



Droichead - External Professional Support Team (PST) Member

FAQs - Primary

1. What is the need for an External Member?

In small schools, or in circumstances where a school is not in a position to establish a PST exclusively from within the staff, an external dimension may be used. An external dimension may also be used where specific expertise is required e.g. to support a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) who is teaching in a Special Class or Autism Class. Principals may choose to establish a PST using a combination of the school's own staff and an external PST member. There must be at least one member from the NQT's school on the PST.

2. How would a school source an External Member?

a. The Oide Droichead Induction Team has created a panel of self-selected, fully trained PST members who are willing to act as external members of another school's PST. Typically, these PST members have worked collaboratively as part of a PST in their own school and have directly supported NQTs through the Droichead process.

To request the External Panel list from Oide Droichead Induction the school principal should email the Oide Droichead Induction Team's Head Office (aine.kilbride@oide.ie). The principal will then select an external PST member from this panel and invite them to join their PST. The Oide Droichead Induction Team will not recommend an external member - selecting the external member is a matter for the principal. The school's context (e.g. DEIS, Community, Special School, Gaelscoil) and proximity to the external person will usually inform this selection. This list is for discreet use by the principal.

b. As an alternative to the Oide Droichead Induction Team's panel, principals may wish to invite a teacher in a local school to be the external member on their PST. This teacher must already be a trained PST member. If not already trained, they must commit to attending PST Training. Please inform the Oide Droichead Induction Team if this is the case and, where possible, this teacher will be invited to PST Training.

A teacher must have fully completed Day One and Day Two of PST Training before beginning their role as an external PST member.

3. If selected as an external member by a school, do I have to agree?

No. Membership of the external panel is on a voluntary basis and in that regard the external member, if contacted by a school, has the discretion to choose whether to support a school guided by time or geographical constraints.

It is important to contact aine.kilbride@oide.ie if you are no longer available to act as an external member.

4. What is expected of me in my role as an External PST Member?

In summary, the PST (internal plus external members) guides and advises the NQT during school-based induction and forms a joint declaration with the NQT that they have participated in a quality teaching and learning process (signing the joint declaration in Form D).

When the external PST member's appointment is confirmed and agreed, the Droichead school and the external member will agree protocols regarding engagement with the process at school level. The roles and responsibilities of each PST member and the principal may differ from one school to the next and are therefore agreed before the Droichead process commences. The external member should be involved in the development of the Droichead Outline Plan with its indicative dates.

Supporting an NQT during Droichead is always a collaborative process. An external PST member usually interacts with the school a number of times for professional conversations with the other PST members and the NQT, and to engage in induction activities such as classroom observation and discussion. These interactions - in-person and/or virtual will include professional conversations with the other PST members and the NQT.



The host school, in collaboration with the NQT and the external panel member, will explore the possibility of conducting a range of induction activities. Face-to-face interaction is not always required and some activities and professional conversations are well-suited to using appropriate software and technology e.g. pre-observation and/or post-observation discussions.

For elements of Strand A, the required period of professional practice, school-based induction activities, including but not limited to observations and professional conversations etc. should ideally take place on-site within the school environment.

5. How is the integrity of the three-stage observation process maintained?

Throughout the Droichead process, a three-stage process is used in every observation whether the NQT is observing an experienced teacher or being observed themselves. Each element of the process requires attention and time. This process - Pre-observation Preparation / Classroom Observation / Post-observation Discussion - applies in all instances but when a PST member observes an NQT, the three-stage process is often referred to as the Coaching Cycle. There is a minimum of two observations by the NQT and a minimum of two observations of the NQT during the NQT's process. The exact number will be decided by the PST in consultation with the NQT.

It is important that where an external member has arranged to visit the host school for an observation, that the pre-observation discussion would happen a few days before the observation so that the NQT is set up for success and has an opportunity to amend the lesson preparation well in advance of teaching the lesson to ensure it is classroom ready. This may be done remotely.

Following the observation itself, the PST member arranges to meet with the NQT for the post-observation discussion. The post-observation discussion is the final phase of the Coaching Cycle. Once again, we see the PST member's skills in action e.g., questioning, listening, empathising, summarising, reflecting, providing feedback, goal setting, action-planning.

If you would like to refer to the Observation Toolkit, please see the link below in section 9.

6. I have been asked to conduct the ‘inspections’ of the NQT and I have been told that this is all the school needs from me. I am really uncomfortable about this - do I have to do this?

No. Inspections are the remit of the Inspectorate and not the role of a PST member.

While observation is an important part of the Droichead process, it is certainly not the only element and should not be taken in isolation. The ‘Classroom Observation’ part of the Coaching Cycle (Pre-observation Preparation / Classroom Observation / Post-Observation Discussion) should not be taken in isolation either - it is a three-part process and continuity, and consistency of support are very important. For that reason, the same PST member should be involved from the start to the finish of each Coaching Cycle. A different PST member may be involved in the Coaching Cycle for another observation.

Please bear in mind that the PST (internal plus external members) guides and advises the NQT during school-based induction and forms a joint declaration with the NQT (by signing Form D) that they have participated in a quality teaching and learning process.

7. Is there a maximum number of schools I can support?

When developing the Oide Droichead Induction Team External Panel, the Oide Droichead Induction Team envisaged that a panel-member would support one school, if requested. We suggest that you have a conversation with the principal of your own school in the first instance as release time and substitution impacts your own school and is claimed via your school’s OLCS. We are aware that in a few instances for good reason, panel-members are supporting more than one school and they (and their principals) are comfortable with this. It is important that you look after your own wellbeing and not take on too much work. Please feel free to contact the Professional Learning Leader (PLL) for your area if you would like to discuss your situation. See contact link below in point 11.

8. Can I apply for Release Time (with substitute cover) to support the school/NQT?

Yes. An external panel member may be granted one release day and request a second one if needed.

This time is not taken from the host school's allocation but from the Oide Droichead Induction Team's Discretionary Time. It should be recorded on the OLCS of the external panel member's school.

As you will have been involved in the development of the NQT's Droichead Outline Plan, you will be aware of the timeframe and the indicative dates for the induction activities.

To avail of the first release day, we would advise that you contact the Oide Droichead Induction Team primary office at least two weeks prior to the date of the proposed release day.

We will require the following information:

1. School name and roll number of your own school
2. School name and roll number of the school you will be working with
3. How the allocated day will be used i.e., when and what activities are to be undertaken, etc.

This can be emailed to aine.kilbride@oide.ie and will be forwarded to the induction team to be reviewed. Once a decision has been reached, a member of the team will be in touch with you.

Should a second day be required, please follow the procedure outlined above including the two-week notification.

The Oide Droichead Induction Team manages this limited discretionary release time and priority will be given to those who have given prior notification.



9. Although I am fully trained it has been a year since I have supported an NQT. What would be particularly useful for me (as an external member) to read /review before I work with the school and NQT?

It is important that you are *au fait* with the following:

- [Droichead Key Steps document](#)
- [The Teaching Council's Framework: Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework](#)
- [Droichead Updates](#)
- [Droichead Outline Plan](#)
- [Observation Toolkit](#)

10. A school has asked me to be part of the process, but they are yet to complete training themselves. How should I proceed?

In this instance, please contact the Oide Droichead Induction Team for further information.

11. What happens if I need help or advice? What do I do?

If you need further support or clarification, please contact your PLL. They will advise you on how best to proceed. You will find contact information for the Droichead Induction Team on our website under "[Our People](#)". Please note you will need to "filter by team", as per screenshot.



If you have any further queries about the external panel, please contact aine.kilbride@oide.ie

