

02/09/2020

Dear Principal,

Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) has committed to supporting schools and families in the return to school for all students and what follows is a summary of our approach. *(Please also find attached a short video clip outlining this approach).*

As you are aware, TESS is comprised of three interlinked strands, The Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL), The School Completion programme (SCP) and The Educational Welfare Service (EWS), which work in collaboration with schools, families and other relevant services to promote and support school attendance, participation and retention.

While SCP and HSCL provide targeted support for those students and parents experiencing difficulties in relation to school attendance, participation or retention, the EWS focuses primarily on school attendance. This autumn however, as principals and their schools deal with the many challenges posed by Covid-19, all TESS strands will be available to support any child/family experiencing difficulties in returning to and engaging with school.

We are aware that students/families who may never have needed support from TESS will now require support to ensure a successful return to school. To achieve this we are asking all HSCL, SCP and EWS personnel to focus on supporting the return to school for the months of September and October. Over the next 2 months, we will be asking TESS staff to prioritise this element of work to support the return to school.

In schools with HSCL and/or SCP, these personnel will focus on any students and families requiring additional support to return to school. Where HSCL and/or SCP is not available to a school, EWOs will be available to provide support to schools and families. To assist in this collaborative effort it is essential that a whole school approach is taken to supporting the return of each student prior to any request for EWO intervention.

TESS will be asking all schools to complete a once off 'Covid' school return from late September when schools have completed 20 school days. This return will identify those students who have not returned to school despite the best efforts of the school team.

Once schools submit these returns, the three TESS strands will utilise all their resources to engage with students identified by schools as not returning. In order to reach out to all schools nationwide TESS is adopting the following approach:

- HSCL personnel will continue to focus on their respective DEIS schools
- SCP staff will continue to focus on the DEIS and non-DEIS schools in their cluster.
- EWS staff will focus on all other DEIS and non-DEIS schools that do not have HSCL or SCP supports. EWS staff will be supported by the temporary reassignment of staff from the wider TUSLA organisation to TESS.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues so that together we can ensure all students are supported to return to school. Should you have any queries or if TESS can be of any further assistance please contact a member of our team. Visit www.tusla.ie/tess/covid19-provision/ to get further information and to access contact details for your region.

Yours sincerely,



Noel Kelly,
Director, TESS

Educational Welfare Service
Every School Day Counts