



Subject:

**SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT DAYS
2007/08 SCHOOL YEAR**

Circular Number:
2007/05

Date of Issue:
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Audience:

- Principals and Chairpersons of Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools;
- Education and Library Boards;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education;
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta;
- Association of Governing Bodies of Grammar Schools;
- Teachers' Unions.

Summary of Contents:

This Circular sets out the arrangements for schools to take up to five School Development Days in the 2007/08 school year to provide additional non-contact time to devote to School Development matters.

Enquiries:

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Governor Awareness
Essential

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Information for schools

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Circular 2006/02

Superseded Documents:
Circular 2006/02
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SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT DAYS - 2007/08 SCHOOL YEAR

1. This Circular is to advise schools that in the 2007/08 school year, may again take up to five additional closures (referred to as School Development Days or SDDs) for the purposes of school improvement and school/staff development. Taking account of 'Baker' days, this means that each school has up to 10 days available for these purposes. All grant-aided schools must be open to pupils for 190 days less any SDDs which the school decides to take. Where a school decides not to use all or some of the 5 available SDDs, it must be open as normal to pupils on these days.
2. This decision takes account of the developments which apply in the 2007/08 school year and the need for schools to be able to devote time to considering a range of current priority issues, such as: -
 - revised curriculum and assessment requirements and the pupil profile;
 - implications of the entitlement framework in post-primary schools;
 - ongoing work on the Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD);
 - issues related to the professional development, health and well-being of staff;
 - ongoing work on school improvement issues such as: literacy and numeracy policies, child protection measures, developing whole school approaches to promoting positive behaviour and anti-bullying policies.
 - sharing information about both school specific and wider school sector matters relating to the Special Education Needs and Disability Order (SENDO).

The Partnership Management Board has indicated that it would be appropriate for schools to plan to use 3 of the SDD's in 2007/08 to support teachers in implementing the revised curriculum. Principals may wish to discuss this with their CASS link officers in the first instance.

It is anticipated that schools' consideration of these issues will take place in the context of the School Development Plan, which became a statutory requirement on schools in September 2005.

- 3 Baker Days and School Development Days are days in which pupils are not engaged in learning; it is therefore essential that schools seek to use each such day to the full to equip staff to improve the educational opportunities they provide. In considering their need for these closures, schools should reflect carefully on how they currently use Baker Days for whole school development and training before deciding on the number of SDDs. Such whole school development and training should link with the school's priorities identified in its school development plan. In order that maximum benefit is derived from each day, schools should involve all staff, teaching and non-teaching, in the planned activities or in other appropriate developmental activities.

4. The Department and its partner bodies are continuing to monitor and review the uptake and use made of SDDs.

Allocation and Management of SDDs in the 2007/08 School Year

5. Schools should submit written proposals for SDDs as soon as possible to the Head of the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS) of their local Education and Library Board (and in the case of Catholic maintained schools, schools should copy their applications to CCMS). In considering proposals, Boards, along with CCMS, where appropriate, will take account of how each school intends to use its Baker Days and the SDDs and to link the proposals to priorities in the school's development plans. Boards (and CCMS) will wish to ensure that schools' plans for SDDs and Baker Days are organised to make the most effective use of CASS support and also that school transport and meals arrangements are organised efficiently. Parents and pupils should be given as much advance notice of closure dates as possible.
6. In the case of voluntary grammar schools and grant-maintained integrated schools, the information sent to Boards will be for the purpose of enabling Boards' CASS service to plan the most effective and efficient delivery of advice and support and also to enable Boards to co-ordinate and plan transport and school meals. The issue of whether a voluntary grammar school or grant-maintained integrated school wishes to take SDDs in 2007/08 (up to a maximum of 5) will be entirely a matter for the school to decide, taking account of its training and support needs and the use already made of Baker Days. Of course, where CASS support is requested, it will be a matter for the school and the relevant Board to discuss the most appropriate dates for the provision of that support.
7. This increase in the number of additional closures may well be questioned by parents and the local community. It is recommended therefore, that schools should indicate in their Governors' Annual Report the days on which the school has been closed together with a short summary of the main activities carried out on each day.

2008/09 School Year

8. A further circular concerning the number of SDD's permitted in 2008/09 will issue during the 2007/08 school year.

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