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<https://checkbox.education.gov.ie/checkbox/statement-of-strategy-stakeholders-consultation.aspx>

# Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2023

## Stakeholder Consultation

The Programme for Government – Our Shared Future sets out the Government’s commitment to education which is founded on the principles of excellence, inclusion and sustainability.

The following are the high level goals for education that have been identified in the Programme for Government:

- Improving the learning experience and success of learners
- Increasing progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs
- Helping those delivering education to continuously improve
- Building stronger bridges between education and the wider community
- Providing better national planning and support services
- Implementing evidence-based policies.

## Goal 1: Improving the learning experience and success of learners

For this goal please provide information in respect of the following (note limit is 300 words for each item):

1. **What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?**
  - a. Putting the learner at the centre of all policy decisions is the key priority
  - b. Additional CPD and support re. teaching methodologies and tools to harness the potential for online learning
  - c. Additional support especially for teachers with larger classes in interactive teaching methodologies cf Professor Selina McCoy/ESRI research in relation to pupil engagement
  - d. Increased emphasis on enabling all pupils to reach their full potential, particularly those with additional needs and those from socio-economically deprived backgrounds
  - e. Supporting pupils with high levels of academic ability to reach their full potential. Their needs can often be overlooked when there are so many pupils with SEN, from disadvantaged backgrounds to support in the same classroom.
  - f. The focus on wellbeing needs to go beyond a framework; it also needs to go beyond pupils, or something that can be 'inspected' or 'ticked'. CPD and resources (for leaders, teachers and pupils) to develop resilience and wellbeing should be a key priority.

2. **List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years:**

Improve the consultation process across the board to ensure that the organisations you engage with have sufficient time to consult practitioners who are working in schools. This would help in a number of ways – increased levels of engagement with policy, better policy based on what will work in practice, the learner will be at the centre of the decisions.

3. **How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal - if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?**

Measure pupil engagement with curriculum content

4. **Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?**

Not applicable

5. **Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?**

See answer to question 2

6. **How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?**

The success of learners is linked directly to the wellbeing and sustainability of teachers and school leaders. IPPN is extremely concerned about the wellbeing of school leaders and would be very happy

to share our experience through the Wellbeing for Teachers and Learners group – a collaboration between the DES, IPPN, NAPD, the Teaching Council and NPC.

## **Goal 2: Increasing progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs**

For this goal please provide information in respect of the following (note limit is 300 words for each item):

- 1. What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?**

Pupil/teacher ratio and resource allocation are the key priorities in relation to this goal.

- 2. List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years:**

Ensure that all schools with significant cohorts of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are identified and provided with targeted supports per the proven DEIS programme of supports. The review of DEIS is long overdue and many needy pupils are being left behind as a result of not being in a designated DEIS school – they are in much larger classrooms and have far less support than other pupils with similar backgrounds. The aspiration towards equity of provision must continue to be a key priority.

- 3. How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal - if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?**

All pupils' abilities need to be measured so that progress can be measured. Appropriate methodologies for the measurement of progress are required for pupils with SEN. A shared understanding between parents and educators in relation to expectations around academic achievement is in need of further development.

Pupil drop-out rates at post-primary will also indicate success or failure.

- 4. Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?**

Not applicable

- 5. Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?**

How school leaders can support SEN and DEIS/disadvantaged pupils to reach their full potential – it is crucial to get this right, and is a particular challenge for teaching principals who have very limited time to lead and manage.

IPPN is extremely concerned about the sustainability of multiple special classes in schools led by teaching principals. Consideration must be given to reinstating administrative status for principals with two or more special classes in their schools, as was the case until the early 1990s.

### **How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?**

It would ensure that no-one is left behind. While there are significant supports available, they don't always make the difference that is intended, as it can be 'spread too thin' across too many pupils to be effective.

It would help to ensure sustainability of school leadership, especially in small schools.

## **Goal 3: Helping those delivering education to continuously improve**

For this goal please provide information in respect of the following (note limit is 300 words for each item):

### **1. What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?**

A CPD budget for every teacher aligned to the Teaching Council Cosán framework would help ensure that all teachers continue to focus on improving their pedagogy and their own and their pupils' wellbeing.

Additional CPD is required in relation to any curricular developments.

New principals should have mandatory induction, and a suite of supports to help them get to grips with their new role, including the excellent supports already provided by PDST, CSL and IPPN.

Teaching principals require this CPD, as well as additional supports to help them lead teaching and learning when they have limited leadership and management time available.

All school leaders need professional development from the start of their leadership 'journey', as teacher leaders in classrooms, as middle leaders, as senior leaders, and also if they are identified as system leaders – throughout the continuum of leadership as discussed with stakeholders at IPPN's Sustainable Leadership symposium in July 2019.

Development of deputy and assistant principals to optimise their capacity as middle leaders is a key priority, with the aim of sharing the leadership and management role of the principal and to make all of the roles more sustainable.

Substitute cover is required for school leaders to avail of CPD opportunities.

### **2. List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years:**

Sustainable leadership action research, especially in relation to small schools – to help school leaders improve their practice, they need significant support and the structures relating to leadership, governance and leadership development need to be improved.

To facilitate school leaders' development, they need time to focus on leading teaching and learning, and time to engage with professional learning. Teaching principals need specific support in this regard, including a minimum of one day a week for leadership and management, and a review of the threshold for appointment as administrative principal.

Other actions re. CPD as outlined above.

IPPN believes that the induction process for newly-appointment principals should be mandatory, and enhanced further to ensure all new leaders are fully supported to thrive in the role.

A particular action needs to be prioritised around governance and the structures and supports needed to ensure it is effective and sustainable in every school, with a particular focus on small schools.

**3. How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal - if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?**

Attrition rate of principals, with a particular focus on teaching principals.

**4. Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?**

Not applicable

**5. Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?**

Attrition rate of teaching principals. CPD for school leaders. Leadership pipeline. Collaboration with IPPN and CSL.

**6. How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?**

Putting structures and supports in place to help school leaders to feel sustained and supported in their role would help to ensure improved morale among school staff, increased focus on teaching and learning, and pupil outcomes. Quality Leadership ⇔ Quality Learning.

## **Goal 4: Building stronger bridges between education and the wider community**

For this goal please provide information in respect of the following (note limit is 300 words for each item):

- 1. What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?**

Student and Parent Charter, with increased balance between rights and responsibilities in relation both to schools and to parents & pupils.

- 2. List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years:**

Consultation with school leaders in relation to the Charter and appropriate rights and responsibilities.

Consultation with teachers, SNAs and other staff through relevant representative bodies.

Consultation with parents and students through a Citizens' Assembly, or similar, to facilitate a greater understanding of the shared rights and responsibilities.

- 3. How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal - if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?**

OCO reports. Increased participation in the Partnership Schools initiative.

- 4. Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?**

Increased participation in the Partnership Schools initiative.

- 5. Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?**

Partnership Schools - DES, NPC and IPPN involved in the steering group.

Student and Parent Charter to ensure that there is a balance between rights and responsibilities in relation both to schools and to parents & pupils.

- 6. How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?**

The ultimate objective for the Student & Parent Charter is to promote positive relationships throughout the school community. This can only be achieved where there is a shared understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all parties. How schools have managed during the current pandemic is an example of how positive collaboration and partnership can work towards a shared objective.

## Goal 5: Providing better national planning and support services

For this goal please provide information in respect of the following (note limit is 300 words for each item):

- 1. What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?**

The **Centre for School Leadership** has been proven to advance the thinking around school leadership and the development of school leaders. It needs to be afforded permanent status and resourced to ensure it can deliver the outcomes envisaged by the DES and the other partner organisations – IPPN and NAPD.

Improved planning and resourcing in relation to NCSE, NEPS and therapeutic supports, as well as supports for pupils from socio-economically deprived backgrounds.

Better planning in relation to the opening of special classes, and respecting the implementation of the Admissions Act in relation to enrolment, rather than designation of schools by the NCSE.

- 2. List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years:**

Ensuring adequate time for consultation with stakeholders - to include practitioners, not just representative groups - is crucial.

Promotion of the critical importance of engagement with school leadership support services to Boards of Management – including IPPN, NAPD, CSL, and PDST.

- 3. How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal - if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?**

Waiting times for therapeutic services to pupils. Pupil attainment, particularly in relation to those with additional needs.

Membership levels (IPPN and NAPD); Engagement with CSL supports (mentoring, coaching). Engagement with PDST supports (it's critical that all newly-appointed school leaders engage with the Misneach and Tánaiste programmes – in our view, it should be mandatory).

- 4. Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?**

Membership levels (IPPN and NAPD). Engagement with group mentoring (IPPN). Membership of local support groups, in conjunction with Education Centres.

- 5. Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?**

Further development of an induction programme for newly-appointed principals and deputy principals, in collaboration with CSL, PDST, NAPD and the Department of Education. Further development of local support groups, in conjunction with Education Centres/ESCI.

As outlined in question 1 - improved planning and resourcing in relation to NCSE, NEPS and therapeutic supports, as well as supports for pupils from socio-economically deprived backgrounds.

**6. How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?**

Enhancing leadership will enhance the quality of learning cf Prof Michael Fullan Quality Leadership ⇔ Quality Learning.

Ensuring no pupil has to wait an unreasonable amount of time to get the help they need to reach their full potential will improve pupil engagement with the curriculum, which will reduce the incidence of early school leaving, and improve long-term wellbeing and engagement in civic life, as well as the workplace.

## Goal 6: Implementing evidence-based policies

For this goal please provide information in respect of the following (note limit is 300 words for each item):

- 1. What do you think the key strategic priorities for education (primary and post-primary), over the next 3 years, should be?**

Consider all the learning from the ESRI, the ERC and other sources of high-quality research - including CSL, the Teaching Council, the teacher training colleges and other stakeholders including management bodies, professional bodies and unions - is harnessed and utilised to develop evidence-based policies in the sector.

The Primary Education Forum and its objectives are a key priority, particularly in relation to the change agenda relating to schools. Consultation with practitioners – through and with representative bodies – is crucial, and sufficient time to do this properly is key. The PEF could play a crucial role in this regard if all agencies (All Department sections, NIPT, NCSE, NCCA, NEPS, Teaching Council) had to engage with the PEF in relation to policy development, the consultation process and appropriate timing of same.

In the past month alone, IPPN was requested to provide submissions on three key topics (reduced timetables, keeping schools open and safe, DES Statement of Strategy) and given less than 21 days to respond. It is not possible for any representative body to engage properly with practitioners in this timeframe.

- 2. List 3 key strategic actions that should be prioritised for primary and post-primary education over the next 3 years:**

Reengagement with the Primary Education Forum. A blended approach should be considered in future – virtual and face-to-face have been proven to be effective.

For each of the above goals, identify the critical data that is needed to drive and measure the actions to deliver the goal, and collaborate with the relevant stakeholders to increase levels of ownership to reach the goal.

- 3. How do you think we should measure our progress towards this goal - if we are successful in achieving this goal what will have improved/be different?**

Per the previous answer.

- 4. Are there specific metrics you use to measure your organisation's achievement in relation to this goal that could be adopted by the Department?**

Response rates to research. Acceptance of/reaction of those on the ground to new policy decisions.

- 5. Are there particular priorities under this goal that we should progress in collaboration with your organisation?**

Any policies and revised procedures that require school leaders to implement in schools should be facilitated through the PEF, with an appropriate consultation process, so that organisations such as IPPN can consult with practitioners to ensure that the 'lived experience' of leaders is brought to bear and reflected in the policies. This will increase the likelihood of acceptance by

school leaders and school staff. Ensuring adequate time for such consultation to include practitioners, not just representative groups, is crucial.

**6. How could greater collaboration/engagement benefit students under this goal?**

Any policy that affects pupil outcomes that is evidence-based, and particularly when it takes into account feedback from practitioners working in schools, will have a greater impact than a policy that is based on anecdote or instinct. Where policy is informed by action research will have even better credibility and impact.

## Programme for Government Priorities

The Programme for Government identifies a number of key cross government pillars or priorities (note limit is 300 words for each item)

### **How can we contribute to the achievement of Ireland's ambitions in these key areas?**

At the moment, the focus rightly is on keeping schools open and safe during a global pandemic. It might be appropriate to re-engage with stakeholders in relation to other priorities – through the PEF and directly - once the crisis has abated.

## Climate Action

### **How can education contribute? What strategic actions should we prioritise in this area 2021 - 2023?**

Climate action needs to become part of the culture in every school community and the wider community. Schools should be encouraged towards actions that will reduce their carbon footprint, including resources to install efficient and cost effective boilers, insulation etc. Unfortunately teaching principals find it extremely difficult to find time to engage with agencies such as the ESAI, SEI etc. Consideration could be given to providing an additional promoted post in each school to focus specifically on environmental sustainability.

## Other issues you wish to raise:

**Note: there is a strict 500 word limit for this question**

There are four key priorities that IPPN would like to raise here. These relate to the following areas:

1. **Resourcing priorities:**
  - a. Put one leadership and management day per week for teaching principals on a permanent and statutory footing
  - b. Ensure that the rebuilding of middle leadership capacity can be facilitated right across the sector in a fair and equitable manner
  - c. Continue the level of resourcing currently in place for schools to maintain cleaning and hygiene for the duration of the pandemic.
2. The **Centre for School Leadership** has been proven to advance the thinking around school leadership and the development of school leaders. It needs to be afforded permanent status and resourced to ensure it can deliver the outcomes envisaged by the DES and the other partner organisations – IPPN and NAPD.
3. **Research and action planning to promote career long sustainability for school leaders.** This includes the Small Schools Action Research Project which is proposed by DCU in conjunction with IPPN, INTO and other stakeholders. This is in line with your goal 6 – to implement evidence-based policies, and our position - policy that is informed by action research will have better credibility and impact than any other kind.

IPPN has started working on a significant project relating to sustainable leadership and are engaging with the Department of Education in relation to three specific aspects:

- a. Progressive governance structures for the primary school sector
- b. Developing and supporting school leaders – aspiring, middle and senior leaders
- c. Leading teaching and learning.

4. **Teacher Supply** – the development of an end-to-end recruitment portal will support schools, Boards of Management, job-seekers and management bodies in managing what can be a complex and onerous set of tasks. The Department will also benefit from the wealth of data that can flow from having the entire process online for all schools. A key priority will be to remove any potential barriers to implementation.