

ENGAGE II PROGRAMME

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

AUGUST 2021

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Executive Summary

- (i) The second year of the Engage programme will enable schools to continue to address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on pupils. Remote learning has affected the learning and development of children and young people and has undoubtedly impacted on their social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing. The programme, building on year 1, allows schools and other educational settings to secure extra teachers and other staff to provide their pupils with the additional support they need. It focusses on supporting pupils to be motivated and engaged to learn, developing their resilience and capacity to respond more confidently to challenges, and supporting their health and wellbeing. Settings are encouraged to implement new approaches to supporting pupils and innovate in ways that will enhance existing approaches that have demonstrated impact.
- (ii) In the second year, the range of educational settings extends beyond primary and post-primary schools to incorporate special schools, EOTAS centres, and funded pre-school education settings (nursery units, nursery schools and non-statutory pre-school education settings participating in the Pre-School Education Programme). The programme will continue to support settings to engage qualified staff to provide high quality child centred one to one, small group or team teaching support to those pupils identified by the setting as most benefiting from additional support.
- (iii) A number of significant changes have been made to the programme in light of experience gained in the first year and given the continuing impact of the pandemic. For example, if primary and post-primary schools are unable to secure qualified teachers they can use a broader range of staff to deliver the programme or bring in third parties to deliver interventions; settings can offer activities outside the normal school/setting day; and they can use up to circa 20% of their funding on materials and equipment if necessary to support delivery of the programme.
- (iv) The overall budget for Engage for September 2021 to March 2022 is c£16.6m. Further funding will be required to allow the programme to continue for the remaining 3 months of the 2021/22 academic year. Funding must be used within the time period for which it is allocated. No funding is presently available beyond 31 March 2022 and schools should not commit to expenditure beyond this date without confirmation that further funding is being made available.
- (v) Settings will design their programme delivery based on their unique circumstances and their pupils' needs. They know their pupils best and will use their professional judgement to decide upon relevant priorities and which pupils

and year groups will participate in the programme. In designing and implementing their interventions, settings should take into account the six objectives of the programme, which should be 'contextualised' in order to reflect the particular needs and circumstances of their setting and pupils.

- (vi) Individual settings will evaluate the outcome of the programme against the specific targets they established at the beginning of the academic year, using the measures they choose to assess the impact of the programme in their setting. Settings will complete the Engage II Planner by the end of October setting out their plans to deliver the programme, and again by the end of June 2022 uploading their evaluation of its impact.
- (vii) Settings must plan to continue delivering the programme during any further periods of remote learning, continuing to deploy the Engage II staff to support those pupils in the greatest need and ensuring continuity of learning. These contingency arrangements must also be uploaded to the Engage II Planner.
- (viii) Individual allocations due to each setting have been published on the DE website (Special schools and EOTAS centres have been or will be notified of their allocations directly). The programme continues to provide the greatest level of funding to settings with higher concentrations of disadvantage while also providing universal support across all settings in recognition of the wider impact of Covid-19. Funding for primary and post-primary schools is based on both their 2019 and 2020 Census data and a buffer has been created to ensure that no school will receive less than in year one. Allocations for pre-school education settings are based on 2020 School Census enrolment data, and the overall Multiple Deprivation Measure NI (MDMNI) measure for the level of disadvantage.
- (ix) Primary and post-primary schools that are unable to secure a qualified teacher have flexibility to engage other types of qualified staff such as a Classroom Assistant or to bring in third parties to deliver and support planned programmes.
- (x) Special schools will find that the programme closely reflects the Engage for Special Schools programme, supporting a wide range of educational interventions that are teacher or therapist-led.
- (xi) Pre-school education settings will decide on the type of staff they will engage and how they will use their funding in line with the aims and objectives of the programme. They could provide high quality child centred one to one, small group or team education support by qualified staff, or appropriately qualified

external personnel, to support pupils on particular areas within the pre-school curricular guidance.

- (xii) A range of help and advice is available to assist settings with regards to implementing the Engage II programme, for example, the Education Authority will work in collaboration with other education support bodies, to provide guidance and support for settings, including advice from Link Officers. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) will also continue to support the programme by providing an overall system-level evaluation of its effectiveness and its impact on the children/young people in primary and post-primary schools. This is not an inspection programme.

- (xiii) Additional flexibility has been offered to settings from 10 January 2022 in light of staffing pressures brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. This allows you to redeploy staff delivering the Engage II programme if necessary to sustain normal classroom teaching. This applies if you are unable to source teachers/staff in any other way. The cost will continue to be met from Engage II programme funding. Settings are asked to retain a record of these decisions including costs in **Section 3b** of the Engage II Planner app. A new menu option has been added to the planner: **‘Substitute teacher covering teacher absence related to Covid-19, illness or other’**. You should use the new option in **Section 3b Step 1: Targets – under the ‘Other areas of support’ heading** and **Step 3: Actions**.

- (xiv) In addition to Engage II funding, post primary schools with year 12 pupils will also receive funding to provide additional support to pupils completing GCSE Mathematics during the 2021/22 academic year. This recognises the key importance of numeracy skills and that pupils will be required to complete all GCSE Mathematics assessments in 2021/22.

Section 1 - Engage Programme – Background and Rationale

1. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, schools and other educational settings were closed to pupils for normal teaching in early 2020 and in early 2021. This disruption has been felt by all pupils and families.
2. Schools and other settings responded by maintaining distance learning through a combination of online support and hard copy learning packs, supported by parents in the home, but it is recognised that this is no substitute for quality professional teaching in a school based environment.
3. It is also acknowledged that there have been disparities in motivation and engagement throughout remote learning periods - many children have not had the opportunity for home learning to the same extent as others. Lack of routine, parental support or access to appropriate ICT for some will all have been contributory factors to any 'lost learning'. This period may also have added to feelings of isolation and anxiety thereby negatively affecting children's emotional and mental health.
4. If left unchallenged, this period of prolonged school closures has the potential to have a long lasting and profound impact on our children and young people in a variety of ways, not least on their learning and achievement. This is likely to be exacerbated for those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who, prior to the health emergency, were already experiencing barriers to education due a range of different factors.
5. While some pupils will have coped and engaged well with remote learning activities, others have returned to school demotivated and require support to re-engage and move on with learning. It is therefore evident that schools needed additional resource. In the 2020/21 academic year, the Engage programme provided all primary and post-primary schools with a total of £16m to secure extra teachers to provide their pupils with the additional support they needed. Also in the 2020/21 academic year, the Engage Special School Programme provided c£850k to special schools to enable them to design and implement interventions specific to their school that will support learning recovery for their pupils.
6. Both Engage programmes were designed with a range of key stakeholders and lessons learned during the first year of implementation have been reflected in the approach to the second year of the programme. Representatives of sectoral bodies and experienced school practitioners have assisted in this process.

7. A number of significant changes have been made to the Engage II programme following feedback from school leaders in light of experience gained in the first year and given the continuing impact of the pandemic. For example, both programmes will be brought together to form a single programme, and it will be broadened to include funded pre-school education and other early years settings, and Education Other Than At School settings. In addition, settings will have increased autonomy to use a broader range of staff to deliver the programme, to offer activities outside the normal school day, and to bring in third parties to deliver interventions. They will also have the flexibility to spend up to circa 20% of their Engage funding on materials and equipment that is necessary to support delivery of the programme.

Budget

8. The overall budget for Engage II in the 2021/22 financial year (September 2021 to March 2022) is c£16.6m (up from c£11.2m for the same period in the first year). Further funding will be required to allow the programme to continue for the remaining 3 months of the 2021/22 academic year (April-June 2022).
9. **While it is anticipated at this stage that the Engage II programme will once again run throughout the full duration of the academic year, and settings should plan on that basis, it should be noted that this is subject to the additional funding being available. Funding must be fully used in the period for which it is allocated.**

Section 2 - Outline of Engage Programme

Programme Aim

10. *To limit any long-term adverse impact of the Covid-19 lockdown on educational standards by supporting pupils' learning and engagement on their return to schools and settings through provision of high quality one to one, small group or team teaching support in every school/setting in Northern Ireland.*

What is 'Engage'?

11. The programme provides an opportunity for settings to implement new approaches to supporting pupils, and they are encouraged to innovate in ways that will complement and enhance existing methodologies that have demonstrated impact.

12. In its first year, the programme supported primary and post-primary schools to bring in additional qualified teachers to support pupils. Given the unique circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, during the second year of the programme a wider range of educational settings will receive funding (to varying levels) to provide additional staff resources. Funding will be offered to –

- primary schools;
- post-primary schools;
- special schools;
- EOTAS centres; and
- Funded pre-school education settings (nursery units, nursery schools and non-statutory pre-school education settings participating in the Pre-School Education Programme).

13. The programme will continue to support settings in engaging qualified staff to provide high quality child centred one to one, small group or team teaching support to those pupils identified by the setting as most in need of additional support following the impact of Covid-19 lockdowns and periods of remote learning.

14. There is extensive evidence¹ of the positive impact of high quality one to one and small group teaching as a support strategy for learning, *particularly* after a period of missed schooling. In primary and post-primary schools support will be delivered primarily by qualified teachers as this is likely to have the highest

¹ <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition/>

impact in those settings. ETI's evaluation of the programme during 2020/21 has also helped to inform arrangement for 2021/22.

15. **The Engage II programme focuses on supporting pupils to be motivated and engaged to learn.** It will be linked to the cross curricular skills, thinking skills and personal capabilities at the core of our curriculum and focussed on those areas where pupils would most benefit from additional teaching, practice and feedback.
16. The programme will complement and enhance the existing work of settings (such as extended schools, special education needs and/or nurture provision particularly the Nurture Approach in Education Programme) to provide support for pupils to engage with learning following Covid-19 lockdowns.
17. In some settings, the one-to-one, small group and team teaching could provide opportunities to further embed a whole school approach to nurture and provide pupils with a learning experience to develop social, emotional and behavioural skills and encourage success at school and with peers.
18. It will also help develop pupils' resilience and capacity to respond more confidently to challenges and support the positive promotion of the health and well-being of pupils.

What does 'Engage II' look like?

19. The programme is aimed at pupils of **all** abilities identified by settings as those who would benefit most from additional support to engage with learning following the Covid-19 lockdown period. For primary and post-primary schools this includes consideration of any EOTAS pupils for which they retain responsibility.
20. There is no prescriptive or suggested ideal model for what the programme delivery should look like or specific parameters for settings to follow, such as an exclusive focus on particular groups of pupils, year groups, or particular subjects.
21. Settings are encouraged to explore creative and innovative approaches in deciding how to utilise the additional staff to address pupil needs. There are extensive opportunities present in the curriculum to allow for this, for example, to develop and strengthen the capacity of children and young people to be more independent, resilient learners who can successfully self-regulate.
22. Settings know their pupils best and have autonomy and flexibility to use their professional judgement to decide upon relevant priorities and which pupils and year groups will participate in the programme. So too, the content and structure

of programme delivery will be based on each setting's unique circumstances and assessment of particular needs.

23. Normal formative assessment approaches within the classroom setting will be the most useful way of identifying individual pupil learning needs and those pupils who will benefit from programme support. That approach will retain an emphasis on making pupils feel confident and secure in what they already know while supporting engagement with learning.
24. It is widely recognised that Covid-19 and its response may have impacted on the social and emotional health and well-being of children, and settings may feel that an element of the Engage II programme should focus on supporting the pastoral or holistic needs of children to enable them to engage in learning.
25. **Fundamentally, it is for settings to decide how to best utilise Engage II programme funding in line with the aim and objectives of the programme in order to maximise positive outcomes for those children and young people with the greatest need, and to tailor associated provision accordingly.**
26. **The Engage II programme is designed to motivate, support and enable children and young people to engage with learning through the provision of additional qualified staff resource. This means qualified teachers in the case of primary and post-primary schools, unless it has proven impossible to secure a qualified teacher, in which case other types of qualified staff may be engaged.**
27. Settings are permitted to spend an element (up to circa 20%) of their budget on materials and equipment during the second year of the programme but only when this is necessary to support delivery of the programme. The focus of the programme remains on child-centred support such as one to one, small group and/or team teaching support. Spend on capital items is not permitted.
28. The funding allocated is not to be used to facilitate any Covid-19 related social distancing requirements or to cover sick absence or other leave absence of normal classroom teachers.

Programme Objectives

29. In designing and implementing the Engage programme, schools should take into account the objectives of the intervention as set out below:
 - *To provide an appropriately differentiated programme of child centred one to one, small group and/or team teaching support to pupils of all abilities who*

settings identify as those who would benefit from additional support to engage with learning following the Covid-19 period of lockdown.

- *To support pupils to increase their confidence, engagement, motivation to learn and to develop the tools and skills they require to become independent learners.*
- *To develop and enhance pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in the key cross-curricular skills of Using Mathematics, Communication and Using ICT.*
- *To support and enhance pupils' development of the whole curriculum thinking skills and personal capabilities.*
- *To develop pupils' understanding of how they learn (meta-cognition) and their self-knowledge about explicit strategies and behaviours for learning to help build positive mind-sets, coping skills and resilience.*
- *To complement and enhance the existing work of settings (such as extended schools, special education needs and/or nurture provision) to provide support for pupils to engage with learning following the Covid-19 period of lockdown.*

30. Settings are encouraged to personalise or 'contextualise' the above objectives in order to reflect the particular needs and circumstances of the setting and its pupils.

Outcomes

31. In line with the programme aim to limit any long term adverse impact of the Covid-19 lockdown on educational standards, there are no specific targets for the Engage II programme in terms of system wide improvement of Key Stage or examination outcomes.

32. Individual settings identify intended outcomes and the particular success criteria for the Engage programme in line with their own specific target objectives, as well as the associated measures (formal/informal, qualitative/quantitative as appropriate) to evaluate the effectiveness of their approach and the impact of the resource.

33. Whilst it is anticipated that this may reveal improvements in such things as building pupil confidence, increasing levels of motivation and engagement, enhancing pupil attitudes to learning, encouraging school creativity and

innovation as well as assessing individual pupil progress in learning, this will be determined at setting level.

34. Also see Section 5 *Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation*.

Contingency Planning

35. While delivery of the Engage II programme would ideally take place within the setting, settings must remain cognisant of the potential for further periods of remote learning during the second year of the programme.

36. Settings must therefore consider contingency planning for how Engage II may be delivered on a remote basis or through a blended learning approach according to the particular context at any given time. The Engage II Planner asks settings to develop their approach to any further periods of remote learning at the outset of the academic year and set out specific targets and actions that can be delivered remotely (see further detail in Section 5).

What allocation will my setting receive?

37. The closure of educational settings due to Covid-19 has affected the whole community. For example, key workers may not have had the time or opportunity to provide as much learning support for their children as they would have wished. We know, however, that the impact of time out of school and potential for lost learning may be particularly acute for those pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. For that reason, the funding methodology for the Engage II programme will continue to provide the greatest level of funding to settings with higher concentrations of disadvantage while also providing universal support across all settings in recognition of the wider impact of Covid-19.

38. Continuation of the programme during April to June 2022 is anticipated but the availability of funding is subject to the outcome of the budget process for the next financial year. Therefore proposed funding for April to June 2022 is indicated in the tables below for information only at this stage. **No funding is presently available beyond 31 March 2022 and schools should not commit to expenditure before this funding is confirmed.**

39. The method of allocating funding for each type of setting is set out below.

Primary and post-primary schools

40. The School Census has been used to determine allocations for primary and post-primary schools. Funding rates are based on the proportion of free school meal

entitled (FMSE) pupils and total enrolment from Reception to Year 7. As the average level of FSME pupils is 28%, the threshold is set at 27% to allow schools close to the threshold to qualify as above average.

41. The funding rates for primary and post-primary schools are set out in the table below. These are based on allocations in year one of the programme with the following adjustments having been made to achieve an appropriate level of funding in year two –
- all schools have received an uplift to cover the 4% teacher pay rise that will apply in the 2021/22 academic year;
 - schools with below average FSME pupils have been given a 15% uplift to narrow the gap with above average FSME schools;
 - a new enrolment banding for below average FSME has been created to increase funding for schools with over 1,000 pupils;
 - schools within 10 pupils of an enrolment boundary have been rounded up;
 - schools are regarded as above the FSME threshold or an enrolment boundary based on either their 2020 Census data, or an average of their 2019 and 2020 Census data; and
 - a buffer has been created to ensure that no school receives less than in year one.

Table 1 – Funding allocations for primary and post-primary schools

Primary and post-primary bandings*	Funding rate September to March	Proposed funding rate April to June**
Above Average FSME and 0-85 pupils	£5,294	£2,268
Above Average FSME and 86-200 pupils	£13,233	£5,671
Above Average FSME and 201-1000 pupils	£26,466	£11,342
Above Average FSME and more than 1000 pupils	£52,932	£22,685
Below Average FSME and 0-200 pupils	£4,306	£2,153
Below Average FSME and 201-500 pupils	£6,458	£3,300
Below Average FSME and 501-1000 pupils	£10,764	£5,382
Below Average FSME and more than 1000 pupils	£18,300	£9,152

* Any school within 10 pupils of a boundary is rounded up to the higher funding level.

** The availability of funding for April to June 2022 is not yet confirmed.

Funded pre-school education settings

42. Allocations have been determined for funded pre-school education settings (nursery units, nursery schools and non-statutory pre-school education settings participating in the Pre-School Education Programme) using the 2020 School

Census for enrolment, and the overall Multiple Deprivation Measure NI (MDMNI) measure for level of disadvantage.

43. Free school meal eligibility (FSME) could not be used as it is underreported in the 60% of pre-school education provision that is part-time (because a meal is not served). Instead, all pre-school settings will receive an allocation based on funded pupil numbers enrolled in the setting, with an uplift for those in the 30% most disadvantaged Super Output Areas (SOAs).
44. A specific set of funding bandings have been created for pre-school settings. These are based on the primary and post-primary school rates with recognition of the variation in pre-school enrolment, the length of sessions and the single year-group. The funding rates are set out in the table below.

Table 2 – Funding allocations for funded pre-school settings

Pre-school bandings*	Funding rate September to March	Proposed funding rate April to June**
Top 30% most disadvantaged SOAs and 0-70 pupils	£4,160	£1,783
Top 30% most disadvantaged SOAs and 71-100 pupils	£5,294	£2,268
Top 30% most disadvantaged SOAs and 101+ pupils	£13,233	£5,671
70% least disadvantaged SOAs and 0-70 pupils	£2,912	£1,456
70% least disadvantaged SOAs and 71-100 pupils	£3,744	£1,872
70% least disadvantaged SOAs and 101+ pupils	£4,306	£2,153

* Any setting within 10 pupils of a boundary is rounded up to the higher funding level.

** The availability of funding for April to June 2022 is not yet confirmed.

Funding for each setting – published list

45. Details of individual allocations due to each setting have been published alongside this guidance. To find out what additional resource your setting is entitled to for the 2021/22 financial year, refer to the following link on the DE website: www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/engage-programme-setting-allocations-sept-2021-mar-2022.
46. Special Schools and EOTAS centres have been or will be notified of their allocations directly.

Section 3 - Financial Arrangements

47. There is **no application process** for settings to follow in accessing relevant funding for the Engage II programme. For primary and post-primary schools, and special schools, the funding will be allocated to the Education Authority as earmarked funds which they will allocate directly to school LMS accounts. It is necessary to allocate funding to pre-schools in a similar way to VG/GMI. All settings are responsible for ensuring that their expenditure is in line with the programme objectives and is monitored and reported on as per agreed methodology.
48. Settings must manage the programme on the basis that the resources being made available in September 2021 must be spent in full by the end of March 2022.
49. **Settings should be aware that there are certain conditions attached to Engage programme monies. Please refer to Section 5 ‘Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation’ which explains the associated accountability requirements.**
50. Further funding for the Engage II programme for the remaining 3 months of the academic year (April 2022 to June 2022) is subject to the outcome of the budget process and settings will be advised of any additional allocation in due course. The programme is not expected to extend beyond 30 June 2022 and so any further funding subsequently made available should be spent within the specified time period.
51. **For the avoidance of doubt, Engage II funding is being made available to support pupils to engage with learning – the funding allocated is therefore not to be used to facilitate any Covid-19 related social distancing requirements or to cover sick absence or other leave absence of normal staff.**

Tracking Expenditure

52. Specific finance codes have been established which will enable spend on the Engage II programme to be tracked accordingly. These are set out below. Any queries on the use of these codes should be directed to EA Finance. Pre-schools will be similar to VG/GMI and cannot be monitored using Function Codes by LMS. A similar system to VG/GMI will operate. As Special schools and EOTAS are managed via CYPS spend can be monitored via function codes within their system.

Engage Programme

NISTR Code	EI (I for Indigo)
DE Function Code for Teacher Hours	7840
DE Function Code for Classroom Assistant Hours	8753 However, schools linked to Omagh Finance (LMS) need to use 8160
The above codes are mapped to EA Function Code	80184

Other Funding Streams

53. It will be possible for settings to use other funding streams to supplement delivery of the Engage II programme. For example, core LMS funding allocated via the Common Funding Formula (includes *Targeting Social Need* allocation specifically to support disadvantaged pupils or those at greatest risk of underachievement).
54. Additional earmarked funding made available through the Extended Schools (ES) programme can also assist with meeting pupil needs arising from Covid-19. Whilst, in line with existing policy, ES funding cannot be used to employ or maintain teachers to deliver curriculum based provision during the normal school/setting day, it can however be used for a wide variety of other purposes e.g. health and well-being activities; language support, homework clubs and other learning activities outside of timetabled school hours; enhancing the learning environment; programmes for parents and wider community etc.
55. If schools need further advice or clarification in respect of the Extended Schools programme and use of related funding in 2020/21, they should speak to EA Link Officers. Contact details are included at Section 6 '*Help and Support*'. Guidance is also available on the [Northern Ireland Extended Schools Information System](#).

GCSE Mathematics Support

Ordering/Purchasing Resources function code	80185
DE Payroll (Teaching Staff) function code	7842
DE Temp Teaching Staff booked through NISTR – Alpha Code	EK
EA Payroll (Non-Teaching Staff) function code	8892

Section 4 - Management Arrangements

56. All settings due to their knowledge and understanding have autonomy and flexibility to use their professional judgement to decide which of their pupils will participate in the programme. They will also structure and design the programme within their setting based on their own unique circumstances.
57. A number of changes to the operation of the programme have been recommended by the Engage Strategic Oversight Group following feedback from school leaders and representatives of the education sector in light of experience gained in year one. These will offer more flexibility and autonomy for settings and support delivery of the programme's aims and objectives.

Type of staff and delivery by third parties

Primary and post-primary schools

58. The Engage programme in its first year required provision to be delivered by qualified teachers. In the second year, primary and post-primary schools that are unable to secure a qualified teacher have flexibility to engage other types of qualified staff such as a Classroom Assistant or to bring in third parties to deliver learning activities and interventions. This will in particular help the Irish Medium sector to overcome any shortage of teachers with the necessary Irish language skills, and will also help other schools where provision is required to meet social, emotional and wellbeing needs.
59. Primary and post-primary schools will decide whether to recruit teachers on a fixed-term basis or from NISTR in line with the needs of their school and pupils and the availability of sufficient budget coverage. They may wish to engage teachers directly or, where part-time hours are involved, they may wish to engage a teacher in tandem with another local school.

Special schools

60. The Special Schools Engage programme in its first year allowed a degree of flexibility to facilitate a wider range of educational interventions in special schools, such as the teacher led or therapist-led interventions, that can address some of the presenting factors within their cohort of children and young people e.g. teaching backfill, trauma psychologist, therapeutic training for staff, music/art/play therapy, counselling.

Pre-school settings

61. Pre-school settings have autonomy to decide the type of staff they will engage and how they will use their funding within the aims and objectives of the programme. They could provide child centred one to one, small group or team

education support by qualified staff, or appropriately qualified external personnel, to support pupils on particular areas within the pre-school curricular guidance. As many pre-school settings operate a dual day, they may choose to prioritise training for staff who work across both sessions. They could also employ additional staff to increase staffing ratios for part of the year, or employ a nurture approach to help pupils to build personal capabilities.

62. The following provides an indicative (but not exhaustive) list of potential uses for the funding allocated:

- Training or guest speakers with a proven track record to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff and parents in relation to engaging children in learning and development;
- External support including play specialist support; speech & language development; emotional support;
- Substitute staff to cover for staff training;
- Additional staff to increase ratios and facilitate interventions such as one to one or small group work;
- Programmes of support for staff and children for example, mindfulness programmes, stress control;
- Classroom or digital resources to enhance engagement across the 6 areas of the NI pre-school curriculum and/or wellbeing; and (after this point to begin with a focus on the pre-school curriculum)
- Physical activity and outdoor play to develop gross motor skills.

63. Settings should bear in mind that research evidence consistently shows the positive impact of high quality one to one or small group academic support as an intervention, including for those who are not meeting developmental milestones. Support from a qualified member of staff rather than volunteers or non-qualified staff is likely to have the highest impact. DE's own evidence and evaluation of the Delivering Social Change Literacy and Numeracy Signature Project corroborates this. Where an external Early Years Specialist is employed by a setting, they should feed in to the design process.

64. The programme will focus on supporting pupils' emotional and social wellbeing, to be motivated and engaged to learn and will include physical activity and outdoor play to develop gross motor skills which children may have had fewer opportunities to develop during lockdown. Activity will be guided by the pre-school setting, linked to the pre-school curricular guidance and focused on the areas where pupils would most benefit from additional support.

Provision outside the normal school day

65. Schools and settings are permitted to deliver provision outside the normal school/setting day. This flexibility may help any settings that experience difficulty in sourcing specialist staff, for example, post-primary schools that require substitute teachers for particular subjects.

Spend on materials and equipment

66. Schools and settings have some flexibility to spend an element of their funding on materials and equipment for use within the programme. This only applies when such materials are essential in delivering the programme and will represent a small element of the setting's budget (up to circa 20%). The focus of the programme will remain on settings designing and implementing an appropriately differentiated programme of child centred support to pupils.

Contingency planning

67. The Engage II programme can be delivered both in a setting and also through supported learning activities undertaken remotely with those pupils who are learning at home. Settings will be required at the outset of the second year (in September/October 2021) to consider contingency planning for how interventions would be delivered on a remote basis or through a blended learning approach, during any future periods of remote learning. There should be no need to suspend or delay Engage programme activities, the expectation is that schools can continue to deliver this support remotely. This is essential to ensure that the programme is effective in supporting pupils even in the event of further lockdowns.

68. The Engage II Planner will ask settings to submit targets and actions that can be delivered during any future period of remote learning, which can be submitted in addition to the regular targets and actions if necessary. Settings are encouraged to explore and adopt innovative and creative approaches to deploy the additional staff secured with Engage funding to support those pupils with the greatest need and to ensure continuity of learning.

69. The expectation is that during any period of remote learning, staff engaged through the programme will continue to be paid as normal, including any bookings for substitute teachers honoured. Schools can continue to source substitute teachers via NISTR to assist with Engage II programme delivery.

70. Guidance is available to assist settings in planning for remote learning within the following DE circulars and ETI guidance:-

- a. The Department's [Remote Learning Circular 2021/01](#) - Further Guidance for Schools on Supporting Remote Learning to Provide Educational Continuity (published 4 January 2021). This updates the Department's circulars 2020/05 and 2020/06 from June 2020 on remote learning and curriculum planning (Remote Learning Circular June 2020 and Curriculum Planning 2020/21).
- b. [Effective practice in remote learning](#), which simplifies, and is complementary to, the above guidance. It is a one-page, quick glance document for schools (published: 9 February 2021); and
- c. ETI [Phase-specific thematic reports on Remote Learning](#) (published 14 May 2021).

71. Additional flexibility has been offered to settings from 10 January 2022 in light of staffing pressures brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. This allows settings to redeploy staff delivering the Engage II programme if necessary to sustain normal classroom teaching, and applies if you are unable to source teachers/staff in any other way. Additionally, the cost of the Engage teacher/staff will continue to be met from Engage II programme funding. Settings are asked to retain a record of these decisions for audit purposes and should use **Section 3b** of the Engage II Planner app to capture these details including costs.

72. Settings should retain a record of the redeployment of staff in Section 3b. A new menu option has been added to the planner: '**Substitute teacher covering teacher absence related to Covid-19, illness or other**'. Settings should use the new option in **Section 3b Step 1: Targets – under the 'Other areas of support'** heading and **Step 3: Actions**.

How should additional staff be sourced?

73. All settings have flexibility to manage the recruitment process as they see fit and how the additional staff will be used within the setting. For instance, it is possible to backfill a post to allow a current member of staff to be released to deliver Engage II programme activities.

74. In line with the desire for settings to retain autonomy with decisions relating to the Engage II programme, they will manage the recruitment process for staff, including for teachers. This will involve engaging staff on a "fixed-term" basis, or in the case of teachers either on a fixed term basis or drawing down the resource from the Northern Ireland Substitute Teacher Register (NISTR).

75. It is appreciated that the recruitment of staff can take time. Settings are reminded that Engage II programme funding must be used during the period for which it is allocated. If there is any anticipated delay in recruiting, they should plan and use funding to ensure full spend within the specified time period. Before engaging

staff the setting needs to ensure they are clear on the duration and end date for the post and the reason for the post. This will facilitate the process of bringing the post to an end when funding ceases.

76. For those settings employing staff with Engage II funding there are a range of practical issues to be considered (e.g. statutory/legal requirements, contracts, terms and conditions, advertising of posts; interviewing, salary scales, timescales etc). Further detailed advice has been developed by the Education Authority in the form of Frequently Asked Questions which settings may find helpful. These FAQs can be found here www.eani.org.uk/ea-staff-hub/hr-online/hiring-managers-recruitment-information. This link also includes information on the substitute teacher process, sample job descriptions and person specifications for both primary and post-primary schools, as well as useful contact details in the event of any recruitment based queries. Catholic maintained schools should seek advice on recruitment from the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS). See also Section 6 '*Help and Support*'.
77. Schools should manage NISTR engagements and/or recruitment processes in line with existing policy and guidance, for example ['EA's Teaching Appointments Scheme for Controlled Schools'](#) and [TNC Circular 2016/01 on the 'Appropriate Use of NISTR'](#).

Section 5 - Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation

Accountability

78. As outlined in Section 2, there are no specific targets for the Engage II programme in terms of system wide improvement of Key Stage or examination outcomes - the focus of the programme is to limit any long-term adverse impact of Covid-19 on educational standards by supporting pupils' learning and engagement.
79. It will be for settings to identify their own intended outcomes and associated success criteria and to monitor and evaluate the impact of the programme using internal assessment systems, including the use of teacher recording and observation to monitor the progress of pupils selected for support through the programme.
80. It will be necessary however for the Department to collate high level information about the use and impact of Engage II resources for accountability purposes to enable determinations to be made around the effectiveness and value for money of the programme. It will also seek to provide assurances to the Minister of Education, Executive, Assembly, statutory bodies, families and wider community about the impact of significant investment of public funding.

Engage II Planner

81. Participating settings are required to use a bespoke online accountability tool called the *Engage II Planner* which captures a range of key information in respect of the focus of programme, how the resources are being used and an evaluation of impact. **The system will be available for settings to log in and begin entering data from mid October 2021.** In the meantime settings should assess needs and begin the process of establishing and delivering the most appropriate form of provision. Primary and post-primary schools should ensure that their Planner is complete for year one of the programme - they will continue to have access to their Engage Planner from the first year.
82. The emphasis in evaluation will be the impact on pupils' attitudes to and dispositions for learning and pupils' progress in learning. Evidenced-based judgements of the programme by schools will then inform further development of interventions.
83. The Engage II Planner will be available on the Wholeschool School Development Planning platform. The design and functionality of the Engage Planner is aligned to the [Targeting Social Need \(TSN\) Planner](#) also hosted on this system, which

enables schools to articulate how £77m of TSN resources made available each year are being used to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds or at greatest risk of underachievement.

84. The Engage II Planner has been developed to assist settings in planning their support offered to pupils for the year ahead, to monitor and record progress, as well as helping to promote and disseminate good practice. The Engage II Planner has bespoke options included to reflect the specific aim, objectives, and characteristics of Engage II programme funding. Schools can either choose from pre-populated drop down menus or can customise their own.
85. Settings will complete the Engage II Planner in two stages:
1. **By end October 2021**, completion of Sections 1 to 3 setting out the setting's plans for the year ahead and how they intend to use the additional resource to meet their specific targets.
 2. **By end June 2022**, completion of Sections 4 and 5 reporting the school's evaluation of the impact of the programme and next steps to sustain momentum after the Engage II programme funding ends.
86. Further help and support on how to complete the Planner, including an instructional video, is available on the application itself which schools can access via the icon on the My School dashboard on C2k, and pre-schools can access through the Wholeschool website. *See further detail on access to the Planner in Section 6 – Help and Support.*
- 87. Settings should note that completion of the Engage II Planner is mandatory. If it is not completed by the relevant deadlines, settings will be contacted and funding could be withdrawn.**

System Level Evaluation

88. At system level, a Strategic Oversight Group is monitoring the outworking of the Engage II programme. It includes representation of senior staff from DE, EA, CCMS and other sectoral bodies, and representation from settings to provide a practitioner viewpoint. Part of the Group's remit is to ensure processes are in place to help identify where effective practice is observed through the Engage II programme and disseminate more widely across schools.

The Role of the ETI

89. The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has supported the first year of the programme by providing an overall evaluation of its effectiveness and its impact on the children/young people in primary and post-primary schools. This evaluation will continue during the second year.
90. The ETI evaluation is not an inspection programme.
91. Plans submitted by schools, within the Engage II Planner, will be vital to enable each school to evaluate for itself the effectiveness and benefit of the interventions which they choose.
92. Through their relationships with their district schools, district inspectors (working in cooperation with EA and CCMS colleagues) will be responsive to guide and advise schools on drawing up their plans and associated success measures.
93. While drawing on school self-evaluations, the ETI will seek first-hand evidence, such as through sample interviews / meetings / workshops with principals, teachers and children/young people to obtain a richer picture of the effectiveness of the programme.
94. Evaluations should seek to identify the extent to which approaches adopted by settings are securing the programme's aims and objectives and the extent to which effective approaches are being shared, going forward.

Section 6 - Help and Support

95. A range of help and advice is available to assist settings with regards to implementing the Engage II programme.

96. In addition to the support offered by ETI as outlined in the previous section:-

- The Education Authority will work in collaboration with other education support bodies, to provide guidance and support for settings on implementation of the Engage II programme. This will include Teacher Professional Learning webinars and advice from Link Officers.
- CCMS will also provide support to schools through the work of the Locality Teams -school leaders requiring support should contact their Education or HR Adviser or the Locality Leads (details below).

97. Should you be in any doubt about any of the information contained in this guidance, you can contact the relevant contact point, according to the nature of the query, as outlined below:

Contact Points

Education Authority

- **EA – Link Officers**
- **EA Recruitment:**

Email: School Recruitment: schoolsrecruitment@eani.org.uk; Online Recruitment System Administration Support: onlinerecruitmentsystemadmin@eani.org.uk

Telephone: 028 9056 4301 then press:

1. Headquarters/Corporate Recruitment
2. South West School Recruitment
3. North School Recruitment
4. East School Recruitment
5. Pre-employment Checks/Access NI
6. System helpdesk

- **EA Finance** –Telephone: 02825 661141

CCMS

- **Locality Lead Officers**
 - Locality 1 geraldine.duffy@ccmsschools.com
 - Locality 2 roisin.harbinson@ccmsschools.com
 - Locality 3 mairead.harvey@ccmsschools.com

- **CCMS HR**

DE

- Teachers Pay and Pensions Team
- Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team (monitoring and evaluation requirements) - email: attendance@education-ni.gov.uk

Section 7 - Engage II Planner – Access Instructions for Settings

98. All settings will be automatically registered to access Wholeschool software. Settings will receive log-in details directly from Wholeschool by email when the system is live.
99. Settings using the Wholeschool software for the first time should ensure that they have followed the 'Identity Manager' steps on using Wholeschool to add relevant users. The steps for Identity manager can be found here:
<https://vimeo.com/463756776>.

Primary schools, post-primary schools and special schools

100. These settings will access the Engage II Planner via the C2k system. In the event that the Engage II Planner app is not visible or schools are having difficulty locating or accessing it, they should contact the C2k helpdesk in the first instance on 0870 601 1666.
101. Once logged into the Wholeschool Dashboard via MySchool click on the Engage Banner/Tile at the top of the dashboard:



Nursery schools, nursery units and pre-school settings

102. Nursery schools, nursery units and pre-schools will access the Engage II Planner via an email sent by Wholeschool. If you have not received this email please contact Wholeschool at: support@whole.school.

Guidance on using the Engage II Planner:

103. Guide for accessing Wholeschool from MySchool:
<https://vimeo.com/463756813>
104. Enabling additional staff to access the Engage Form (**only Principals have access to the planner initially**): <https://vimeo.com/463782922>

105. Walkthrough video guide for completing your Engage Plan: <https://vimeo.com/632820789>
106. If you have access to the Engage II Planner but find it is not functioning correctly please contact Wholeschool at: support@whole.school.
107. For queries on the process of completing the Engage II Planner please contact DE's Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team at: attendance@education-ni.gov.uk.

Section 8 – Engage: GCSE Mathematics (Maths) Support Project

Background

108. Given the unique circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, **all post primary schools** with year 12 pupils in Northern Ireland will receive funding to provide additional support to pupils completing GCSE Mathematics during the 2021/22 academic year.
109. This funding recognises the key importance of numeracy skills and that pupils will be required to complete all GCSE Mathematics assessments in 2021/22.
110. It is a central purpose of our schools to ensure that pupils develop the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to succeed at school and later on, in life and at work. The skills of literacy and numeracy are key drivers for the future growth of our economy, which will continue to be underpinned by the quality of our school leavers. Literacy and numeracy skills and knowledge are, therefore, at the centre of the Northern Ireland curriculum. This additional funding to support the development of numeracy skills recognises the impact of two extended periods of remote learning and that education has been significantly disrupted during both 2020 and 2021.
111. The project is primarily designed to provide child centred one-to-one, small group or team teaching support within school by qualified teachers to those pupils in the second year of their GCSE studies (usually Year 12) who are identified by schools as most benefiting from additional support with GCSE Maths.
112. There is extensive evidence of the positive impact of high quality one to one and small group teaching as a support strategy for learning, particularly after a period of missed schooling. Support delivered by qualified teachers is likely to have the highest impact.
113. The teaching programme will be guided by the school and focused on the areas where pupils would most benefit from additional teaching, practice and feedback. Considering how to effectively link structured one-to-one or small group intervention to classroom teaching is key to success.
114. The funding can also be used flexibly to provide additional resources and support materials for pupils taking GCSE Mathematics, for example revision booklets or to purchase subscriptions to online educational tools. In the Engage GCSE Maths Project whilst schools are encouraged to utilise funding to provide

small group and one-to-one support, given the level of funding available, there will be no maximum level of funding which can be utilised on resources and support materials.

115. The project should complement and enhance rather than replicate existing programmes and support. Schools can supplement the funding provided to deliver the project with other funding available to schools for example from the Engage II Programme, the Extended Schools Programme or via the Common Funding Formula in order to increase the level of support provided.

Project Aim

116. The aim of the project is to limit any long-term adverse impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on educational standards by supporting pupils' learning and engagement with GCSE Mathematics through provision of high quality one to one, small group or team teaching support and high quality resources and support materials in every post-primary school in Northern Ireland.

Project Objectives

117. The objectives of the project are detailed below:
- To provide an appropriately differentiated programme of child centred one to one, small group and/or team teaching support to pupils of **all** abilities who schools identify as those who would benefit from additional support with their GCSE Mathematics study.
 - To provide high quality resources and support materials to develop and enhance pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in Mathematics.
 - To support pupils to increase their confidence, engagement, motivation to learn and to develop the tools and skills they require to become independent learners.
 - To complement and enhance the existing work of schools (such as Engage II, extended schools, special education needs and/or nurture provision) to provide support for pupils

Funding Arrangements

118. There is no application process for settings to follow in accessing relevant funding for the Engage: GCSE Maths Support project. Given the unique circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, **all** post-primary schools in Northern Ireland will be provided with funding through the project. A total of c£545,000 of funding is available for the project.

119. Funding will be allocated to schools on a per pupil basis dependent on Year 11 enrolment figures from 2020/21 (this cohort will be Year 12 in 2021/22). The available budget provides funding of approximately £23.50 for each Year 12 pupil.
120. A minimum level of £1,000 funding will be provided to small schools with less than 50 pupils in Year 12. Dependent on enrolments, schools will receive funding of between £1,000 and £8,000.
121. Details of each school's funding allocation are published on the Department's website alongside their Engage II programme allocation.
122. The funding is allocated for use in the 2021/22 financial year, from September 2021 to March 2022. **The funding must be fully used in the period for which it is allocated.**

Eligibility

123. Engage: GCSE Mathematics Support Project funding is explicitly earmarked for pupils in their second year of GCSE Mathematics and must be used primarily to support these pupils. This will usually be pupils in Year 12, though pupils in Years 13 or 14 taking GCSE Mathematics may also benefit from support.
124. The funding is not designed to target pupils in Year 11 who are completing GCSE Mathematics in one year.
125. It is recognised that some materials (for example subscriptions to online educational tools) may need to be purchased on a whole school basis.
126. Schools know their pupils best and will have autonomy and flexibility to use their professional judgement to decide which of their pupils will participate in the project. They will also structure the project within their school based on their own unique circumstances.
127. The project is aimed at pupils of **all** abilities identified by school as those who would most benefit from additional support with GCSE Mathematics in order to fulfil their potential.

Monitoring and evaluation

128. The project will not have specific targets for system wide improvement of examination outcomes, as the focus is to limit any long-term adverse impact of the Covid-19 lockdown on educational standards by supporting pupils' learning and curriculum coverage in GCSE Mathematics.

129. Rather schools will identify their intended outcomes and success criteria and will monitor and evaluate the impact of this project using the Engage II Planner.
130. Schools will already be using the Planner to monitor and report on the Engage II Programme. An additional drop-down box will be available within the Planner to report on the GCSE Mathematics project. In this way administrative and reporting requirements for the project will be kept to a minimum, reducing the bureaucratic burden on schools.
131. At system level, the Engage II Strategic Oversight Group will monitor the outworking of the Project.
132. The ETI is carrying out an overall evaluation of the Engage II Programme and this will include the Engage: GCSE Mathematics Support Project.