



# Teachers' Union of Ireland

## Addressing the Educational Needs of Students in the Very High-Risk Category

### Guidance for TUI members

#### Students categorised as very high-risk

##### How is a student deemed to be in the very high-risk category?

A student categorised as being in the very high-risk category is a student who has an underlying condition/illness that places her/him at very high-risk if s/he contracts COVID-19. The school must be provided with a letter from a medical professional stating that the student falls into that category. Such students are required to remain at home.

##### Are schools required to adapt education provision for students in the very high-risk category?

Yes. The overall responsibility for ensuring that students at very high-risk if they contract COVID-19 receive appropriate support remains with the school in which they are enrolled.

##### Are schools required to adapt education provision for the siblings of students in the very high-risk category?

No

#### Adapted Education Provision

##### What options are available to a school to support students in the very high-risk category?

A school is permitted to use one of the following options or a combination of options.

- 1) Some teachers have been certified as being at very high-risk from contracting COVID-19 and cannot therefore return to a physical school setting. These teachers will be facilitated to work from home and may be used to support students in the very high-risk category rather than to teach their own classes in school. A school is permitted to hire a substitute to teach the classes of the teacher in the very high-risk category.

A teacher who undertakes this support role does so within her/his timetable i.e. provision is made within her/his normal class contact hours to engage in supporting students in the very high-risk category.

Schools should ensure that teachers who are facilitated to work from home are provided with an appropriate digital device and training for this purpose.

The very high-risk student/s being supported by the teacher may be enrolled in the teacher's own school or in other schools.

- 2) Schools that do not have a teacher in the very high-risk category, working from home, who can meet the subject needs of a very high-risk student may seek the assistance of their local education centre to source a teacher to meet the needs of the very high-risk student. Local education centres will connect teachers from other schools to assist.

- 3) *A group of schools may decide to organise its own cluster of teachers to match students and teachers, for example, schools within one ETB or schools within a local geographical area.*
- 4) *Schools may also use existing teaching resources to meet the needs of students in the very high-risk category.*
- 5) *Individual subject teachers may **voluntarily** decide that they can adapt education provision for these students themselves. **The decision in this regard rests solely with the subject teacher.***

### **Can school management require a subject teacher to adapt education provision for very high-risk students who are learning remotely?**

*No. The decision in this regard rests solely with the subject teacher.*

### **What supports should a school put in place to enable very high-risk students to engage remotely?**

*School management should arrange for the student (and teacher) to have access to relevant digital technology and other resources, as appropriate.*

*School management must also set clear, reasonable expectations about the level of support it can provide to both the student at very high-risk and her/his parents/guardian.*

### **If a teacher engages remotely with a student in the very high-risk category, what additional supports will be given if the student also has special educational needs?**

*The Special Education Teacher (SET) should plan to provide any additional support that is as closely aligned as possible with that which would normally be available in a physical setting of a school.*

### **Will a teacher who is teaching the student remotely be required to meet regularly with parents/guardians?**

*Regular contact/check-ins with parents/guardians and students will be essential to establish how the students are experiencing the adapted education provision.*

*The conduct and frequency of contacts/check-ins will be clearly communicated to parents/guardians. This contact will be scheduled in a manner that is consistent with the right of teachers to personal/discretionary time and cannot give rise to additional workload.*

## **Role of the Subject Teacher**

### **What is the role of the subject teacher (teacher within the school i.e. not working remotely) to facilitate students at very high-risk?**

- *Subject teachers **who voluntarily decide** that they can most appropriately address the practicalities of adapted education provision themselves may share key teaching points of lessons and activities with the student using the school's online digital platform.*
- *The subject teacher can also provide or recommend resources including books and/or packs of materials for use by the student that are relevant to the planned lessons.*
- *In circumstances where a subject teacher in the school decides that s/he cannot appropriately address the adapted education provision, s/he **may**, at his/her discretion, co-ordinate the support for the student through liaising with a designated teacher with expertise in the subject who is supporting the student remotely.*

- *In circumstances where a subject teacher in the school decides that s/he cannot appropriately address the adapted education provision and there is no designated teacher with relevant subject expertise available from the student's own school or indeed from another school in the local area, the local Education Centre will advise the school of the teachers available in the region who have the required expertise.*

*Should this approach be taken, the subject teacher should advise the teacher who is teaching the student of the topics the student has covered to date and periodically check-in on the student's progress.*

### **If a subject teacher decides to support a student categorised as very high-risk, what happens?**

*Such teachers could, using technology:*

- *allow the student to connect remotely (using school-supported digital devices) to the live class taking place within school.*
- *send the student video recordings of practical activities, or links to such recordings. These videos may be sourced on-line i.e. not a recording of the teacher.*
- *provide regular opportunities for the student to interact with her/his peers in the relevant subject classes through online video conferencing and/or collaborative learning activities, such as project work, which can be carried out online.*

## **Role of the Teacher categorised as Very High-Risk - working from home**

**If a teacher (at very high-risk and working from home) is supporting student/s categorised as very high-risk from other schools, is there any change to her/his teaching contract?**

*No. The contractual relationship with the teacher's own school/ETB is unaffected and a teacher therefore is guided by the policies of her/his own school. Such teachers are only required to teach the number of hours s/he is contracted to teach with her/his base school/ETB.*

**If a teacher (at very high-risk and working from home) is supporting student/s categorised as very high-risk from other schools using all her/his contracted hours, is s/he required to also teach her/his normal class in her/his base school?**

*No. Such a teacher, teaching remotely from home, is only required to teach the hours s/he is contracted to teach - nothing further.*

## **Role of the Designated Teacher**

**As the designated teacher in the school i.e. the teacher working within existing school resources. What do I do?**

*As designated teacher you will be teaching the students remotely and be allowed further time, from within timetable, to ensure frequent contact with the subject teacher(s) and should strive to support the learning experiences for the student in the subject in a way that aligns with the learning of the student's peers in her/his subject class insofar as possible.*

*The designated teacher should liaise with the subject teacher on the progress of the student.*

## Recording of Lessons

**If a teacher decides to support a very high-risk student, is s/he required to record her/his lessons and send them to the student?**

*No. Teachers are not required to do this and are advised not to do so. Students should, where possible, interact with the teacher online during the normal timetabling of her/his subject in the school.*

*Teachers could, using technology:*

- *allow the student to connect remotely (using school-supported digital devices) to the live class taking place within school.*
- *send the student video recordings of practical activities or links to such recordings. These videos may be sourced on-line i.e. not a recording of the teacher.*
- *provide regular opportunities for the student to interact with her/his peers in the relevant subject classes through online video conferencing and/or collaborative learning activities such as project work which can be carried out online.*

## Role of Education Centres

**What is the role of Education Centres?**

*If a school does not have teachers categorised as very high-risk working remotely from home in the subject area needed or does not have teachers in the school who feel that they can cater for this adapted education provision, Education Centres will assist schools in identifying available teachers in an area who are working from home with the relevant subject expertise. The Education Centre will link those*

*teachers with students who are at very high-risk from contracting COVID-19.*

## Early School-Leavers or students anxious about COVID-19

**Are schools required to adapt education provision for students who are anxious about returning to school or students who are in the high-risk category (not very high-risk)?**

*No. However, schools are required to engage with these students in the same manner as they would have done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**Are schools required to adapt education provision for students who are at risk of early school leaving?**

*No. However, schools are required to engage with these students in the same manner as they would have done prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

**If I have a student who is at risk of early school-leaving or is anxious about returning to school, should I record her/his attendance/absence in the usual fashion?**

*Yes. Where students have not returned to school, despite the efforts made by schools and others, Educational Welfare Officers will engage with, encourage, and support these students and their parents to facilitate a return to school.*

## Students – self-isolation

**One of my students has been told to self-isolate: is the school required to adapt education provision for this student?**

*No. From time to time, a number of students may be required to self-isolate for a short time*

on foot of medical advice. It is not expected that these students would be educated through adapted education provision during this time. Instead, schools should, at a minimum, endeavour to support those students to catch up with their learning on their return to school

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***This guidance as set out above is based on:  
Continuity of Schooling: Supporting Post-Primary  
Students who are at Very High-Risk to COVID-19***

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## **Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, 2004 Advice to members**

*The sections of the EPSEN Act that relate to Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have not yet been commenced. As a result, a statutory entitlement to an individual education Plan does not currently exist and will not exist until the relevant sections of the Act are commenced by Ministerial order.*

*Moreover, until and unless the DES/Government provides the requisite resourcing, particularly with regard to time and training, it is neither realistic nor manageable to introduce IEPs.*

*Therefore, in the absence of appropriate resourcing, TUI members cannot be required and should not attempt to implement IEPs. To do so would create the false impression for parents/guardians that a school has a developed capacity to deliver the level of service promised in the EPSEN Act.*

*TUI members are committed to providing an education of the highest quality to all children, irrespective of ability, but are routinely obstructed in their efforts by a post-primary environment that is chronically and grossly under-resourced, not least in respect of special educational needs.*

*It is the moral and legal responsibility of the State, acting through the DES, to provide the resources that will facilitate effective*

*introduction of the requisite range of supports - including IEPs - for students with special educational needs.*

*The Union will not countenance an opportunistic transfer of that responsibility (or of the associated culpability) from the State to teachers.*

*In this regard, the TUI will oppose, by whatever means necessary, the imposition of the very significant additional workload on teachers, including principal teachers, that such a transfer of responsibility would involve. The Union will support members in applying this advice.*

*This advice applies specifically to the generation of:*

- *Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for SEN students*

*It also applies to any proxy for an IEP, that has not been the subject of consultation and agreement with the Union. In this regard, members are advised to advise the Union of any attempt to implement what may, in practical terms, be IEPs variously styled as:*

- *Individual Action Plans (IAPs) for SEN students*
- *Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for SEN students*
- *Student Support Files (SSFs) or Student Support Plans (SSPs) for SEN Students.*

***This list may not be exhaustive.***

*Members should particularly note that the above advice does not apply to normal, professionally appropriate and sustainable (classroom) planning by teachers for differentiated teaching and learning that takes due account of the strengths and needs of the students they serve and of the contexts in which they teach.*

**Youthreach Centres** are also advised not to engage in devising or in the implementation of, individual Learning Plans (ILPs)/individual Action Plans (IAPs) unless the centre in which they work is in receipt of the dedicated SENI resourcing.