

Páirc Clerkin, IPPN CEO
Thursday 8th February 2024
IPPN Deputy Principals' Conference 2024

A Chairde, Welcome to Galway! Thank you sincerely for making the effort to join us.

A very special welcome - and congratulations, on your appointment - to the 101 Newly Appointed Deputy Principals who are attending the IPPN Deputy Principal conference for the first time.

The theme of our conference is **Leading Together with Purpose**.

It's a chance for us all to reflect on our own leadership role.. on what our core purpose is. as a school leader, and hopefully to leave tomorrow feeling both supported and empowered.

We also look forward to working with and hearing from our speakers over the next 2 days – Rachel Doogue and Mary Pyne who will be facilitating our *Leadership Connections* session this evening;.. Professor Patricia Mannix McNamara who will speak to us tomorrow on Core Purpose and school culture, and Lorraine Dempsey and Enda McGorman who will share perspectives and experiences relating to the Wellbeing of self and other leaders and wellbeing of pupils and staff respectively. I thank them all for joining us.

Sincere thanks also to our seminar facilitators presenting on a number of different topics. and to our Board members. who will chair those sessions.

In a short while, I will hand over to leadership coach Rachel Doogue and her colleague Mary Pyne, who will take you all through a really interesting process of reflection and discussion around the experience of leadership in your school.

A similar process was undertaken at the principals' conference in November and the learnings from the collated feedback are really insightful.

That session explored how principals could focus more on their core purpose,.. and also how they could share leadership more effectively. with the deputy principal. and with the wider team.



The learnings from the sessions were presented in the February issue of Leadership+.

You can access the epublication version by clicking on the QR Code on screen.

It was in E-scéal last week as well.



This afternoon's 'Leadership Connections' session will be a further opportunity to do what our network set out to achieve when it was formed over 20 years ago. That is to facilitate peer to peer support and the sharing of effective practices. We learn best from each other.

The Sustainable Leadership project has progressed significantly. since we last gathered together a year ago.

Since the publication of the original *Roadmap to Sustainability* report, a series of actions. has been undertaken. which are detailed in the progress report published in November, copies of which. you will have received. when you collected your bag.

Additional copies are available at the Reception Desk if you didn't get your copy earlier.

To inform that progress report and to ensure the ongoing monitoring of the sustainability of school leadership, we issued separate surveys to principals and.. to deputy principals in September 2023 to which over 1,500 school leaders responded.

While Brian will make some reference to the data that the 500 plus Deputy Principals. who responded shared with us, it is notable that both principals and deputy principals reported a **decrease** in the sustainability of their leadership roles over the last 12 months.

The second year of data from the Health and Wellbeing research. gathered in spring last year. showed a further deterioration. in the negative health and wellbeing scores. for primary school leaders, when compared with the healthy working population.

The most elevated score,.. and the one that causes us most concern, is that of burnout:.. 54% of primary school leaders are now within the severe or high categories.

In short, we know. that the practice and experience of school leadership is taking a toll on your effectiveness, on the sustainability of your role. and on your health.

While the Department has made significant,.. positive investment in supports for school leaders in recent years, it's potential impact is limited. by the lack of clarity relating to school leadership roles. and the unsustainability of those roles.

Reaching consensus on what we want school leaders. to spend their time doing, clarifying the behaviours of effective school leaders and giving leaders the opportunity to do the job they signed up to do - is a key focus of IPPN's advocacy work on Sustainable Leadership.

A key part of progressing that work is to build **support amongst stakeholders** for the key recommendations within the report to be actioned.

Collaboration is critical in order to succeed in addressing some of the more complex challenges that we face in meeting the needs of our schools - such as teacher supply,.. SEN resourcing and developing appropriate supports for those responsible for school governance.

Our research confirms that there is a **reluctance among potential and emerging leaders** to step into formal leadership roles.

This is a real concern and a challenge that IPPN will address in the coming years as part of our Emerging Leaders Project.

That project will have a significant impact in terms of **fully and actively embracing and supporting our emerging leaders**, and in doing so,.. **will help school leaders to build greater leadership capacity.**

We are also in the process of developing our ‘**Leadership Portfolio**’ concept to support those Emerging Leaders. when it comes to the recruitment process.

We believe that both of these initiatives are important actions on the part of IPPN to support sustainable leadership.

They will support the building of leadership capacity in our schools and,.. in so doing,.. provide extra support to school leadership teams.

In Budget 2024,.. IPPN strongly advocated for four key improvements:

- **Firstly, enhancing leadership capacity** in schools
- Secondly, the resourcing of schools to meet **SEN needs**
- Thirdly, the need for a **review of the current governance** structure
- and finally the provision of **adequate funding** to schools.

There has been some progress in all four areas. But there remains significant scope for further progress.

With regard to **enhanced leadership capacity**, the announcement that deputy principals in our Special Schools will have administrative status is a very welcome but long-overdue recognition of the acute challenges experienced by school leaders in such settings.

A special welcome to the 22 deputy principals from that sector who are here today. Finbarr Hurley from Oide. and Brian O’Doherty. the IPPN Deputy CEO. look forward to meeting with you. to outline some of the supports that will be put in place for you over the coming months.

While this will provide greater leadership capacity within Special Schools,.. the failure to restore and expand the provision for ‘release’ time for deputy principals in **all** schools limits leadership capacity and also compromises leadership effectiveness and leadership sustainability.

In relation to **Special Education** IPPN’s position paper on **SEN Allocations, Resources & Appeals** emphasized the crucial importance of the accurate,.. adequate and timely allocation of resources to schools to meet additional needs.

It also recognised the key role that SENOs have to play in such a process.

IPPN welcomed the announcement in the Budget of the additional teaching and SNA posts to support inclusion as well as the announcement of a national recruitment campaign for SENOs.

In August,.. the Department and NCSE met with members of IPPN's National Council and has committed to engaging with school leaders on its proposals and deliberations on the revised allocations process.

Notwithstanding.. the confusion caused by the inadvertent and premature release. of appendices. over the bank holiday weekend,.. IPPN welcomes. the measures that have been taken.. to better ensure. accurate and adequate. allocations to schools.

There is an obvious commitment. to better ensuring. the efficacy and accuracy. of the allocations' model.

Of particular note. is the section. which details progression. to a stage. where "schools have more input. into identifying. the need in their school".

IPPN believes that a move to such a high-trust model. of self-declaration. would be the most effective. and efficient way. to ensure. that schools. were resourced adequately.. to meet the additional needs. of children.

Regarding Governance - Central to IPPN's submission on the issue was a call for a review of the existing Board of Management governance structure.

Therefore it's extremely positive . that the Minister referred to such a process of review in her foreword. of the new *Governance Manual. for Primary Schools 2023-27..* published in September

IPPN looks forward to working with the other members of the Primary Education Forum to progress this important work in the best interests of schools.

I'll come back to governance later when considering some of the challenges schools face.

Regarding School Funding - Another example of collaboration was the management bodies' and education partners' campaign to secure enhanced funding by way of increased capitation to schools.

In September.., organisations representing children parents teachers school leaders and primary school managers wrote to the Minister to highlight our shared concerns with regard to inadequate funding.

Budget measures mean that the primary capitation grant will be increased to €200 with a further €49 per child being provided for cost-of-living measures on a once-off basis.

While this is welcome, it is insufficient and IPPN shares the calls for all increases to capitation funding to be placed on a permanent footing,.. and for the basic capitation rate to be increased to €275 per pupil.

IPPN has been progressing a number of our priorities over the past year.

The organisation completed a three-year review of our own internal governance structures to ensure full compliance with the Charity Regulator,.. while also enhancing leadership capacity within the organisation.

We have expanded & completely restructured the National Council around three core committees.

There is either a Principal or Deputy Principal representative of every city and county network on each committee:

- **The eServices** committee is focusing on the redevelopment of the IPPN website.
- **The Professional Learning** committee is organising a pilot shared learning day for principals and deputy principals to attend together.
- **And the Advocacy & Communications** committee has published the SEN position paper that I mentioned earlier and is currently working on its next priority – wellbeing of school leaders.

Those who attended the Autumn Meetings will have received a report from committee members who have been involved in these projects. I thank them all for their commitment to the IPPN mission.

A core objective for IPPN in reviewing our governance structures was to strengthen the voice of membership so that **you** influence the priorities we set for the organisation.

The new committee structure facilitates just that and I would encourage all of you to consider getting involved and putting your name forward for election to the National Council in the future. It is great to see that the number of Deputy Principals on our National Council is increasing year on year.

As with other years, there have been many challenges over these past 12 months. **In relation to Teacher supply** - Reducing the pupil-teacher ratio, and getting it closer to the OECD average of 20:1 has been a long-standing priority.

Recent reductions will benefit children all around the country,.. especially those in younger classes and children with additional needs.

However,.. many of your schools, particularly those in urban areas,.. Special Schools,.. Gaelscoileanna and DEIS schools,.. have had to deal with a shortage of teachers to fill vacant permanent and fixed-term posts,.. as well as severe difficulties in sourcing substitute teachers.

This has a significant impact on you,.. on your staff,.. and most importantly,.. on your pupils.

IPPN made a number of proposals to the Department in August in our **Submission on Teacher Supply** and we will continue to engage with the Department to progress proposals such as

1. Allowing schools to create full-time posts from Department sanctioned part-time hours
2. Allowing greater flexibility in certain areas in terms of offering year-long,.. fixed-term positions for longer-term leave such as maternity leave positions. This can be achieved with no additional cost to the state,.. if combined with work on the local supply panels
3. We have also lobbied for a ‘budgeted substitute hours’ system.
A similar concept to the banked hours we had during Covid.

Schools everywhere have unused teaching hours that are part of the annual Education Budget.

Any money saved due to the unavailability of a teacher needs to be reinvested in children who have missed out on teaching time as a result of teacher shortages,.. and we **must** prioritise the most vulnerable children.

We know that this can be achieved when the colleges close and we have access to newly-qualified teachers, and to the third and fourth year B.Ed students, as well as the PMEs.

And of course Teachers and other public servants need an affordable place to live.

Central Government will have to tackle that challenge to ensure families and children receive the basic public services any citizen is entitled to expect especially in a wealthy country like Ireland.

Another IPPN initiative to help address teacher supply was the launch of the EducationPosts recruitment portal in June.

We will continue to develop the service to support efficient school recruitment and to reduce the administrative burden associated with the process.

Another significant development that we have been working on is **Sub Seeker** to speed up access to any potential substitute teacher that may be available.

Supporting management bodies with the transition to new boards of management is another challenge.

IPPN has consistently requested a review of school governance.

In fact, our in-depth research on the Boards of 500 schools was published in a report called *Primary School Governance Challenges and Opportunities*.

The report set out a number of key proposals to strengthen governance supports and resources, and was issued back in 2011.

IPPN applauds and thanks every one of the volunteers who serve or have served on our boards of management.

There probably isn't a better example of voluntary community service at national level than what has been achieved through the board of management system over the last 50 years.

But, **all** systems require regular review, especially a structure that has been in place for almost 50 years.

The compliance landscape of the 1970s is very different to that of 2024.

The fact is that boards, as structured in 2024, do not have the required supports to fulfil their onerous responsibilities.

Governance is about oversight.

It is not about taking on management duties as is often suggested to school leaders as a solution to work overload.

All of the compliance. and oversight work is essential.

It must be done,.. and must be done correctly, but it cannot continue to be done. by school leaders, who have neither the capacity not the expertise in these areas.

We are looking forward to engaging with the Primary Education Forum regarding school governance.

We also look forward to reflecting on the learnings from the **Small School Cluster Research Project**.

It is great to see some of those clusters piloting new approaches, such as shared services, and combining part-time posts into a single full-time position.

I'll leave you with a **final thought**, regarding our **leadership autonomy**.

In my view, this should be utilised to the fullest extent possible. to ensure we focus on **our core purpose** and enhance our leadership effectiveness.

We do not need to seek permission to use any methodology that helps us set out the most appropriate **way forward** for our school.

We all know that this requires the identification of priorities and other areas that need to be deprioritised.

To prioritise effectively requires an understanding of the school's capacity for change, including that of the school leaders.

No system will ever tell us to stop,.. that we are doing too much,.. or that we need to slow down.

School Self Evaluation and School Improvement Planning are effective processes for identifying and implementing priorities.

But IPPN has another support that helps you manage your capacity,.. the pace of change and the communication process around school improvement planning.

It's called P-I-E-W and it's basically a School Planning Management Framework.

You do not need anyone's permission to use it, because it is designed to support and enhance the SSE and SIP process.

The framework will empower you and your leadership team in taking more control over the pace of change, in managing the narrative around school improvement planning and, of course, in focusing on your core purpose.

The Framework ensures. that any initiative. goes through a **piloting** phase, an **implementation** phase. and, most importantly, an **embedding** phase.

It certainly made me feel more confident about my own autonomy as school leader.

Yes – of course,.. I had to account for our decisions – but the framework was self-explanatory in terms of what had already been achieved, what was in the process of being piloted. what was in the implementation phase, - the areas where we were embedding practice and the many, many areas and fantastic ideas that would just have to **wait** because we were at maximum capacity.

This framework helped to put boundaries around my own enthusiasm for change.

Try it out – it will help you to focus on your core purpose.

Over the next year we will deliver CPD around the country about using the P-I-E-W School Planning Management Framework.

Once again, I want to thank you for joining us here in Galway.

I wish you all well. Enjoy conference.

And thank you for your commitment and dedication to school leadership.

Go Raibh Míle Maith Agaibh