An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Supporting children and young people from Ukraine, enrolled in post primary schools, who wish to engage online with the Ukrainian curriculum

January 2023 V1.1

1. Introduction

Since the invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022 over 65,000 people have arrived in Ireland from Ukraine. Under the terms of the EU temporary directive these families have the same rights as European citizens to access primary and post-primary education in Ireland.

Many schools have enrolled and welcomed children and young people from Ukraine. To date (November 2022) over 13,000 children have been enrolled in our schools approximately 8,300 at primary and 4,700 at post-primary. This is a very significant achievement on the part of the schools and their communities. The Department wishes to thank them for warm welcome which they have extended to children and young people and their families fleeing the war in Ukraine

The swift response and welcome from school communities are a critical part of the national response to supporting Ukrainian people in Ireland.

While children and young people have been enrolling in schools we are aware that the Ukrainian Ministry of Education has encouraged students, where possible, to link back with their old school and has provided an online platform for students to engage with the curriculum[1]. The Ukrainian curriculum is being delivered either through distance learning offered by a school in Ukraine or via the All-Ukrainian Online School through a dedicated website available here. The key priority area for many Ukrainian students is continuity in their learning of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian history. Older students may also be preparing for university entry examinations next summer.

An Inspectorate research survey of 79 primary and post-primary schools (April – June 2022) found that in approximately 38% of those schools, Ukrainian students continued to engage to some extent with the Ukrainian curriculum. At post-primary, schools indicated that approximately half their students were engaging to some extent with the online curriculum from Ukraine while at primary this figure was closer to 20%.

---

[1] Where parents/ guardians express a preference not to enrol their children in a school with the intention of them engaging exclusively with the online and distance learning offerings from Ukraine parents/ guardians must apply to the Child & Family Agency TUSLA to have their child placed on the register of children educated outside of a recognised schools. Details of the application process can be found at

https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/alternative-education-assessment-and-registration-service/

In some instances, facilitation of access to the Irish curriculum and the Ukrainian online curriculum can be challenging for schools to arrange. Schools are also aware that some of the students in senior cycle may be engaging with the online Ukrainian curriculum before and after school. Schools are encouraged to discuss this with the students and their parents to ensure this additional engagement is not putting undue pressure on the students or adversely affecting integration and inclusion as they endeavour to balance their online engagement with the Ukrainian curriculum with attendance and engagement in school.

This short document has been developed to support schools to manage requests from families for children and young people from Ukraine enrolled in school who wish to engage online with the Ukrainian curriculum.

The document is designed to support schools to reflect on a number of related themes:

- **Access**: How can schools facilitate students accessing the online Ukrainian curriculum during the school day?
- **Balance**: How can a healthy balance in workload be achieved for those students who are integrated within their school while continuing to engage with the online Ukrainian curriculum outside of school time?
- **Culture and Identity**: How can schools support students in maintaining a connection with their culture, language and identity?
- **Communication**: What are the most effective ways to communicate with parents around the expected learning and engagement with the curriculum?
- **Supports**: What supports are available to schools to support Ukrainian students?

In the context of the welcome extended to Ukrainian families by schools and their communities, it is essential that Ukrainian students enrolled in schools are supported in integrating with their class groups. This includes following the Irish curriculum as far as possible. Guidance is available on the appropriate class setting for students as they arrive into school Considerations and Advice to Support the Placement of Children and Young People in Classes and Year Groups in Primary and Post-Primary Schools available here: Information for Schools

In particular, consideration should be given to offering subject options at post-primary that align with, and build on, their Ukrainian education to date, in so far as is practical. This approach is also important in supporting student wellbeing and language development. Based on the experience to date, where schools have enrolled Ukrainian children and young people, they are working hard to enable the students to:

- experience a learning environment which fosters their sense of wellbeing and belonging
- access the Irish curriculum through their placement in appropriate class and year groups

- develop their communication skills through appropriate and engaging learning experiences
- benefit from interventions focused on enabling them to productively interact with others and meaningfully engage with the Irish curriculum

2. Guiding principles

The following guiding principles have been developed from relevant research[2] and by the recent experiences of children and young people in the refugee or international protection process in our school system to underpin our response.

- Schools are encouraged and supported to promote a **sense of safety, calm, connectedness, efficacy and hope (Hobfoll, 2007)**, in line with best practice for support provision in the aftermath of their recent experiences.

- Children of school-going age from Ukraine will be enabled to **access education in schools** wherever possible.

- School policies and supports that are part of the inclusive multicultural environment of the school will underpin the approach to inclusion and will inform the response of schools. In this regard, English language supports and student participation in school extra-curricular activities are an important part of children's integration and inclusion in school life.

- To **support students' learning, social and emotional needs**, schools should continue to use the additional resources provided by the Department of Education, including supports for wellbeing, supporting children and young people in a time of war, EAL and teaching resources, as well as Department of Education and NEPS guidance documents which can be found at: Supporting the Wellbeing of Children from Ukraine in your School and gov.ie - Information for schools – Ukraine (www.gov.ie).

- **Support for the students' Ukrainian culture, sense of self and national identity** should be fostered where possible. This may be possible through intercultural activities and through facilitating access to the online curriculum including Ukrainian history and language.

- **Digital technologies** can provide opportunities to support learning, wellbeing, and interconnectedness between children and between children and their teachers through a variety of translation and other apps.

---

[2] OECD 2019 Refugee education: integration models and practices in OECD countries
OECD Education Working Paper No. 203; UNICEF, February 2022; Education, Children on the move and Inclusion in Education

The principles listed above are intended to guide our response to the situation as it unfolds. In this context, it is important to note that broader issues which are beyond the remit of the Department and of schools, especially how or where people are provided with accommodation in Ireland, will significantly influence the manner in which the education system can respond most effectively.

3. Considerations to support online engagement

3.1 Communication with parents / guardians and students

Conversations with parent(s)/guardian(s) and students can be of great help to schools in clarifying the needs of children and young people and in providing appropriate educational responses. Discussions should include the school's expectation in relation to engagement with the Irish curriculum and the lessons that the student will be expected to participate in and how best to support them in a sustainable way should they intend following elements of both the Irish and Ukrainian curricula. As part of this planning stage, while noting the advice from NEPS in relation to the appropriate timing of assessments when children have been displaced or traumatised, students' special educational needs and language (of instruction) needs should also be established.

The Department is aware of some schools who have included a Ukrainian parent on the Parents' Council and likewise Ukrainian students on the Student Council. These initiatives have been warmly received by the Ukrainian community. Such decisions on the school's part can assist with communications, and clarifying expectations over time.

3.2 Inclusion – Irish Curriculum

Many subjects in the post-primary curriculum are aligned with subjects that Ukrainian students will have experienced in their own schools. Ukrainian students should be encouraged to access as much of the Irish curriculum as possible along with their peers in the year group.

To participate in the Irish curriculum, many students will need to acquire new language and literacy skills. Planning for language support will need to take into consideration students' learning needs in terms of interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency in the language of instruction in the school. Additional supports are available for children and young people who present with language needs. In circumstances where a school does not have any capacity within its existing allocation, an application for language supports (English and/or Irish) can be made to the Department using form NE-EAL 2022/23 at the following link. In the case of post-primary schools that are unable to source a teacher to provide EAL supports, schools may avail of ESOL Tutor (English for Speakers of Other Languages) via the local ETB ESOL Tutor panel. Schools should contact their ESOL coordinator in their local ETB to access ESOL supports.

3.3 Ukrainian language and culture

It may be possible for the school to facilitate students in accessing some of the online Ukrainian curriculum during the school day. Some of the practicalities associated with this are discussed in section 4.0. This engagement may help support the development of their native language and culture.

Enabling engagement with the Ukrainian curriculum is just one aspect of how schools can support Ukrainian children in terms of the language and culture. While each school context is different many schools hold international culture days to provide time for all children to talk about their country, language and culture.

3.4 Wellbeing

Some students who wish to engage both with the Irish and the Ukrainian curriculum may need guidance and support to help balance the demands of both. There is also a need to consider how best to balance the demands of homework with online learning so that the student learning experience is reasonable and not adversely impacting on their wellbeing.

Mindful of the context for Ukrainian children and young people, it is essential that all students participate in the wellbeing programme and wellbeing related learning in school. Resources available through Information for Schools on Ukraine can enhance the successful integration and inclusion of students into the school setting. Within the context of their communities, schools have a key role in supporting academic success, social competence and emotional wellbeing for students using the Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools. This can be achieved through the appropriate use of resources already assigned to the school.

4. Practical considerations, how might it work in practice?

4.1 Subject Choices

It may be possible to facilitate engagement online with the Ukrainian curriculum at times when the student is not undertaking a particular subject.

For example, where a Ukrainian student at post-primary has an exemption from the study of Irish, subject to criteria as set out in Circular 0055/2022, additional supports and access to online provision could be facilitated during the timetabling of Irish.

Schools could consider facilitating Ukrainian students to access online on-demand curriculum, during, for example, optional bands. For example, if a school offers a band such as Geography, Business and French, the possibility of including an additional optional block to facilitate students to access the online curriculum may be explored, if practicable.

4.2 Facilitating independent learning

Where it is possible for a student to engage with live online learning, schools will need to explore what is necessary to facilitate independent student learning. This may include, where appropriate and practicable, providing access to digital devices and an appropriate supervised space within the school. Where additional resources are required in relation to facilitating independent learning queries should be submitted using the Principal helpline. The helpline operates 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

In the context of the current situation in Ukraine, and Ireland's humanitarian response to the crisis in taking in refugees, the ICT grant funding which issued in late 2021 can also be used by schools to support the needs of Ukrainian children arriving in Ireland through access to digital technology infrastructure. This can include loaning devices to Ukrainian children in the school if needed, as well as providing appropriate software, apps, and tools to support their learning.

4.3 Timing and Duration

The timing and duration of the online live lesson and the impact of the lesson on the students' engagement with the Irish curriculum will need to be considered.

___

It should be borne in mind that the online live Ukrainian curriculum may begin earlier in the morning than Irish lessons. Schools and parents need to be cognisant of students' wellbeing to ensure that students are not overburdened by their engagement with two curricula. There is also a need to consider how best to balance the demands of homework with online learning so that the student learning experience is reasonable and not adversely impacting on their wellbeing. As noted earlier, ongoing communication with parents (e.g. through a Ukrainian parent on the Parents' Council) can be of assistance in this regard.

4.4 ICT supports

The variance in broadband coverage in primary schools and how investment in ICT infrastructure in primary and post-primary schools has been utilised may also be a factor in whether it is feasible to support online engagement during the school day.

Likewise the availability of digital devices and access to supervised learning spaces will need to be considered.

The school's Acceptable Use Policy should be explained to those who engage with any online learning during the school day in the normal manner.

As stated in 4.2 above, the ICT grant funding which issued in late 2021 can be used by schools to support the needs of Ukrainian children arriving in Ireland through access to digital technology infrastructure. This can include loaning devices to Ukrainian children in the school if needed, as well as providing appropriate software, apps, and tools to support their learning.

4.5 Ukrainian School Hub

The New Ukrainian School Hub was officially launched in early June 2022. The initiative, announced by the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, is part of the Commission Communication 'Welcoming those fleeing war in Ukraine' and aims to support Ukrainian refugees by facilitating access to supplementary educational resources. The platform brings together solutions developed by European and Ukrainian Education Technology (EdTech) providers and materials provided by public authorities. The All-Ukrainian Online School platform is accessed through a dedicated website available here.

The New Ukrainian School Hub is co-funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and the European Commission. The project builds on the infrastructure of the Learning Together project in collaboration with the European EdTech Alliance. It is also supported by University of Helsinki, Finnish Consulting Group Ltd, and cooperating with the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine (MDT) and UNICEF.