



Circular Letter 115/2008

To: BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

1. **Substitute cover for registered teachers employed in primary schools – Amendments to existing arrangements.**
 - 1.(a) As a result of the 2009 Budget provisions for Education, arising from current economic challenges, and following subsequent proposals from the management bodies of primary schools, new arrangements are being put in place for substitution cover for uncertified sick leave for teachers in primary schools.
 - 1.(b) These arrangements are being put in place with effect from 1 January 2009 and will remain in place for the remainder of the 2008/09 school year while a review of the supervision, substitution arrangements and related matters takes place.
 - 1.(c) With effect from the 1st January, 2009, the general rule will be that substitute cover will not be provided for the first day of an absence of a teacher on uncertified sick leave in a school.
 - 1.(d) There will be two exceptions to this general rule. The first will be that substitute cover will be provided for the first day of an absence of a teacher on uncertified sick leave in schools with two or less classroom teachers.
 - 1.(e) The second will be that in the event that two or more teachers in a school are absent from teaching duty on the

first day of uncertified sick leave, substitute cover will be provided for the second and subsequent teachers that are absent.

- 1.(f) The existing arrangements for substitute cover for other absences of teachers from teaching duty will continue to apply.

2. Checks for the Employment of Substitute Teachers.

2.(a) A recent newspaper report of journalists being offered employment as substitute teachers gaining access to two schools while purporting to be qualified teachers serves as a timely reminder of the importance of carrying out adequate checks when school staff are being recruited. For school authorities, when employing persons for teaching or other positions, good practice should involve the checking of recent employment records, qualifications, experience and names of referees. While many substitute teachers have previous experience of working in schools and may be known to the authorities in particular schools, there is clearly a heightened requirement for vigilance in checking the prior employment record where the person seeking employment is not known to the school or is approaching it for the first time. Good practice is warranted in any event, regardless of the specific issue with regard to safeguarding against any child protection risk.

2.(b) In the context of child protection specifically, the arrangements for vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff are set out in Department circular 0094/2006, which issued to all schools in June 2006. This circular is available on the Department's website. Irrespective of the position on vetting by the Garda Vetting Unit, where facts or information come to a board of management's attention calling into question a person's suitability to work with children, it is a matter for the board to be satisfied that the person is suitable to work in that capacity.

The position will naturally have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

2.(c) A Board of Management must consider the various circumstances of the case, give due weight to all relevant factors and afford fair procedures to the individual concerned before making a decision.

H. Loftus,
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