



IPPN Submission to the Department of Education

**Review of Governance Manual for Primary Schools
2019-2023**

June 2022

1 INTRODUCTION

The Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) is the officially-recognised professional body for the leaders of Irish primary schools. Established in 1999, IPPN is an independent, not-for-profit voluntary association with a local, regional and national presence. Recognised by the Minister for Education as an official Education Partner, IPPN works with the Department of Education (DE), the National Parents' Council, management bodies, unions, education agencies, academic institutions and children's charities towards the advancement of primary education. IPPN articulates the collective knowledge and professional experience of over 6,000 Principals and Deputy Principals, leading Ireland's 3,200+ primary schools.

We set out in this submission the substantive issues for consideration pertaining to the review of the Governance Manual and look forward to engaging with the Department and the education stakeholders in due course.

2 IPPN'S SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The following are the key issues that we feel merit consideration as part of the Review:

1. The need for a clear articulation of what constitutes the governance role of Boards and how that differs from management

“The primary goal of a board of management is to ensure that the school is managed in a manner that provides all of its pupils with the best possible education. Therefore, I believe that in achieving this objective the most effective Boards are those that have a clear understanding of their governance role and responsibilities and are fully aware of the importance of good communications with the school community including, in particular, parents.” – Minister’s Foreword, 2019 [IPPN’s emphasis to highlight mixed messaging]

2. Whether the current structure of Boards is the most appropriate to deliver on their oversight and compliance responsibilities in the increasingly complex legislative context in which they operate

3. How professional expertise can be made available to Boards in areas such as legal, financial, HR, health & safety, building works/capital projects etc.

4. The need for mandatory governance training for all Board members, and for additional mandatory specialised training for Board members with specific roles e.g. Treasurer, Health & Safety Officer

“In order to successfully manage a school, appropriate training is essential for Board members.”
Minister’s Foreword, 2019

5. Terms of office and rotation of Board members in line with recommended best governance practice, to ensure a measure of continuity and to guard against a loss of institutional wisdom

6. How the 49 standards detailed in the Charity Regulator’s Governance Code apply to schools
“The Department has consulted with the Charities Regulator and board of management members who act with reasonable care and good faith, adhering to the rules and procedures including those pertaining to financial procedures outlined in the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019 – 2023 and all other relevant rules, regulations and legislation relating to the membership and operation of Boards, meet the requirements outlined in the Charities Regulator publications the “Charities Governance Code” and “Guidance for Charities Trustees”. The Charities Regulator can be contacted by emailing info@charitiesregulator.ie.” Governance Manual 2019-2023, p43

7. The facility for schools to establish shared governance structures.
It is worth considering what data is available from those schools that pursued such shared structures over the last four years on a voluntary basis. The learnings from the Small schools Action Research project also need to be considered.

It is IPPN’s belief that these key issues need to be addressed if we are to resolve the well-known issues experienced by Boards of Management and school leaders across the country, in all school types and sizes as well as across all patron bodies. Failure to address these issues will result in a compounding of the challenges of sustainable leadership and of attracting skilled people onto primary school Boards.