

**Subject:**

**SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT DAYS  
2011/12 TO 2014/15 SCHOOL YEARS (inclusive)**

**Circular Number:  
2011/21**

**Date of Issue:  
19 October 2011**

**Audience:**

- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools;
- Education and Library Boards;
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools;
- Education and Skills Authority Implementation Team;
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education;
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta;
- Governing Bodies Association;
- Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment;  
and
- Teachers' Unions.

**Summary of Contents:**

This Circular sets out the arrangements for schools to take up to five School Development Days in the 2011/12 - 2014/15 school years (inclusive) to provide additional non-contact time to devote to school improvement matters.

**Enquiries:**

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

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**Governor Awareness  
Essential**

**Status of Contents:  
Information for schools**

**Related Documents:  
2005/08**

**Superseded Documents:**  
This Circular cancels and replaces Circular 2010/05, which superseded Circular 2008/02  
(with effect from 31 July 2010 )

**Expiry Date:  
31 July 2015**

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## SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT DAYS - 2011/12 TO 2014/15 SCHOOL YEARS (INCLUSIVE)

1. This Circular is to advise schools that in the 2011/12 - 2014/15 school years (inclusive) they may again take up to five additional days (referred to as School Development Days or SDDs) for the purposes of school improvement and school/staff development. School Development Days, if taken, should be taken for the purposes of development activities taking place during the hours that constitute a normal school day. 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.**
2. Every School a Good School – a Policy for School Improvement (ESaGS) included a commitment to extend, for at least the next five years, the provision that has allowed schools to take up to 5 school development days. These days are to be used for self-evaluation and continuing professional development in pursuit of school improvement and raising of standards. Section 4 of the ESaGS document sets out the four characteristics of a successful school and indicators of performance associated with each characteristic. The four characteristics are:
  - Child-centred provision
  - High quality teaching and learning
  - Effective leadership
  - A school connected to its local community
3. The extension of this provision takes account of the Department's reform agenda and will enable schools to plan ahead and devote time to matters they identify as priorities for their school including:
  - the need for schools to engage in rigorous self-evaluation, taking account of data and other evidence, in support of school improvement and the raising of standards, particularly standards in literacy and numeracy;
  - the continued implementation of the revised curriculum, the introduction of revised assessment arrangements and arrangements for reporting to parents;
  - the implementation of the entitlement framework in post-primary schools;
  - the development of whole school strategies and systems for early identification of all barriers to learning and participation in education for children with special and other additional educational needs, including the promotion of pupils' emotional health and well-being;
  - the development of school based provision to meet the individual needs of all children presenting with barriers to learning;
  - issues related to the professional development, health, attendance and well-being of staff, including Performance Review and Staff Development (PRSD);
  - the use of ICT in enhancing learning, teaching and assessment, continuing professional development and school leadership and management; and
  - promoting effective links with parents and the community.

4. Schools should reflect carefully on how they currently use Baker Days for whole school and staff development before deciding on the number of SDDs they wish to take, taking particular care to use the days in a way that minimises disruption to pupils' learning. Such whole school and staff development should link to, and support, the priorities identified in the school's 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. Staff development sessions should also be regularly and systematically monitored and evaluated to ascertain their impact and effectiveness on school improvement.
5. The roll out of the training programme for the introduction of revised statutory assessment arrangements for the 2012/13 year is being co-ordinated by CCEA to ensure that there is the minimum disruption for schools, and schools should consider setting aside the equivalent of 2 days to avail of training and professional development to help meet the statutory requirements to assess and report on the cross-curricular skills. This will enable schools, where relevant, to agree specified closure dates with CCEA to facilitate school-based INSET and CPD on the implementation and embedding of the revised arrangements.
6. Baker Days and School Development Days are days on which pupils are not engaged in learning and can be disruptive to parents and guardians who may be required to make alternative arrangements for their children. It is therefore essential that schools satisfy themselves that the closure for the day is justified. Schools, should also include details in their Board of Governors' Annual Report on the days on which the school was closed, together with a short summary outlining the outcomes of the main activities carried out on each day.
7. The Department and its partner bodies will continue to monitor and review the uptake and use made of SDDs.

#### **Allocation and Management of SDDs**

8. Schools should submit written proposals each year for SDDs as soon as possible to the Head of the Curriculum Advisory and Support Services (CASS) of their local Education and Library (and in the case of Catholic maintained schools, schools should copy their proposals to CCMS). Details of dates and proposed activities will also be made available on request to the Education and Training Inspectorate. In considering proposals, Boards, along with CCMS where appropriate, will take account of how each school intends to use its Baker Days and SDDs and how the proposals link to priorities in the school's development plan. The education support bodies will wish to co-ordinate strategic and operational planning to ensure that schools can make most effective use of the support provided, to ensure consistency in the delivery of key educational messages and to ensure efficient provision of services such as school transport and meals. Parents and pupils should be given as much advance notice of closure dates as possible.
9. In the case of voluntary grammar schools, grant-maintained integrated schools and other maintained schools the information sent to Boards will be for the purpose of enabling the education support bodies 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, grant-maintained integrated school or other maintained school wishes to take SDDs in 2011/12 - 2014/15 (up to a maximum of 5) will be entirely a matter for the school to decide, taking account of its professional development and support needs and the use already made of 'Baker' Days. Of course, where support of education support bodies is requested, it will be a matter for the school and the education support bodies to agree the most appropriate dates for the provision of that support.



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**LISA BOAL**

Standards and Improvement Team