



Powerstown Educate Together National School

Droichead Policy

This policy has been formulated by Powerstown ETNS to inform NQTs and teaching staff of the Droichead process for the induction & mentoring of NQTs.

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Droichead an Introduction:

Droichead, a period of supported professional practice, is a central feature of a new model of induction and probation being piloted in Powersotwn ETNS over the coming two years (2014/2015 and 2015/2016).

Following satisfactory completion of the *Droichead* process, NQTs will be confirmed by fellow professionals as having met certain criteria and the Teaching Council will remove the *Droichead* condition from their registration.

The main objective of *Droichead* is the professional development of NQTs by way of systematic support in the induction phase, thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and development.

A key characteristic of *Droichead* is access by the NQT to a mentor and other experienced colleagues. These will form a professional support team (PST). The PST is made up of experienced and fully registered teachers, either in the same school as the NQT or in neighbouring or other schools. Ideally, PST members will each have five years' teaching experience or more.

Satisfactory engagement & Criteria

Satisfactory engagement in *Droichead* will be attached to an NQT's registration as a condition. In order to fulfil the *Droichead* condition, he or she will have to:

- (a) engage in a period of induction
- (b) be confirmed by (an) experienced fellow professional(s), following that process, as having satisfied certain criteria and
- (c) complete a minimum period of post-qualification professional practice, which may take place in one or more schools.

The criteria that the NQT must satisfy as referenced in (b) above are as follows:

- (a) he or she must have engaged professionally with the school-based induction activities as established by the Teaching Council
- (b) he or she must have demonstrated a satisfactory commitment to quality teaching and learning and
- (c) he or she must have demonstrated an ability to practise independently as a qualified, fully registered teacher.

The Teaching Council has developed indicators of good practice which may assist PSTs in establishing when these criteria are being met. These indicators are set out in *The Droichead Pilot Programme: A Guide for Pilot Schools*, which is being made available to PSTs in pilot schools as part of their training. They may also be downloaded from www.teachingcouncil.ie.

When an NQT has been confirmed as having fulfilled the *Droichead* condition, the Council will remove that condition from the teacher's registration. When all conditions have been met, the teacher will be deemed to be probated and fully registered.

Applying to commence *Droichead*

A primary teacher who is conditionally registered with the Teaching Council and whose only remaining conditions are induction and probation/*Droichead* is eligible to commence the process of *Droichead* in a teaching position in a pilot school.

In order for an NQT to begin the *Droichead* process, he or she must have commenced, or be about to commence, employment in a pilot school. Such employment must be for a period of at least 50 consecutive school days (primary) or 100 hours (post-primary) in order to be recognised for *Droichead* purposes.

Applications may only be made online to Limerick Education Centre at www.lec.ie using 'Form DR1'.

Commencing the process of *Droichead*

To apply to commence the process of *Droichead*, a teacher must complete and submit 'Form DR1' online at via the website of Limerick Education Centre, www.lec.ie. As soon as a teacher is employed in a pilot school and the online submission of the form DR1 been confirmed, the process of *Droichead* is deemed to have been commenced.

An NQT should make contact, and seek to have a meeting, with his or her mentor soon after he or she has commenced employment.

Shortly thereafter, a professional conversation takes place between the NQT and the PST (see section 5.4) and an outline plan for the *Droichead* process is agreed. The outline plan is likely to set out the frequency of observations of practice and professional conversations. It is also likely to include indicative timelines for

making a recommendation to the Teaching Council, having regard to the duration of the NQT's employment in the school.

Professional support team

The professional support team is a team of experienced and fully registered teachers, including a principal and a mentor, who work collaboratively to support the NQT during the *Droichead* process and his or her entry into both the school and the profession.

When the members of the PST first meet, they may decide that different members of the team will take on different roles.

- a) **The Principal (Helena)** will ensure that the process is carried out appropriately but may choose not to be directly involved in observing the NQT; he or she may delegate those aspects to the deputy principal, mentor and/or other experienced teachers, as appropriate
- b) **The Mentor (Cróna & Maeve)** will have a uniquely supportive role, and will work closely with the NQT on a regular basis to support planning and preparation, and arrange for the NQT to observe his or her teaching, and that of his or her colleagues, as appropriate and
- c) **The Droichead Support Teacher (Ann Marie & Elaine)** will be experienced teachers who may not be as closely involved in the process.

The PST will also decide which members of the team will observe the NQT's work and provide feedback based on those observations.

See Appendix 1 for further information.

Droichead is fundamentally about the NQT's professional journey from qualification to full registration and the process of his or her learning as he or she engages with more experienced colleagues, and reflects on the professional conversations that take place and on his or her own teaching. The PST is encouraged to take every opportunity to discuss issues and challenges as they arise, and to offer a range of supports that will enable the NQT to address those challenges and learn from them. The PST is also encouraged to seek additional support, advice and guidance when required. The more comprehensive the support offered, and the greater the degree of open engagement by all those involved, the better for the NQT.

Professional practice requirement for *Droichead*

Droichead encompasses both the confirmation by (an) experienced fellow professional(s) that the NQT has satisfied defined criteria, and the completion of a minimum period of post-qualification professional practice.

For the 2015/2016 school year, the minimum professional practice requirement for *Droichead* will substantially mirror those for NQTs undertaking the probation (primary) processes.

The required minimum period of professional practice must take place in a recognised school. In cases where the period of professional practice takes place in more than one school this can be aggregated towards the overall practice requirement. In these circumstances, the NQT should ensure that the relevant sections of 'Form A' (Appendix 3) are completed and signed by the principal of each school.

Only professional practice as a qualified teacher will be taken into account for the purposes of satisfying the *Droichead* condition.

Professional practice requirements for primary NQTs

To meet the professional practice requirements of *Droichead*, a primary teacher must complete a minimum of 100 school days from the date on which he or she was first appointed to a post recognised for *Droichead* purposes in a primary school. Such practice may be in a permanent, temporary or substitute capacity and must comprise:

a) at least 100 consecutive days in a single setting

or

b) at least 100 days, which may take place in separate schools in two periods of not less than 50 consecutive days each.

or

c) at least 120 school days, which must involve a single block of not less than 50 consecutive days.

A primary teacher can undertake the *Droichead* process if employed in one of the following roles:

a) mainstream class teacher

b) special class teacher in a mainstream school

- c) teacher in a special school or hospital school or
- d) full-time resource teacher of pupils with low-incidence disabilities.

The minimum period following which a recommendation can be made by a PST to the Teaching Council regarding an NQT's professional practice is a block of 50 consecutive school days within one of the class settings as outlined above.

Observations by the NQT of teachers' practice

Observation of other teachers teaching is a key element of the *Droichead* experience. As with many aspects of *Droichead*, the Council has not prescribed the number of observations that must be undertaken, as it is the quality rather than the quantity of observations that is important.

It is recommended that there would be at least two classroom observations carried out by the NQT, and that the exact number, and the classes observed, should be based on discussions between the NQT and the mentor. While it is acknowledged that this may affect the teaching day of other members of staff, the experience of mentoring to date would indicate that this type of work is mutually enriching for both the NQT and their more experienced colleagues. The Council would ask experienced teachers to bear this in mind when considering requests for observation time by NQTs.

Observations by the PST of the NQT's practice

In order to ascertain if an NQT has demonstrated a satisfactory commitment to quality teaching and learning, and has the ability to practise independently as a fully registered teacher, a number of observations of practice by one or more members of the PST will be required. The number is likely to vary depending on a range of variables. For example, where the NQT is experiencing professional difficulties, a greater number of observations may be needed in order to identify areas for improvement and support.

The key to successful observation (regardless of format) is that the focus should be on observation of both learning and teaching. After that, the focus should be determined by the Council's criteria 5, in particular the areas where most support is needed, as determined in professional conversations with the NQT. See section 5.10 for further details.

The PST will be best placed to determine, on a case-by-case basis, how many observations might be necessary and to co-ordinate these within the overall school-based *Droichead* plan. It is anticipated that an NQT will be observed at least twice by one or more members of the PST within a 50-day period (at primary level) or 100-hour period (at post-primary level). This is over and above any observations that may be made by the mentor.

NQTs will have opportunities for professional conversations following observations of their practice by one or more members of the PST (see section 5.10).

Professional conversations

During the course of the *Droichead* process, an NQT will have a number of interactions with one or more members of the PST, called ‘professional conversations’, which are described below.

A professional conversation might be an opportunity for the NQT and mentor (or the NQT and other member of the PST) to exchange informal feedback on a one-to-one basis, and discuss issues arising in the course of the NQT’s day-to-day practice. Alternatively, it may take the form of an arranged meeting between the NQT and some or all of the members of the PST.

The first professional conversation will be for the purposes of welcoming the NQT and agreeing an outline plan for the *Droichead* process, including indicative timelines for making a recommendation to the Teaching Council, having regard to the tenure of the NQT’s position in the school.

Other professional conversations will follow observations of the NQT’s practice and allow the members of the PST, either individually or collectively, to provide feedback to an NQT in relation to the teaching and learning that was observed, and guidance regarding areas for further development.

An NQT will take notes to record the key aspects of the discussion and future actions to be taken. He or she may do this as part of his or her portfolio (see section 5.11.). Relevant extracts from the portfolio should be shared with the experienced teacher or other PST member, if the PST considers that this may assist in providing further supports. The need to respect the confidential nature of information discussed during professional conversations is emphasised.

In recognition of the collegial nature of teaching, the practice of discussing emerging classroom challenges with colleagues (including members of the PST) is a very positive one. Therefore, the fact that an NQT seeks guidance or support with regard to a professional practice issue, as part of a professional conversation, should be viewed in a positive light and encouraged by members of the PST.

Records to be maintained by the NQT

As a self-directed learner, it is expected that NQTs will maintain a professional portfolio to support the process of reflection, and to document the *Droichead* process and his or her learning during that process.

The portfolio should include:

- Records of professional conversations and meetings with members of the PST, including needs analyses and action plans
- Records of CPD, including certificates and course notes
- Records of observations of other teachers/classes and notes
- Weekly reflections

In maintaining records of the *Droichead* process, NQTs should respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of information gleaned during the course of the process. He or she should also be mindful of ethical and data protection considerations, anonymising data where appropriate and ensuring that records of the *Droichead* process are stored securely.

At all times, the frame of reference should be the Council's criteria for *Droichead*, and the portfolio should help the NQT to identify areas where he or she may need further support or guidance. Relevant extracts from the portfolio should be shared with the PST, if members consider that they may assist them in providing further supports or in making a recommendation to the Teaching Council.

Records to be maintained by the PST

It is important that PST members retain notes of their observations of the NQT's practice, and of the professional conversations with the NQT, so as to be able to provide informed feedback on the pilot. In addition, it is important that a record of professional conversations would be agreed between the NQT and the PST. Ideally, such records should be maintained electronically, for ease of retrieval, and also for sharing with fellow PST members and researchers during the pilot phase. A template for observations, and

recording the outcomes of these observations, is available from the NIPT and training on the use of such templates will be provided to all PST members.

In maintaining records of the *Droichead* process, PST members should respect the privacy of others and the confidentiality of information garnered during the course of the process. They should also be mindful of ethical and data protection considerations, anonymising data where appropriate and taking any measures necessary to restrict access to sensitive information. It is recommended that records be kept in line with the school's data protection policies and at a minimum until the NQT has been fully registered.

Concluding the *Droichead* process

The minimum period following which a recommendation can be made by the PST to the Teaching Council regarding a newly qualified primary teacher's professional practice is a block of 50 consecutive school days within one class setting.

The minimum period following which a recommendation can be made by the PST to the Teaching Council regarding a newly qualified post-primary teacher's professional practice is a period of 100 hours. The 100 hours must be spent teaching a curricular subject(s) to a designated class on the school's timetable within a single post-primary school.

It should be noted that these are absolute minimum periods of practice and the Council believes that, where the period of an NQT's practice in a school exceeds those thresholds, it is advisable to defer the making of a recommendation until nearer the end of his or her time at the school. It is also open to the PST to recommend an additional period of professional practice, so that the NQT may avail of further supports to aid his or her development.

When an NQT is nearing the conclusion of the *Droichead* process, as per the indicative timeframe agreed at the start of the process, a professional conversation takes place between the NQT and the PST members.

By this point in time, it is expected that the NQT will have:

- a) completed a required minimum period of professional practice (at least one block of 50 days in the case of primary teachers, and 100 hours in the case of post-primary teachers)
- b) engaged professionally with the school-based induction activities as established by the Teaching Council
- c) demonstrated a satisfactory commitment to quality teaching and learning and

d) demonstrated an ability to practise independently as a qualified, fully registered teacher.

In most cases, a recommendation will be made by a number of experienced teachers working collaboratively. There may, however, be circumstances where a principal is not in a position to establish a PST, perhaps due to school size. In such circumstances, he or she may wish to consider linking with another school or schools and establishing an inter-school PST, or he or she may make the recommendation to Council him or herself.

At the end of the *Droichead* process, the PST may form an opinion that:

- a) the NQT meets the requirement of *Droichead* (this may be subject to undergoing additional periods of professional practice)
- b) that a further period (or periods) of professional practice is/are required before a recommendation can be made
- c) that additional supports are needed before a recommendation can be made or
- d) that the assistance of the Inspectorate is required.

Where the PST is of the view that further time is required in order to make a recommendation to the Teaching Council, the *Droichead* process may be extended. Observations of practice will also continue, and feedback may be further discussed in professional conversations as part of the ongoing process of support for the NQT. Additional supports may be sought from the NIPT, as appropriate. At the end of this period, a further professional conversation with the PST will take place. If necessary, the PST may decide, following consultation with the NIPT, to request assistance from the Inspectorate. In such cases, the principal will complete 'Form DR2OCI' and submit it to the office of the Chief Inspector.

Where, having regard to the practice of an NQT, the PST is uncertain as to the appropriateness of completing the *Droichead* form, the PST may wish to seek guidance through the cluster meetings or the telephone and email channels, which will be established to support PSTs. The NIPT will be available to offer additional supports via its school support service. That service aims to support and guide the PST (including the mentor) and the NQT, and incorporates phone/email support, school visits, action planning, etc.

Where, following such supports, the PST still has concerns about confirming satisfactory completion of *Droichead*, it may decide that the NQT would benefit from an additional period of professional practice and further supports, before a recommendation can be made.

Following the provision of additional time and support, the PST, having consulted with the NIPT, may decide to request assistance from the Inspectorate. This is done via 'Form DR2OCI', which should be submitted by the principal to the Office of the Chief Inspector. The Inspectorate will then observe and evaluate the NQT's practice, provide oral feedback to the NQT and to the principal, and make a recommendation to the Teaching Council.

The input of the Inspectorate should only be sought where other supports, guidance and advice have not addressed the difficulties the NQT is experiencing. If an NQT has not demonstrated that he or she has met the *Droichead* criteria within a period of 50 days, more time should be allowed and further guidance provided prior to requesting assistance from the Inspectorate.

Informing the Teaching Council about the completion of *Droichead*

In order to meet the requirements of *Droichead*, an NQT must be recommended to the Teaching Council by the PST as having met certain criteria and have completed the specified period of professional practice.

As soon as both requirements have been met by an NQT and verified as appropriate, he or she will be in a position to submit a completed 'Form A' to the Teaching Council. The Council will check the form and if all is in order, it will remove the condition of *Droichead* as appropriate on the NQT's registration record and confirm this to the teacher in writing.

In order to be granted full registration, an NQT must meet the requirements of *Droichead* and any other registration conditions applied.

Complaints and appeals

An NQT who has concerns about any aspect of the *Droichead* process should act as quickly as possible. The concerns may be raised informally in the first instance with his or her mentor, or more formally, through the professional conversations with the PST, where the nature of the concerns warrants this.

Where the NQT feels that his or her concerns are not being satisfactorily addressed, he or she may make contact with the NIPT to seek the guidance of an associate who have been nominated to support the *Droichead* process in that county.

As set out in section 5.6., in seeking to fulfil the condition of *Droichead*, a primary teacher is required to complete a period of professional practice of not less than 100 days (or 120 days, in certain circumstances). At post-primary teacher must complete a period of professional practice of not less than 300 hours.

If, at the end of such a period and having exhausted the complaints procedure, an NQT is of the view that the process of *Droichead* was not conducted in accordance with the principles and procedures set down by the Teaching Council⁶, he or she may submit an appeal to the Teaching Council. Such appeals must be submitted in writing within one month of the expiration of the relevant period of practice as set out in Sections 5.6 and 5.7.

Appeals submitted should include the following documentary evidence:

- a) the name and registration number of the NQT
- b) the school where the *Droichead* process took place and its roll number
- c) the period during which the *Droichead* process took place and
- d) details of the *Droichead* process, as recorded by the NQT in his or her professional portfolio, and the reasons why he or she considers that the *Droichead* process has not been carried out in accordance with the principles and procedures as set down by the Teaching Council.

Appeals will be considered by an appeals panel made up of Council members and external reviewers. An appeal will lead to one of the following two outcomes:

- a) a decision that the *Droichead* process has been carried out in accordance with the principles and procedures as set down by the Teaching Council and that the outcome of the process should stand or
- b) a decision that the *Droichead* process has not been carried out in accordance with the principles and procedures as set down by the Teaching Council, that the outcome of the process should be set aside and, as appropriate, the timeframe for satisfying the *Droichead* condition extended by a prescribed period.

The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing to both the NQT and the principal of the school in which the *Droichead* process took place.

The *Droichead* process in restricted settings (primary)

A primary teacher will normally undertake the *Droichead* process when employed as a mainstream class teacher. In certain circumstances, a teacher may be employed in a restricted setting and may wish to undertake the *Droichead* process in such a setting. The *Droichead* process may be partially carried out if a teacher is employed in one of the following restricted roles:

- a) special class teacher in a mainstream school
- b) teacher in a special school or hospital school or
- c) full-time resource teacher of pupils with low-incidence disabilities.

A teacher employed in a restricted setting is generally not afforded opportunities to teach the full curriculum and gain experience in areas such as whole-class management. For this reason, on the conclusion of the *Droichead* process in a restricted setting, the Teaching Council cannot remove the condition of *Droichead*. It will, however, update the Register to reflect that the *Droichead* process has been completed in a restricted setting. The time-bound requirements regarding the condition of *Droichead* will no longer apply for so long as the teacher remains employed in a restricted setting.

Primary NQTs who complete the *Droichead* process in a restricted setting and who are eligible to work in mainstream classroom settings will be obliged to complete the *Droichead* or the probationary process in such settings within two years of taking up a position in a mainstream classroom.

Review

This Policy will be reviewed and updated in accordance to the guidelines released by the Teaching Council.

Role Expectation for the Principal in the Induction Programme

- To nominate a teacher to train as a mentor
- To brief the N.Q.T. on the nature and purpose of the induction within the school
- To outline at the initial meeting the role of the mentor, NQT and principal
- To consult with the mentor and NQT regarding the induction plan
- To support the mentor and NQT/s
- To attend NIPT professional development for principals
- To brief school staff, parents and Board of Management on the nature and purpose of the school's involvement in the NIPT
- To liaise with the mentor and NQT regarding inputs at staff meetings on the induction programme
- To inform the Inspector when substitution cover for school-based induction activities is being availed of
- To keep copies of timetables and induction plans when substitute cover is being availed of, as part of the school-based mentoring and induction
- To oversee the planning and preparation for teaching and learning by NQTs and out arrangements in place to support same
- To develop a whole school policy on induction

Role Expectation for the N.Q.T.

- To reflect on and evaluate practice with regard to The Teaching Council's Code of Professional Conduct
- To be aware of the continuum of professional development and his/ her own responsibilities therein
- To participate fully in the school's induction programme and to undertake the elements of the programme
- To work in partnership as part of the school team
- To be fully cognisant of the duty of care to all pupils in the school
- To accept responsibility for seeking help and advice
- To maintain the school's professional ethos in terms of appearance and conduct
- To learn from the established good practice of teachers in the school and/ or elsewhere
- To consider the professional feedback of the principal, mentor and other staff who advise about teaching and learning
- To be thoroughly prepared for all lessons and to have long and short term planning available and up to date
- To be aware of all school policies
- To attend professional development sessions and contribute to group learning by participating fully

Role Expectation for the Mentor

- To provide personal, professional and pedagogical support for the NQT
- To co-ordinate the induction plan and induction activities in collaboration with the Principal and the NQT
- To attend mentor professional development, where possible
- To liaise with the principal in providing short updates at staff meetings on the process of induction of NQTs
- To liaise with other staff members in relation to opportunities for the NQT to visit their classrooms and work alongside them
- To enable and empower the NQT to seek/ source answers to questions
- To establish clear boundaries for the mentor-NQT relationship
- To clarify school policies and procedures for the NQT
- To work in partnership with the NQT in the classroom e.g. observing and giving feedback
- Where practical, to liaise with other schools in the area for the purpose of observing and sharing practice
- To provide support for planning and preparation for teaching and learning by NQTs
- To accept and give feedback in a constructive, open and professional manner
- To engage in action planning with the NQT
- To adopt a professional approach at all times