a level appropriate to him/her

With the exception of pupils who require assistive technology to access the curriculum, as pupils must be supervised when using internet capable devices such as iPads, work should not be set that involves the use of these devices.

Work must be differentiated, as appropriate. Work given to pupils should aim to revise and reinforce work already done, so as not to place additional demands on the receiving class teacher.

In the case of Junior Classes, i.e. Infants to 2nd Class, prepared work is to be left in the teacher's classroom, ready and accessible to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

In the case of Senior Classes, i.e. 3rd to 6th Classes, prepared work is to be given to pupils by the teacher the day before his/her absence on EPV or, if necessary, is to be left in the teacher's classroom, ready and accessible to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 2/10/24.

The policy will be reviewed, as necessary, with reference to the latest Department of Education guidelines.



Chairperson of Board of Management



Principal

Date: 2/10/24