



IPPN Annual Report 2019/2020

Tacaíocht, Spreagadh, Misneach
Supporting School Leadership

ippn 
Leading and Learning

*‘Leadership – discovering
and pursuing initiatives
that enhance the quality
of learning and teaching
in the school’*

Towards a Better Future – A review of the Irish school system

Coolahan, Drudy, Hogan, Hyland and McGuinness, 2017.

The research publication was commissioned by IPPN and NAPD

[Link](#)



IPPN: The Organisation

School leadership is both professionally challenging and personally demanding. The Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) was established in 2000 to address school leaders' professional and personal needs. IPPN's focus from the beginning has been to provide supports and services for school leaders at local and county level, and to represent the views of school leaders in relation to education policy and school leadership nationally. From very humble facilities initially, the IPPN National Support Office has been located in state-of-the-art facilities in Glounthaune, Co. Cork since 2010.

IPPN is the officially-recognised professional body for Irish primary school leaders. It 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 and Skills (DES), education stakeholders including management bodies,

unions, education agencies, representative bodies, academic institutions and children's charities, towards the advancement of primary education. The Republic of Ireland has almost 560,000 children attending 3,239 primary schools. IPPN articulates the collective knowledge and professional experience of over 6,000 principals and deputy principals.

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IPPN Structure

IPPN's network of principals and deputy principals is structured as follows:

❖ Local Support Groups

Support groups form the main 'cell structure' of IPPN. Principals' and Deputy Principals' support groups are sustained with the support of local Education Centres.

In 2019/2020, additional support groups for deputy principals were established, so there are now groups available in most counties. The IPPN Support Office provided support to several county committees who wanted to set up support groups in their local area. IPPN President Damian White was directly involved as part of the membership engagement project – see Membership Engagement in the Advocacy section of this document.

❖ County Networks

IPPN facilitates 26 County Networks and each Network meets for up to three Continuous Professional Development events per year. These CPD events are funded through IPPN nationally and are open to all principals and deputy principals of member schools.

In 2019/2020, 35 county network meetings were hosted by IPPN, including the autumn meetings, largely due to the restrictions around the COVID-19 school closures.

Due to COVID-19, IPPN President Damian White and Jack Durkan virtually attended several leadership CPD and support meetings hosted by Education Centres across the country to engage with and get feedback directly from school leaders.

❖ National Council

Two school leaders are elected from each of the 26 counties to the National Council for a two-year term to ensure effective communication between County Networks, the Board and the Support Office. The National Council elects a President and officers who form the Board of Directors.

In 2019/2020, the National Council met three times. The Council comprises 24 teaching principals, 24 administrative principals and 4 deputy principals.

❖ Board of Directors

The Board is responsible for the strategic direction and overall governance of IPPN. The Board manages the affairs of the organisation through advisory groups established to research and develop IPPN policy.

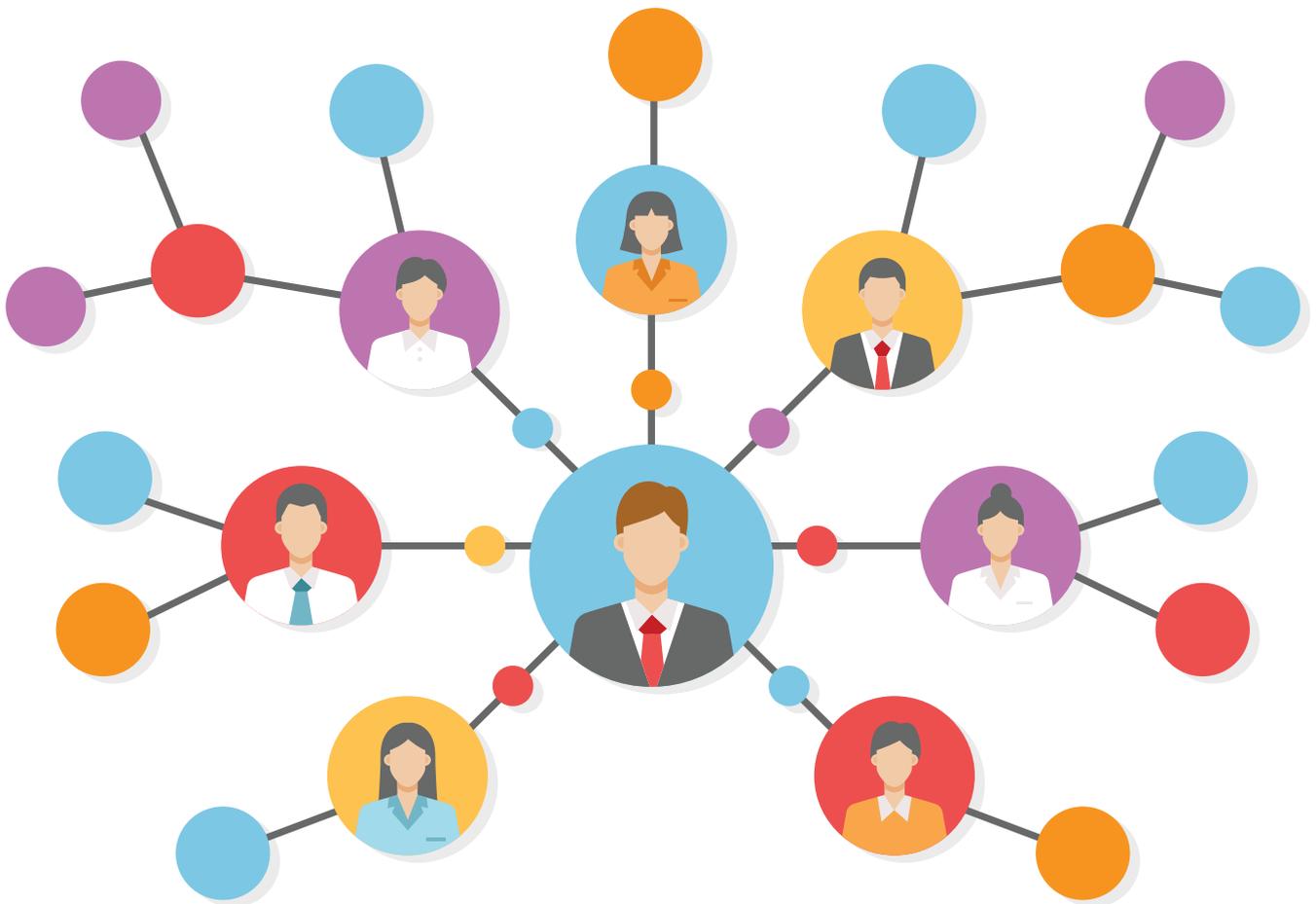
In 2019/2020, 50% of Board members were administrative principals, 17% were teaching principals, 8% were deputy principals and 25% were not current serving school leaders. Of the latter, 2 were seconded to CSL and the President is seconded to IPPN. The ratio of Board members of Male to Female was 50/50.

❖ Operations

In addition to the core work undertaken by IPPN staff to support school leaders in their leadership and management role as outlined below, IPPN staff also worked behind the scenes to run internal systems and processes, link in with service providers to keep online services running, plan events, develop capacity; recruit, induct and train staff; attract and maintain commercial income to fund vital services, handle invoicing and payments, and all of the other responsibilities any organisation must undertake to run smoothly.

In 2019/2020, IPPN staff provided additional supports during school closures and the transition back to school. Suffice to say that, as is the case in schools, our staff are our best asset, and our team continuously seeks to improve how IPPN operates in support of our members.

In 2019/2020, 35 county network meetings were hosted by IPPN, including the autumn meetings, largely due to the restrictions around the COVID-19 school closures.



Our Staff

In 2019/2020, this was the IPPN team:



Páirc Clerkin
Chief Executive Officer



Pat Goff
Deputy CEO



Nora Peters
General Manager



Angela Lynch
Leadership Support Manager



Geraldine D'Arcy
Advocacy & Communications Manager



Jennifer McCarthy
Membership & Event Management



Jack Durkan
IPPN Leadership Support



Donal Kerins
IPPN Leadership Support



Rachel Hallahan
Principal Information Officer



Sarah McNamara
Textaparent & Education Expo Sales



Jackie O'Reilly
Supports & Services



Sinéad Coakley
Business Development



Jacqui Ahearne
Accounts



Susan Forde
Front of House



Maeve O'Mahony
EducationPosts.ie



David Buckley
PA to CEO/President



Strategic Objectives

IPPN's stated **vision** is *Empowered Leaders; Inspired Learners* and our **mission** is to support and advocate for exemplary school leadership - *Tacaíocht, Misneach agus Spreagadh*. IPPN has four strategic objectives to achieve its vision and mission:

- ❖ To strengthen its Network by harnessing the capacity and capability of school leaders
- ❖ To maximise IPPN's impact and ensure that school leaders' experience is central to education policy by continuing to build collaborative relationships with key stakeholders
- ❖ To ensure IPPN supports and services are enhanced to reflect the needs of today's school leaders
- ❖ To continue the ongoing work in achieving its primary organisational goals.

We want to maximise IPPN's impact and ensure that school leaders' experience is central to education policy





Aims

IPPN's goals centre on the task of leadership across a spectrum of issues and activities:

❖ Supports and Services

- ❖ To provide all school leaders with a continuum of high quality personal and professional development, support, advice and guidance, in order to maximise the learning outcomes of every child
- ❖ To promote collegiality and professional dialogue and the sharing of best practice throughout the network of school leaders.

❖ Advocacy & Communications

- ❖ To provide leadership to all school leaders
- ❖ To positively influence education policy
- ❖ To be the trusted voice for children and their learning.

❖ Infrastructure

- ❖ To be financially secure and independent, providing the human and financial resources to maintain our Supports & Services and Advocacy needs
- ❖ To diversify funding sources for long-term organisational sustainability.

We aim to promote collegiality and professional dialogue and the sharing of best practice throughout the network of school leaders.



Supports & Services

From the National Support Office in Cork, IPPN provides the following supports and services to the 6000+ principals and deputy principals of over 3000 IPPN-member primary schools. IPPN members tell us that they value knowing that the back-up and support is there when they need it.

❖ Leadership Support Service

This one-to-one confidential advisory service, provided by a team of skilled serving and retired principals, offers collegial support and guidance of a non-directive and non-legal nature. The team also provides a Professional Guidance service, answering queries of a factual nature. From September 2019 to August 2020, the Leadership Support team responded to over 2,600 individual queries of principals and deputy principals. In July and August alone, well over 400 calls and emails were dealt with, a time that is usually relatively quiet. Among the topics dealt with, the following were the most common:

- ❖ School Policies (Linked to COVID-19)
- ❖ HR Admin

- ❖ Parents & Pupils – Parental Complaints, Custody & Access
- ❖ Recruitment
- ❖ Interpersonal/Conflict Management.

The team closely monitors the issues and queries raised by members and this information is factored into the plans for the development of resources and CPD.

❖ E-Scéal

This weekly electronic bulletin is the crucial 'one-stop-shop' providing all the key information school leaders need to know - current issues within the education sector, professional guidance, FAQs, circular releases, as well as topical issues relating to leadership and

management. Our links with education stakeholders ensure that IPPN is kept informed at the earliest opportunity of key developments, enabling us to pass that information to our members. Members who read their E-scéal every week can be assured that they won't miss any key information.

During the 2019/2020 school year, 41 E-scéalta were issued.

[Sample E-Scéal](#)

❖ Continuous Professional Development

From September 2019 to August 2020, IPPN hosted 38 local, regional and national CPD events for school leaders with over 2,800 school leaders participating at regional and national events and members attending local IPPN County Network Meetings across the 26 counties.

These CPD events offer an opportunity to hear fresh thinking from national and international figures in education, participate in stimulating workshops and to network with colleagues.

Other examples of CPD events organised by IPPN:

- ❖ Annual Principals' and Deputy Principals' Conferences
- ❖ Professional Briefing Day
- ❖ County Network meetings – at least one per term, apart from the summer term
- ❖ 'Headstart' for newly-appointed principals, now offered in conjunction with Misneach 1

From September 2019 to August 2020, IPPN hosted 38 local, regional and national CPD events for school leaders with over 2,800 school leaders participating at regional and national events and members attending local IPPN County Network Meetings across the 26 counties.

- ❖ 'Ciall Ceannaithe' online summer course in which more than 220 school leaders participated.

We share our CPD calendar using the **CSL CPD Calendar** tool.

[CSL CPD Calendar](#)

❖ Mailing Lists

IPPN's mailing lists are among the most valued supports available to members. They are 'closed' mailing lists i.e. the emails are for principals and deputy principals who are members of IPPN.

The most popular mailing list is 'networking', which facilitates a peer-support community. It has almost 4,000 subscribers. 16.5 million emails were sent during the 2019/2020 calendar year. The service was particularly busy during the last term, as leaders reached out to each other for support during the unprecedented closure of school buildings due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The mailing lists are usually suspended for the summer months, however it was decided to continue the service uninterrupted to ensure the peer-to-peer support could continue as principals and deputy principals organised and managed the transition back to school after the prolonged closure.

The advice@ippn.ie mailing list is for sensitive, confidential and non-generic queries, which are answered offline by members of our Leadership Support Panel as an extension of the Leadership Support service.



There are also mailing lists dedicated to cohorts of our members e.g. teaching principals, newly-appointed principals, deputy principals, DEIS schools, special schools, and those with autism classes, as well as county mailing lists which are used for more local information.

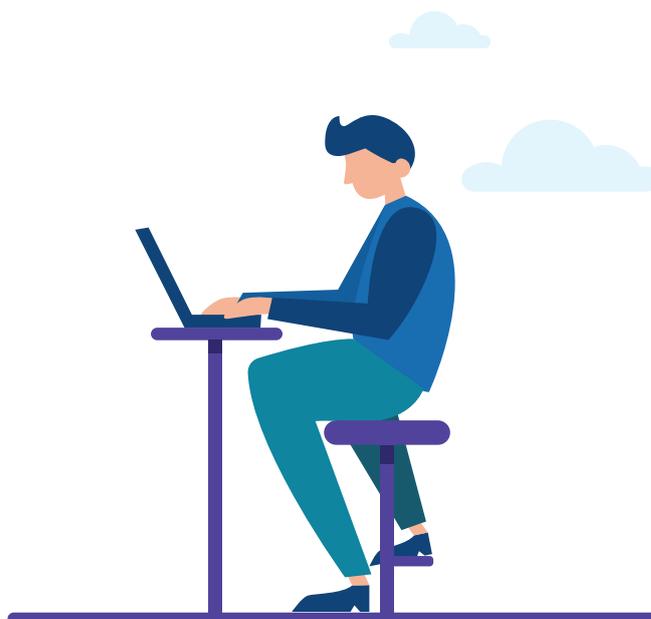
❖ Leadership+

The journal for principals and deputy principals, Leadership+ is issued to members throughout the year. It offers a wide range of articles of relevance to school leaders, including practical hints and tips, professional guidance, research summaries, information on new procedures and forthcoming events, to name just a few.

In the calendar year 2019/2020, five issues of Leadership+ were published. The April and May/June issues were not posted to schools as members could not access their school buildings during COVID-19 school closures. The April issue was printed just before schools were closed, and will be issued to schools in late September along with the October issue.

A complete archive of all 114 issues published to date is available online. The key benefit of the epublication is the ability to provide direct online links to more information on relevant source websites, as well as resources such as templates and sample policies. It is accessible on all devices and fully searchable to easily find a particular word or phrase. It is hoped that members will engage further with the epublication version in the coming years.

Leadership+



❖ Online Services

Webinars

Webinars allow school leaders to access online CPD wherever you are – home or school – at a time of your choosing, as they are recorded.

As a consequence of the COVID-19-related closure of school buildings, IPPN brought forward our plans to develop a series of webinars on relevant topics for school leaders. With our first ‘Sustainable Leadership’ series, over 2500 school leaders registered and participated in our first three webinars:

- ❖ Governance and key updates from Education Partners
- ❖ Recruitment and key updates from Education Partners
- ❖ Reopening of Schools – Response Plan, and key updates from Education Partners.

In addition, Mason Hayes Curran facilitated webinars in association with IPPN in relation to Admissions Policy 2021/22 and reopening of schools.

Webinars will supplement, but will not replace our face-to-face events, which also allow school leaders to network with their peers.

We plan to further develop our capacity to deliver CPD remotely, through online technology and to build on the learning from our initial series, developed to support members during COVID-19 closures.

Schools that wish to accept applications online through the portal will be facilitated, which will also be very useful for jobseekers. Communication with organisations will be online also. Testing on this platform begins in September 2020, with full launch of the platform shortly after this.

Sub Seeker

Sub Seeker is an online service within EducationPosts.ie that enables primary and post-primary schools to find qualified teachers for substitute teaching in selected counties. It helped substitute teachers find over 800 temporary positions since it was launched this time last year. The number of registered substitute teachers has tripled since then. At the time of writing, over 4,200 substitute teachers are registered on the service.

The benefits of the new Sub Seeker system include:

- ❖ Schools can review a teacher's profile (availability, experience, qualifications and other relevant information) before offering a substitute position
- ❖ Schools can see the history of their searches and the subs they have employed
- ❖ Data security – the system is GDPR compliant
- ❖ All teachers are validated against the Teaching Council database so schools can be assured they are registered
- ❖ Teachers can sub in both primary and post-primary schools
- ❖ The system works equally well on PC, laptop and tablet computers as well as on smart phones.

Based on member feedback, a number of enhancements have been made since the service was launched. Sub Seeker now sends a text message to substitute teachers once a substitute position is received. This ensures teachers are aware of all offers received, even if they do not have a Wi-Fi or data connection on their phones.

Sub Seeker

A new Sub Seeker button has recently been added to the homepage of EducationPosts.ie, and is visible once logged into an EducationPosts.ie account. This button allows for quicker access to the Sub Seeker platform, for both schools and teachers.

Development will continue in autumn 2020 to enhance the system further, including time limits on offer acceptance, more comprehensive search tools and member profiles, as well as updates to communication tools for job seekers and employers. We will continue to engage with users and develop the service on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of schools and job-seekers.

Dashboard

dashboard.ippn.ie provides everything school leaders need to know on one webpage, including a calendar of events, sector updates, latest IPPN resources and E-scéals and networking mailing list posts.

dashboard.ippn.ie

Social Media - #Flags4Frontline Campaign

To raise awareness for all frontline workers during the COVID-19 crisis, it was suggested that we encourage school children to fly flags to show gratitude towards those on the front line. IPPN, along with the INTO, NAPD, TUI, ASTI and several sporting organisations, launched the #Flags4Frontline social media campaign in March 2020.

The message was simple – hang club, county, provincial or national flags on gates, houses and schools to show gratitude to frontline workers, and help lift the spirits of those in the local community. IPPN raised awareness for this campaign across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, IPPN.ie, and also in the Leadership+ magazine.

The #Flags4Frontline campaign was a great success, with flags, homemade signs, and videos created by pupils, teams and communities across the country.

Over 4,200 substitute teachers are now registered on the Sub Seeker service



Supports for Newly-Appointed Principals

Once IPPN is aware of a retirement or a vacancy for the role of principal, we ensure that information is provided to the incoming principal about the various supports available to them, such as one-to-one and group mentoring.

One-to-one mentoring is provided to new principals by the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) in the first year following appointment. It is part of the continuum of support we hope new leaders will avail of throughout their leadership journey. In addition to CSL mentoring, IPPN will offer support to over 270 new school leaders in the school year 2020/2021. The present difficulties with Covid-19 have utterly changed the educational landscape for leaders, and new leaders in particular will need support and guidance during the next school year, particularly in light of the challenges that lie ahead.

In their second year as a school leader, and as part of their ongoing CPD, principals will complete modules 4 and 5 of the Misneach programme. In addition to this, they will access Group Mentoring support, facilitated by IPPN. Each mentoring group will be facilitated by an experienced school leader who has been formally trained in both one-to-one mentoring and in group mentoring and facilitation – the ‘group mentor’. Group mentoring meetings take place approximately four to five times a year and consist of groups of usually four to eight principals in their second year of leadership, facilitated by group mentors.

Group mentoring was introduced in April 2017 by NAPD and IPPN as both organisations consider mentoring to be a key component in the induction of newly-appointed school leaders. Quality leadership support and participation in professional learning communities (networks) are essential to the development and continued effectiveness of school leaders.

Feedback and evaluations from mentees during the past year has been very positive, with the mentees expressing their appreciation of the service and how it gave them renewed confidence, space and time for reflection and specific goals and plans to address various aspects of their work.

In the 2019/2020 school year, the IPPN Leadership Support Team designed and delivered training in relation to Group Mentoring to 48 mentors across the country, to enable them to act as mentors to cohorts of new school leaders.

We also engage with principals who are retiring to let them know about opportunities to get involved in IPPN projects and to stay in touch with what is happening in the education sector.

One-to-one mentoring is provided to new principals by the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) in the first year following appointment.





Advocacy

IPPN also supports school leaders by advocating for improved policy and funding for primary education, as well as leadership development and supports for school leaders. Our advocacy work covers IPPN's overall vision for school leadership '*Empowered Leaders; Inspired Learners*', as well as our key objectives (outlined below under '*Strategic Objectives*'), and specific issues and concerns that relate to particular cohorts of our members - special schools, one-teacher schools, schools led by teaching principals, and DEIS schools, among others. As a professional body, IPPN is precluded from involvement in industrial relations matters but works closely with the other education partners and the INTO to highlight all issues of concern to school leaders and advocate for those prioritised to be progressed.

IPPN has worked closely with INTO, CPSMA (on behalf of Management bodies), NABMSE and NPC in seeking support in areas of shared priority, particularly since the outbreak of the Coronavirus Pandemic in March 2020. IPPN advocated for school leaders with education partners and the DES in almost daily briefings and working group meetings during this period, and provided continuous bulletins and updates to members, all of this done while working remotely and in addition to all of the other services and supports provided.

To reflect and capture the voice and experience of the school leader in our advocacy work, IPPN seeks to consult widely with principals and deputy principals through member engagement with county networks, the National Council and the Board, as well as through the education centre network, directly at IPPN events, and through research projects (see Research below). There have been issues around consultation processes with the Department and other education agencies, with very limited time provided to education partners to review and provide feedback. We have sought an approach which allows for forward planning and

adequate time to consult with our members - to give school leaders a stronger voice and an ability to influence education policy.

It is worth noting that IPPN membership is funded directly through membership fees paid by school boards of management. IPPN is accountable to the Oireachtas and is regularly invited to hearings.

Membership Engagement

IPPN's direct engagement with members can divide neatly into two distinct sections, before and after March 12th, when schools closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prior to the closure of school buildings in March 2020, IPPN President Damian White visited several counties, and visited many schools - large schools, small schools, special schools, mainstream schools with ASD units and Gaelscoileanna - engaging with school leaders and addressing their concerns. He met local principals' support groups and listened to concerns and shared support in a number of areas. A new principals' support group was established in North County Dublin. Damian and IPPN CEO Páirc Clerkin met with several education centre directors to look at ways in which we could work more closely in support of school leaders. Along with the leadership of INTO, Damian also met with school leaders from schools affected by the Western Building Systems school buildings issue, and advocated on their behalf with the DES on the issues raised.

Since Covid-19, almost all engagement has happened remotely. The President and members of IPPN's Leadership Support team have attended Zoom meetings and webinars with school leaders hosted and supported by education centres all across the country, and continue to do so. A number of support groups specific to deputy principals have been established and continue to meet remotely.



Areas of Focus

Elsewhere during the 2019/2020 school year, our advocacy work focused on the following aspects of school leadership and management, in line with our strategic priorities:

- ❖ **Small schools** - presentation at DES symposium, establishment of working group on small schools chaired by Prof. Anne Looney, Executive Dean of DCU
- ❖ **Teaching Principalship** - presentation to Joint Oireachtas Committee, top priority in our Budget 2020 submission and engagement with stakeholders
- ❖ **COVID-19 remote learning and transition back to school** - supports needed by schools and school leaders to lead and manage during the crisis, resources needed by schools to reopen safely for the new school year - presentation to the Special Oireachtas Committee, participation in briefings and working group meetings, various submissions
- ❖ **Sustainable leadership** - IPPN started a discussion with key stakeholders to look at the sustainability of primary school leadership, which will lead to a number of strands of work in the coming years
- ❖ **Special Education** - IPPN has worked with officials in the DES and NCSE as well as with NABMSE, to progress and address issues relating to SEN, including the designation of schools for new special classes, the new SNA allocation model, and the serious issues specific to the special schools' sector
- ❖ Other issues discussed with key stakeholders included:
 - Homelessness
 - The proposed Student & Parent Charter and its implications for schools
 - School Completion Planning
 - Racism.

IPPN's direct engagement with members can divide neatly into two distinct sections, before and after March 12th, when schools closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

❖ Stakeholder Development

Over the course of the year, IPPN continued to build positive, collaborative relationships with the key stakeholders in education, to ensure that the challenges, concerns and opportunities relating to primary education and school leadership are fully understood. This approach helps when key policy and funding decisions are being made, as the needs and concerns of school leaders are more likely to be taken into consideration. The best example of this is the collaboration in relation to the Roadmap for Reopening and the resources needed by schools to safely do so. There is no doubt that these were provided as the key stakeholders were in agreement as to the approach and the priorities.

Close collaboration with our post-primary counterpart NAPD and international school leadership associations has also reaped rewards, in deepening our understanding of alternative approaches and policy developments.



Over the course of the year, IPPN continued to build positive, collaborative relationships with the key stakeholders in education.

❖ Research

IPPN conducts and commissions research to determine the nature and depth of the issues at stake in primary education, particularly in relation to school leadership and management. The resulting research publications are used both to develop understanding of the issues, challenges and potential solutions among stakeholders, as well as to support school leaders directly in their work.

In recent years, IPPN has undertaken research in relation to special schools and the particular health and safety issues in one-teacher schools, as well as the perspectives of our deputy principal cohort on school leadership and management. A current focus is on the wellbeing of school leaders, and on the workload of school leaders, teaching principals in particular.

IPPN has undertaken a number of significant research projects over the years, the results of which have been published in formal reports, which are available to members in the Advocacy section of our website www.ippn.ie. **Click here** for a link to these publications.

Research Publications

In the 2019/2020 school year, IPPN surveyed members in relation to the following key issues:

- ❖ COVID-19 school closures and practice in schools – March/April and follow-up in late May 2020
- ❖ IPPN strategic review
- ❖ A range of topics was covered in a pre-conference survey in early 2020, including:
 - Path to principalship
 - SEN in mainstream schools
 - Issues and challenges in Irish-medium schools
 - Homework policy
 - Irish exemptions
 - Formation of new Boards of Management
 - IPPN supports, including the PIEW Model, Sub Seeker, Wall Calendar, Airgead Bunscoile
 - Environmental sustainability
 - Internet access.

In addition, small cohorts of school leaders were asked to provide input on a number of topics relating to submissions sought by external organisations such as the DES, Inspectorate, Tusla, HIQA and others, including in relation to the following:

- ❖ HIQA Draft National Standards for Children's Social Services
- ❖ Section 29 appeals procedures
- ❖ Guidelines on the Continuity of Schooling, and
- ❖ Full Reopening of Schools after COVID-19 Closures.



CONFERENCE 2020
TO THE FUTURE
Mission
CON

ippn
tacaíocht
misneach
spreagadh

“The Centre for School Leadership (CSL) actively advocates for the importance of school leaders being involved in system leadership.

Engagement with stakeholders in the system who support school leaders in their daily work is essential for sustained system improvement and the attainment of better outcomes for pupils.

Being aware of these supports, actively using them to improve their practice, having access to the reassuring successes of other schools and other leaders, understanding that everyone faces similar challenges, and being informed of upcoming changes and policy initiatives, places school leaders in a position of readiness which depletes stress and ensures a better sense of control for principals who work in busy daily schedules.

CSL supports recognised stakeholders in the Irish system who ensure that school leaders have the support, information, assurance and the social-professional space that they need to sustain their energy, enthusiasm and positivity for the role.”

The Centre for School Leadership



Contact us

We are keen to hear from school leaders and any other stakeholders who share our vision for primary education.

You can contact us through one of the media below

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

+353 21 4824070

info@ippn.ie

www.ippn.ie

[@IPPN_Education](https://www.instagram.com/IPPN_Education)

IPPN National Support Office
Glounthaune
Co. Cork

More information about IPPN and the supports and services we offer to school leaders is available on our website www.ippn.ie.

CHARITABLE STATUS

IPPN is a registered charity with CHY number 17221.