

School Payment Solutions for the Irish Primary and Post-Primary School Sector

The Department of Education & Skills and its education sector procurement hub, the Education Procurement Service (EPS), in conjunction with the Schools Procurement Unit (SPU), the Financial Support Services Unit (FSSU) and Education & Training Boards Ireland (ETBI), has established a framework of three market providers in order to provide payments solutions for schools to avail of. The payments solutions will facilitate the handling of payments from parents to schools electronically (including internet, mobile phone app and chip and pin), while continuing to allow parents that wish to make payments by cash, cheque, etc.

The payments solutions are intended to fulfil the following objectives:

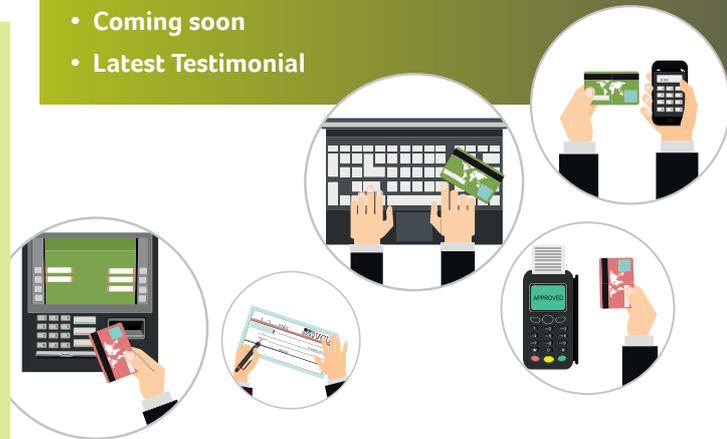
- To facilitate flexibility in making, and receiving, payments to and in schools;
- To remove cash payments for school activities from the schools themselves, but without removing the cash payment option for parents; and
- To align school payments with the National Payments Plan – the main goal of which is to 'deliver a significant increase in the use of secure and efficient electronic payment methods leading to a reduction in the reliance on cash and paper-based payment instruments'.

The solutions available to schools are split by category into 10 lots (5 x primary and 5 x post-primary), based on the payment services that individual schools identify as their requirements:

- One Lot in each category covers the entire electronic payments spectrum (Cash & Cheque, Direct Debit & Standing Orders, Card Terminal, Online and Retail), and is targeted towards those schools that do not have any aspect of a payments solution.
- The other four Lots in each category cover different payments aspects, thereby allowing schools that have varying degrees of payments solutions in place currently to take advantage of whatever aspects of the tender that they require to suit their requirement.

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The Department of Education & Skills in conjunction with the SPU and ETBI, has identified approximately 100 schools across the primary, post-primary and ETB sector willing to take part in a pilot project to avail of these solutions. An implementation team, with representatives from the Department, the EPS, FSSU and ETBI, will work with both the pilot schools and the service providers to oversee the rollout of these payments solutions. The framework will be available for other schools to avail of should they wish, but for the purposes of onward close monitoring of the pilot project, the focus will remain on the initial identified cohort.

<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Procurement/schools-payments.html>



PC's and Laptops for Schools

Schools can now directly order their PC and Laptop requirements from two appointed suppliers. There is no requirement by schools to embark upon any procurement process because this has already been concluded on behalf of all schools. Simply identify which device meets your specific needs and order by the quantity you require. For full access to the User Guide and the Order Forms, ensure you are registered as a 'Buyer' on www.procurement.ie and you will find the documents at this link - <https://bz.procurement.ie/contracts/4212>

Electricity Supply for Schools – contract renewals

In September 2017, the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) sent information and contract documents in relation to the award of contracts to Energia as the new electricity provider to 1,478 schools currently under contract within the OGP bundle. Further notifications have since issued to these schools (in October 2017 and January 2018). To facilitate the timely change to the new provider (in May 2018), schools should, as soon as possible, sign:

- (i) the goods contract;
- (ii) confidentiality agreement; and
- (iii) the account set up form,

and send all three to the new provider, Energia (smeAccountManager@energia.ie).

Please note that the new contract with Energia will commence from the 1st May 2018 and returning these three documents to Energia (smeAccountManager@energia.ie) immediately will facilitate the transfer from the current supplier (Electric Ireland) to the new supplier (Energia). It is important to be aware that if you do not return the required documents and consequently fall out of contract in May, your school may incur costly, out of contract, default rates.

If you have any questions in relation to the renewal process or wish to add your school to the OGP bundle, please contact the OGP helpdesk on: 076 100 8000 or email them at support@ogp.gov.ie

Natural Gas Supply for Schools – contract renewals

The Office of Government Procurement (OGP), following consultations with the Department of Education and Skills and the School Procurement Unit (SPU), has held a mini-competition to supply natural gas to schools for a three-year period commencing on April 1st 2018 until the 31st of March, 2021.

The OGP is pleased to inform you that SSE Airtricity has been awarded the contract which is estimated to generate annual savings in excess of €2.5 million for the education as a whole.

If your school has been issued with contract renewal documentation and in order to ensure that your school is switched to the new rates, please complete, sign, scan and return, via email, the Goods Contract, Confidentiality Agreement and Account Setup Form directly to corporateaccounts@sse.com ASAP



Office of Government Procurement Ireland (OGP) YouTube Information Videos



YouTube

These videos give an overview of the different types of procurement processes used by Irish public bodies as well as information on how the process works when securing goods or services. Information also on how businesses can subscribe to and access these opportunities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=490ZEaYdWA>



Engaging early with the procurement process

It is well recognised that accompanying the good news of approval of a grant to fund a new school build and/or other building projects comes onerous tasks and responsibilities for those school principals and Boards of Management. The procurement processes alone for kitting out new classrooms, labs, offices and engaging service providers for utilities, IT Services, Telecoms, catering, and cleaning are technically involved and highly time consuming. Public procurement brings serious obligations in an arena that has become frequently more litigious as suppliers scrutinise and often challenge the award of contracts more often now than ever previously.

Principals and Boards of Management are best advised to engage with the Schools Procurement Unit at the earliest possible juncture so as to ensure that your school's requirements are serviced in the most timely and efficient manner possible; for example, to ensure services are in place for the commencement of a new academic year, the procurement planning process should be starting immediately after the return from the Christmas break. Early engagement will secure your school the best advice on the course(s) of action to take and will ultimately save on your time and effort. Contact details for the Schools Procurement Unit are email: procurementssupport@jmb.ie / Ph: **01 203 5899**.

News of the latest Frameworks available to schools

The Office of Government Procurement has recently concluded a number of new framework agreements which are available to all primary and post-primary schools for use. Full details of each framework, the range of goods and services covered, and the defined draw-down mechanism is available to 'registered' buyers on www.procurement.ie



Previous copies of the SPU Newsletters

The archive of our previous newsletters is now available on the Department's website at:
<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Procurement/newsletter/>

The Irish versions are available at this link:
<https://www.education.ie/ga/Scoileanna-Coláistí/Eolas/Soláthar/nuachtlitir/>

Guidance for Schools on Good Procurement Practices

Our 'Guidance for Schools on Good Procurement Practices' is available for download from –
<https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Procurement/Guidance-for-Schools-on-Good-Procurement-Practices.pdf>

The guide is also available as Gaeilge from here –
<https://www.education.ie/ga/Scoileanna-Coláistí/Eolas/Soláthar/Treoir-do-Scoileanna-maidir-le-Dea-Chleachtas-Solathair.pdf>



COMING SOON

PC's and Laptops for Schools

An online portal to facilitate the purchase of school specific laptops and desktop computers is coming soon. Schools will be notified once this facility has been made available.



Latest Testimonial

Fiona Coy was particularly excellent to deal with. The patience that she exhibited to me and the clarity of her explanations was exceptional. All emails were replied to promptly and I felt that she was always at the end of the phone if I needed her. The procurement process initially appeared very daunting and time consuming but with the help of the SPU I feel the school got a great deal from the suppliers.

St. Brigid's Presentation Secondary School, New St., Killarney, Co. Kerry

For your general enquires, specific feedback or suggestions on how we can improve our service to your school or to the schools sector generally, please see our contact details below.

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