

Priorities for Principal Teachers – Children

Hopefully by now you will have had a chance to read through IPPN’s publication [Priorities for Principal Teachers – In Clear Focus](#). It aims to:

- support the many principals who are struggling to manage their workload and are unsure what aspects of their role they can delegate or deprioritise
- offer a fresh perspective on how the wider educational community might be used to support principals
- provide a means of defining the priorities for the leadership role of principal
- show, by way of example, how to categorise tasks as follows:
 - Key priorities for the principal
 - Priorities principals could delegate or share
 - Other tasks principals should not personally undertake and those the school might agree to ‘de-prioritise for a time’.

What works in one school may well not work in another, but in every school, discussing and examining tasks with others will help to share good practice and to identify alternative approaches to dealing with work overload.

Having discussed the approach outlined in the publication with hundreds of principals, the general consensus is that we should first discuss the prioritisation of tasks within our local principals’ support group, followed by discussion with our deputy principals. This will help us when we then consult with our Boards of Management and the rest of our staff to gain their buy-in to a change in how work is prioritised and allocated throughout our schools.

Children

Children are what our schools are all about. Their education and welfare must always come first. Time spent getting to know the children and building a positive relationship with them is never time badly spent.

But what specifically must we principals do ourselves, what can we delegate or share and what should we definitely not spend our time doing when it comes to children in the school? Principals have told IPPN that we have the most difficulty prioritising children and staff, perhaps feeling we need to do everything ourselves. To help with this, we looked at all of the activities that take place within schools and consulted with school leaders to determine what IPPN believes to be the best possible guidance in terms of where principals spend time.

In relation to dealing with children, the following is the guidance presented*:

Key Priorities for the Principal – Must Do	Other Priorities – Could Delegate or Share	Other Tasks – Deprioritise / Principal should not need to personally undertake
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that there is a culture and environment within which children are well cared for, safe and respected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate supervision procedures are in place for pupils during school hours • Monitor pupil performance and achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is sufficient work for pupils whose teacher is absent • Arrange for tours and visits to places of educational interest, in consultation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the teaching and learning within the school • Implement child protection and anti-bullying policies • Act as Designated Liaison Person • Create an environment which maximises the learning potential and the holistic development of all pupils • Visit classrooms regularly to get to know, encourage and affirm pupils • Involve children in key policies and procedures • Ensure that school policies are regularly reviewed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinate Learning Support provision • Deal promptly with any allegations of bullying in accordance with school policy • Manage resources for children with special educational needs • Identify students at risk of school attendance problems • Introduce initiatives to enhance the quality of pupils' education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> with the staff, with BoM approval • Promote saving • Teaching principals should not answer the phone during class contact time. • Organise displays of pupils' work around the school • Manage lost property • Arrange transport for extra-curricular activities.
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**The complete list is in the publication*

In the context of work overload of the principal, and particularly of the teaching principal, what is important is that there is a *conversation* about how activities and responsibilities are allocated among the school staff, with an emphasis on empowerment, distributed leadership and ownership of school policy at all levels – staff, parents and pupils.