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POWERSTOWN EDUCATE TOGETHER NATIONAL SCHOOL

Droichead Policy 1.2

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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1. DROICHEAD AN INTRODUCTION:

Initial Teacher Induction is carried out in Powerstown ETNS through engagement with *Droichead* - **an integrated induction framework** for newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

Droichead builds on the learning which has taken place during initial teacher education, in particular, the extended school placement. At the same time, it recognises that induction is a distinct phase on the continuum of teacher education, a socialisation process into the teaching profession. The integrated framework includes both **school-based** and **additional professional learning activities** to address the needs of teachers as they begin their careers.

2. THE DROICHEAD PROCESS

- *Droichead* takes as its starting point the areas for further learning which have been identified by the NQT, in collaboration with the HEI, as part of the extended school placement.
- This process includes a period of supported professional practice in the classroom, school-based professional learning activities, as well as other additional professional learning activities to meet the needs of teachers as they begin their careers.
- The main objective of the *Droichead* process is to support the professional learning of NQTs during the induction phase, thus laying the foundations for subsequent professional growth and learning in the next phase of their career.
- Following the *Droichead* process, a declaration is made by the NQT that he or she is ready to move to the next phase on the continuum of teacher education. A joint declaration is made by the teacher and experienced colleagues, following collective reflection, that through their engagement in *Droichead*, they have participated in a quality teaching and learning process. The Teaching Council then removes the *Droichead* condition from the teacher's registration. The teacher will be fully registered with the Council when all registration conditions (e.g. Irish Language Requirement, qualification shortfall conditions) have been deemed by the Teaching Council to have been met.
- When an NQT is employed in a participating school in an eligible setting (see Section 3) and for the minimum period of professional practice (see Section 4), **they register for the *Droichead* process via an online form on Teaching Council website using their unique teaching council number and password log in.** An email confirmation is issued to the NQT from the Teaching Council confirming that they have registered for the

Droichead process. **This record should be retained, a copy provided to the PST and then submitted with a completed Form D.**

- There are two key strands of the *Droichead* process as an integrated induction framework for newly qualified teachers.
 - The first strand is a **school-based induction (Strand A)**, through which the NQT is supported by experienced colleagues.
 - The second strand is made up of **additional professional learning activities (Strand B)**, which involves:
 - (a) attendance at NQT cluster meetings in local education centres, and
 - (b) one other professional learning activity, related to the needs of the NQT (See Section 6)

3. SETTINGS IN WHICH THE *DROICHEAD* PROCESS CAN TAKE PLACE

Teachers will normally undertake the *Droichead* process when employed as a mainstream class teacher. As a general rule, paid employment in a permanent, temporary or substitute capacity is eligible, where the teacher is teaching all areas of the Primary School Curriculum, including Irish, to a mainstream class of pupils (single or multi-grade) for the entire school day, and where the teacher's tenure at the school will afford him or her the opportunity to meet the minimum duration requirements set out in Section 4 below.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, the school should deploy NQTs in a mainstream setting. In certain circumstances, where he or she is the most appropriate teacher to support the needs of pupils, a newly qualified teacher may complete the *Droichead* process within Powerstown ETNS in one of the following roles:

- (a) Special Class teacher
- (b) Full-time resource teacher of pupils with low-incidence disabilities (as defined by the DES)
- (c) Full-time learning support teacher
- (d) A role which combines both (b) and (c) above (LS/RS post)

In the above cases, the period of employment must involve teaching the same cohort of pupils. As part of the *Droichead* process, Powerstown ETNS will also endeavour to ensure that there are opportunities for the newly qualified teacher to teach in a mainstream setting, which would include the teaching and learning of Gaeilge in a mainstream class, in collaboration with the class teacher.

4. DURATION OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE REQUIRED

Professional practice requirements for engaging in the *Droichead* process includes (i) extended school placement (10 weeks) during initial teacher education and (ii) post-qualification practice.

Teachers must complete a block of **60 consecutive school days** in an eligible setting from the date on which they were first appointed to a post recognised for *Droichead* purposes. The teacher must register for the *Droichead* process with the Teaching Council online at <https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Teacher-Education/Droichead/>.

It should be noted that these are the absolute minimum periods of practice. Given that *Droichead* as an induction framework is designed to provide the maximum degree of support, guidance and advice, it is recommended, where an NQT has additional time in his or her school over and above the minimum requirements set out in Section 3 above, that the extra time be used to support the *Droichead* process.

5. SCHOOL-BASED STRAND

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT TEAM (PST)

- *Droichead* is fundamentally about the NQT's professional journey and the process of their induction. A key part of this process is an NQT's engagement with more experienced colleagues, and reflection on the professional conversations that take place on their own professional learning and practice. There are a number of ways in which a PST can be established, e.g. if more than one NQT is undertaking the *Droichead* process in a given year, more than one team might operate in parallel.
- The professional support team in Powerstown ETNS is a team of experienced and fully registered teachers, ideally with a minimum of 5 years teaching experience who work collaboratively to support the NQT during school-based induction, in the first stages of his or her professional journey.
- The roles and responsibilities of each PST member and the principal may vary from year to year according to the needs of the school. Roles and responsibilities will be discussed and decided at an initial PST meeting before the *Droichead* process commences in a given school year.
- The PST completes *Droichead* professional development, provided by NIPT, and is assisted in its work through the provision of a range of supports and resources including:
 - NIPT initial training for all members of the PST
 - Release time with substitute cover to allow each member of the PST to attend training
 - Release time to support the school-based elements of *Droichead*
 - Telephone and email support from the NIPT, through its network of associates and permanent staff
 - A comprehensive mentor guide, including a range of sample templates.

The PST will meet **at least once per term** to discuss issues and challenges as they arise, to offer the NQT supports to address challenges and learn from them, and to support the NQT with planning, preparation and meetings/observations with other teachers.

PROFESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS

During the course of the *Droichead* process, an NQT will have a number of interactions with the experienced colleagues who are supporting the process, called 'professional conversations'. These conversations provide opportunities to exchange informal feedback on a one-to-one basis, and discuss issues arising in the course of the NQT's professional learning and practice and offer guidance to the NQT. 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, discussing their areas of professional learning following initial teacher education, and agreeing an outline plan for the *Droichead* process.

Other professional conversations will follow observations of the NQT's practice and allow the NQT and members of the PST, either individually or collectively, to share feedback in relation to the teaching and learning that was observed.

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. PSTs offer a range of supports that enable the NQT to address challenges and learn from them. Additional support, advice and guidance is also available from the NIPT via its school support service, and some additional time to facilitate this may be of value.

TAISCE: PORTFOLIO-BASED LEARNING

Portfolio-based learning is an important process to support the NQT in engaging in these conversations in a way that is effective and helpful. Therefore, as a self-directed learner, and to support reflective practice, NQTs will maintain a *Taisce*. Engaging in the process of portfolio-based learning enables the NQT to reflect on their professional learning in a way that suits them and identify and plan for areas in which they may need further support or guidance.

Droichead allows for a large measure of flexibility in the creation of *Taisce*, with the format and contents decided and owned by the NQT. Ideally, it should include key learning moments and insights from the *Droichead* process, including school-based induction, i.e. records from observation of other teachers teaching, records of feedback following post-observation professional conversations with PST members, etc. Key learning moments from additional professional learning activities, including insights from cluster meetings and/or other professional learning events/conversations, may also be included.

Emphasis is on the quality, rather than on the quantity, of these learning opportunities. It is also important to remember that the NQT chooses which moments to reflect on, and how they wish to capture that reflection.

The NQT, in collaboration with the PST, selects relevant items from their *Taisce* as a focus for the professional conversations, which are central to the *Droichead* process.

In maintaining their *Taisce*, NQTs 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 ensuring that their *Taisce* is stored securely.

OBSERVATIONS

Observations are also a key feature of *Droichead*. They are part of a multi-faceted process of induction as they provide the NQTs with opportunities to learn from their fellow professionals. They also provide grounding for the PST members' advice and support throughout the school-based induction. Observations are arranged in advance.

Observations by the NQT of Experienced Teachers' Practice:

It is recommended that there would be **at least 2 classroom observations carried out by the NQT**. The exact number, and the classes observed, should be based on discussions between the NQT and the PST members. The NQT should outline their focus prior to the observation with a PST mentor

Observations by the PST of the NQTs' Practice:

Observations by PST members of the NQTs' practice should focus on areas where the NQT feels that they need particular advice, help and support. In this light, while all observations are arranged in advance, the NQT should be encouraged to teach in an area where they feel their learning is greatest. This can then provide the basis for a subsequent professional conversation. It is recommended that there would be **at least 2 classroom observations carried out by the PST**. It is also recommended that the PST observe the NQT in the **core subjects and one other subject per observation**. The PST will be best placed to determine, on a case-by-case basis, how many observations may be necessary, and to co-ordinate these within the overall outline plan for the *Droichead* process. The PST will ensure that each NQT is observed by different PST members.

6. ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

To complement the school-based induction strand outlined above, NQTs also engage in additional professional learning activities as part of the *Droichead* process, as follows:

NQT CLUSTER MEETINGS AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- NQTs should engage in **one cluster meeting per term**, in a local education centre. The meetings are facilitated by the NIPT and in collaboration with the group of NQTs. The agenda is developed in collaboration with the NQTs and may include key elements of *Droichead* such as the observation process, professional conversations, *Taisce*, etc.
- NQTs should also engage in **one other professional learning activity**, identified by themselves in accordance with their professional learning needs, in consultation with the PST. Typical learning activities might be, for example, participation in a workshop, a meeting of a Teacher Professional Network (subject associations), an online/blended learning activity, attendance at a conference, *Féilte*, etc.
- NQTs should engage in professional development relevant to their educational setting and should be reflective of the learning needs of the pupils they teach.

7. STANDARDS TO GUIDE AND SUPPORT THE DROICHEAD PROCESS

The Council has established standards to support the *Droichead* process, in guiding the NQT, with the PST, in relation to their professional learning and practice. Through their engagement in the *Droichead* process, the NQT will:

1. have engaged professionally with school-based induction and additional professional learning activities
2. have shown their professional commitment to quality teaching and learning for their pupils
3. have engaged in reflective practice that supports their professional learning and practice, both individually and collaboratively.

Indicators of good practice and school context examples are described in a separate document which is given to the NQT early in the process and discussed throughout the year at meetings with the mentor and other members of the PST.

8. MAINTAINING RECORDS OF THE *DROICHEAD* PROCESS

A *Droichead* outline plan is created by the PST, in consultation with the NQT. Ideally the NQT will undertake the *Droichead* process for a period longer than the minimum stipulated period, when their period of employment so allows.

Powerstown ETNS have devised their own observation documents and will provide the NQT with a *Droichead* outline during the initial induction meeting

To facilitate the Council's quality assurance process, schools are asked to retain records which they have created to support the *Droichead* process in line with their data protection policy.

Such documents should include records of observations of the NQTs practice and records of professional conversations with the NQT. Ideally, such records should be maintained electronically, for ease of retrieval, and also for sharing with fellow PST members. A template for observations, and recording the outcomes of these observations will be provided to all members of the PST. **Routines for record-keeping and sharing of documents should be discussed and agreed upon at an initial PST meeting.**

In maintaining records, 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 measure necessary to restrict access to sensitive information.

Where an NQT who has completed some or all of the *Droichead* process leaves a school, they should be given a copy of the relevant records which the school holds in relation to that process.

9. CONCLUDING THE *DROICHEAD* PROCESS

- When an NQT is nearing the conclusion of the *Droichead* process, as per the indicative time frame agreed at the start of the process, a professional conversation takes place between the NQT and the PST members. This conversation will also involve the NQT identifying areas of further professional learning (to be included on Form D).

- When the NQT and PST have concluded the *Droichead* process (school-based induction and additional professional learning activities) they complete **Form D**. It is the responsibility of the NQT to submit this with a copy of the confirmation email from the Teaching Council confirming they have registered for the *Droichead* process.
- When Form D has been fully completed and submitted to the Teaching Council, the Council will remove the *Droichead* condition from the teacher's registration and issue a revised confirmation or registration letter. All conditions must be met for the teacher to be fully registered.

10. CONSISTENCY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

A number of mechanisms are in place to assure the quality and consistency of the *Droichead* process nationally:

- (a) NIPT provide support to schools offering *Droichead* who employ an NQT.
- (b) *Droichead* Quality Assurance (DQA) panels, comprising an independent chairperson, a practising teacher from the relevant sector and a person with expertise in the support and/or evaluation of teaching and learning at school level, are established by the Teaching Council. The DQA panel visits a sample of schools where the *Droichead* process has taken place and discusses the process with the PST and the NQT. Such visits are pre-arranged and take place in a spirit of collegiality and collaboration. Following its review, the DQA panel submits an anonymised report to the Teaching Council setting out its findings and recommendations in relation to the process. The report is considered by the Council and, following ratification, is published on the Council's website and circulated to the NIPT and the Inspectorate.
- (c) As a leader of learning in the school, the principal, while not necessarily involved in the *Droichead* process, fosters a learning culture in which *Droichead* can flourish, and supports the PST in facilitating a quality induction process.
- (d) Professional development, including cluster meetings, for PST members, include discussions regarding the standards and indicators of good practice which guide and support the *Droichead* process.
- (e) A review process is in place where NQTs or the PST wish to raise concerns about aspects of the *Droichead* process. This process includes an informal stage, at school level, and a more formal stage at NIPT level. It also allows for unresolved issues to be escalated to the Teaching Council, via its *Droichead* Quality Assurance Panel.
- (f) The Council will engage with the DES and its agencies regarding the implementation of *Droichead*, and to ensure its consistency with the overall policies as may be determined by the Minister from time to time. This will include the development of guidance for the transition to the new *Droichead* policy.

REVIEW

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