



# A Guide to IPPN

**LEADERSHIP** **ADVOCACY**  
**EFFECTIVENESS** **SERVICES**  
**CORE PURPOSE** **PROFESSIONAL**  
**PROFESSIONALISM** **BODY**  
**EMPOWER** **TRUST**  
**SCHOOL LEADERS** **SUPPORTS**  
**LEADING TEACHING**  
**AND LEARNING**

**ippn**   
Leading and Learning

*Tacaíocht, Spreagadh, Misneach*  
*Supporting School Leadership*

How to use  
recycler



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# IPPN Vision, Mission & Values

## WHO WE ARE

IPPN is the professional body for the leaders of Irish primary schools. 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, 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 6,400 Principals and Deputy Principals.

## WHAT WE DO

The importance of school leadership as an influence on, and key determinant of pupil learning, has been clearly established. The equation is simple – effective school leadership leads to school effectiveness, which in turn leads to better outcomes for children. It is, therefore, a priority that school leaders should be

empowered and supported to deliver that effective leadership in our schools, thereby maintaining their focus on what is most closely aligned with their core purpose – leading teaching and learning.

IPPN aspires to empower school leaders to provide the most effective leadership of their school communities. We do so through the provision of supports and services that enable that empowerment, and through our advocacy for the enhancement of leadership capacity, effectiveness and sustainability. This work is shaped directly by our engagement with our members to ensure that it reflects their needs and perspectives. We also advocate with our fellow Education Partners in the best interests of children, schools and school leaders.

The way in which we work to achieve our stated objectives is underpinned by our values of respect, trust and professionalism, which define us as an organisation.



# Strategic Priorities 2021-2025

To progress the work on our stated objectives, we establish priorities that form the basis of our strategic plan. The plan was developed in consultation with our members, our Board of Directors, our staff and key stakeholders across the education sector. It identified five areas of strategic priority.

**Sustainable Leadership** - to create the conducive conditions that will enhance leadership capacity, effectiveness and sustainability in all schools.

**Member Engagement** - to provide all our members with access to the resources, guidance and networks required to support them in their roles as school leaders and, through this engagement, to attain insights that will inform IPPN's future plans and maximise our impact. The IPPN President leads the organisation in this work.

**Professional Learning for Leadership** - to strengthen our facilitation of learning and continuing professional development, ensuring this is inclusive, relevant, and valued by members and staff. The Leadership Support Team and the Professional Learning committee of the National Council lead in this work.

**Communications** - to embed effective communication in all aspects of IPPN's work and to continue to improve communication with our members, our staff and the wider education sector. The Advocacy team leads in this work.

**Governance** - to strengthen IPPN's governance structures to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability at all levels within the organisation. The CEO and General Manager lead in this work.





# Sustainable Leadership Project

IPPN's direct engagement with school leaders has highlighted the increasing levels of challenge, frustration and disillusionment experienced and articulated by school leaders in response to their experience of the practice of leadership. The intensity of that sense of frustration and disillusionment has noticeably increased in recent years and prompted IPPN to undertake its Sustainable Leadership project.

The purpose of the project is to explore and understand:

- why so many of those who are tasked with one of the most strategically important roles in education, and a key determinant of a school's effectiveness, are struggling to sustain themselves in those roles
- what are the factors that are undermining that sustainability
- what is the impact on their leadership practice
- what are the implications for their health and well-being, and
- what can be done to render school leadership roles more sustainable.

## EVIDENCE GATHERING AND ANALYSIS

As part of phase 1 of the project, we endeavoured to do two things:

1. to provide a research-informed analysis of the current reality of primary school leadership and

2. to explore the key issues and identify solutions that will have a positive impact on leadership capacity, effectiveness and sustainability, with a consequential positive impact on school effectiveness and outcomes for children.

This culminated in the publication of a report in November 2022 – ***Primary School Leadership: The Case for Urgent Action - A Roadmap to Sustainability*** – which can be accessed [here](#).

In November 2023, IPPN published a progress report on the project in order to

- reaffirm the rationale underpinning the project
- highlight what actions had been undertaken and what progress had been made since the publication of the original report
- provide an up-to-date evidence base which demonstrates an ongoing need for action.
- The progress report can be accessed [here](#).

There are four elements to the evidence base:

1. The extent to which the workload of school leaders has increased since 2016
2. The nature of that workload with reference to the domains of the quality framework for leadership and management
3. The impact of the preceding factors on the sustainability of leadership roles
4. The impact on the health & wellbeing of school leaders as measured by an independent research study.

### SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

1. The breadth of tasks and responsibilities that are ascribed to school leaders has increased considerably over the last 8 years as each circular, each set of policy guidelines, and each new scheme or initiative is published
2. Those tasks and responsibilities demonstrate a significantly disproportionate focus on managing the organisation with a much lesser focus on the leadership of teaching, learning and school development
3. This is impacting on the sustainability of leadership roles with the mean score for all principals rating that sustainability at 3.61 out of 10 with teaching principals reporting a rating of just 3.18 out of 10
4. 97% of principals agree that the factor that most undermines the sustainability of their roles is the number of tasks & responsibilities they have to undertake that have nothing to do with their core purpose

5. The experience of the practice of leadership is having a serious and detrimental impact on the health & wellbeing of school leaders with their negative health scores being double, or more than double, those of the healthy working population, and with 54% now falling into either the high or severe categories of burnout
6. If the job of principal became vacant in their school, 81% of deputy principals would not apply chiefly because of the negative impact it would have on their health and their work / life balance.

### WHERE IMPROVEMENT CAN BE ACHIEVED

Three areas clearly emerge which, if addressed, have the potential to have a profound impact on leadership practice in Irish primary schools.

1. Role clarity
2. Sharing of leadership
3. School Governance.

If school leaders were enabled to maintain their focus on their core purpose through greater clarity of role, if they had greater capacity to share leadership effectively and if our schools had a governance structure that had the capacity to meet its onerous responsibilities, then:

- there would be greater leadership capacity within our schools
- that leadership would be more effective and
- those leadership roles would be more sustainable.

97% of principals agree that the factor that most undermines the sustainability of their roles is the number of tasks & responsibilities they have to undertake that have nothing to do with their core purpose



# Advocacy

A key aspect of IPPN's work is to advocate for the enhancement of leadership capacity, effectiveness, and sustainability, as well as improved policy and funding for primary education. Our advocacy work takes account of IPPN's overall vision for school leadership, as well as our key objectives outlined above.

It also takes account of specific issues and concerns that relate to particular cohorts of our members, including special schools, schools led by teaching principals, DEIS schools and developing schools. We do this work through:

**Stakeholder Development** - building 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.

**Participation in Working Groups** - IPPN is involved in a significant number working groups to progress the key challenges facing primary education and school leadership, including:

- Primary Education Forum (PEF) and its Consultation and Communications sub-committees
- CSL/Oide Steering Committee
- Anti-bullying Forum

- Primary Principalship Pre-appointment Programme Group
- Review of Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2023-2027
- Steering Group for the Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership
- Small School Action Research Project Steering Group
- Summer Programme Steering Group among many others.

IPPN is also represented internationally on the Board and Committees of :

- the International Confederation of Principals (ICP)
- European School Heads Association (ESHA)

**Position Papers and Submissions** - IPPN uses position papers (unsolicited) and submissions (requested) to set out our vision for particular aspects of primary education that require change. They are evidence-based and reflect the issues being experienced in





schools. In recent years, IPPN has advocated with stakeholders on the following topics:

- Citizens Assembly on the Future of Education
- The implementation of the Free Schoolbooks Scheme
- Working Paper on Teacher Supply
- SEN Allocations, Resourcing and Appeals
- Budget 2024
- Child Protection Working Group Recommendations
- Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy
- STEM Education.

The full set of position papers and submissions is available in the Advocacy section of [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie).

## ACHIEVEMENTS

The following achievements are the result of our extensive advocacy work with the Department of Education, our fellow education partners, education agency leaders and other relevant decision makers.

- Our submission for **Budget 2024** achieved a number of improvements for school leaders:
  - Deputy principals in special schools to have administrative status
  - Capitation grant to be increased to €200 from September 2024
  - Funding allocated for additional posts of responsibility to develop leadership capacity
- Continued funding of the pilot mental health in schools projects into 2024
- Schools can now combine Special Education teaching hours and principals' release days to form a full-time post, providing continuity of learning for children and greatly alleviating school administration.
- Consideration of school governance structures will be undertaken by the Primary Education Forum
- The need for an increased number of SENOs nationally, the use of an accurate dataset and the need for a more responsive, time-bound appeals process were incorporated into the new model of allocating SET resources to schools
- Key issues relating to **SNAs** are being progressed - new contract, centralised vetting, training and complaints procedure
- A second phase of the **Small Schools Clustering Action Research Project** has been sanctioned to run for a two year period from 2024 to 2026
- The **Free School Books Scheme** took account of the significant additional workload involved in the administration of the scheme, as highlighted by IPPN, through the provision of an administrative support fund.

## RESEARCH

IPPN conducts and commissions research to determine the nature and depth of the issues 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, we have 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 the need for more discrete time for leadership to be allocated to all schools.

IPPN has undertaken a number of significant research projects over the years, including the following:

### Sustainable Leadership

As part of this project, IPPN commissioned or undertook the following research:

1. Deakin University conducted research in 2022, 2023 and 2024 on **Irish School Leaders' Health & Wellbeing**

2. IPPN conducted a detailed analysis of **the role and responsibilities of school leaders** with reference to the quality framework for leadership and management
3. IPPN conducted a detailed Membership Survey, seeking input on the **sustainability of their roles**, the factors that were impacting on that sustainability, what they perceived to be their core purpose and what was most demanding of their time.

### Small Schools Clustering Action Research Project

IPPN has supported this project through facilitation of two clusters of four schools and liaising with the wider project team through the National Coordinator. IPPN is pushing for national roll-out of those approaches the clusters have found most helpful in supporting the leadership and management of small schools.

### Special Classes

A member consultation survey captured the views of principals of mainstream schools with special classes, which helped inform IPPN's advocacy work for schools supporting pupils in such classes.

The full set of research publications is available in the Advocacy section of our website [here](#).





## Supports & Services

From the National Support Office in Cork, IPPN provides the following supports and services to IPPN members.

### LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

#### Professional Guidance

This one-to-one, confidential advisory service, provided by a team of skilled, experienced school leaders, offers collegial support and guidance of a non-directive and non-legal nature. The team also answers queries of a factual nature. Typically, the team responds to approximately 2,500 to 3,000 calls for support annually. 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

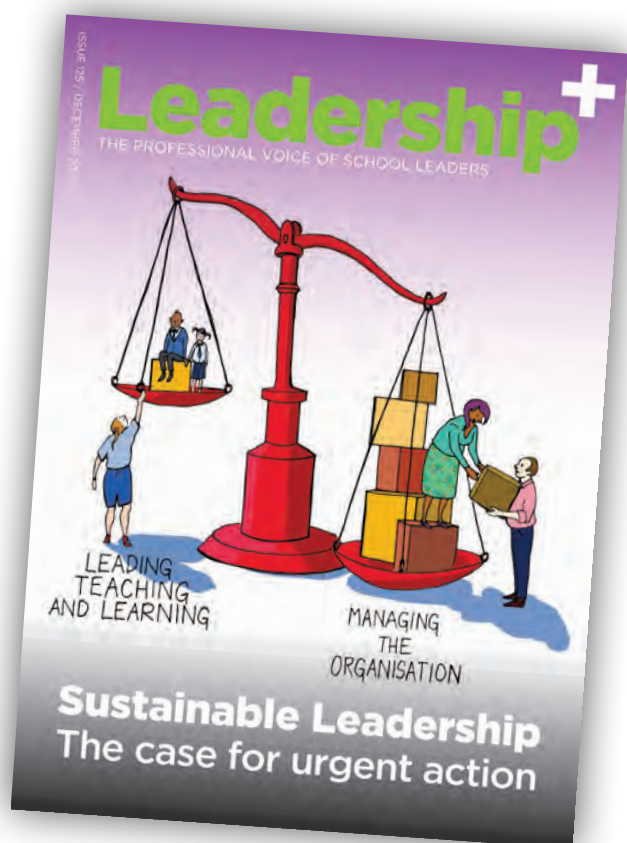
This weekly newsletter is issued every Thursday afternoon through the school year to principals and deputy principals. It is a vital 'one-stop-shop' resource, providing key information from across the education sector.

#### Mailing Lists

[Networking@ippn.ie](mailto:Networking@ippn.ie) is a 'closed' mailing list which facilitates a peer-to-peer support community. It has in excess of 5,500 subscribers. Several million emails are sent through the mailing list each year.

The [advice@ippn.ie](mailto:advice@ippn.ie) mailing list is for sensitive, confidential and non-generic queries, which are answered offline as an extension of the Leadership Support service.

The [advocacy@ippn.ie](mailto:advocacy@ippn.ie) mailing list is to facilitate members sharing their observations with IPPN on current issues impacting on leadership practice and on schools.



## LEADERSHIP+

IPPN publishes five issues of Leadership+ per school year, showcasing members' own research and the work IPPN does on behalf of members, as well as bringing external perspectives on matters of relevance to school leaders – researchers, policy-makers, stakeholders, education thought leaders etc.

**LINK** [Leadership+ 2023/2024](#)

## LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP PROJECT

IPPN works with National Council representatives and Education Centres throughout the country to support the establishment of a Local Support Group (LSG) for every school leader (principal and deputy principal) who requires one.

## RESOURCE BUNDLES

IPPN Resources Bundles are where school leaders will find the answers and supporting documentation relating to the most common queries they encounter

in the day-to-day management of their schools. They are produced in an easy-to-use, interactive e-publication format and are hosted on [ippn.ie](http://ippn.ie).

Three recent resource bundles are:

- Maintaining a Safe Workplace: Managing Safety, Health & Welfare in Schools
- Supporting SEN – Recruiting and Appointing SNAs
- Data Protection.

## CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

IPPN hosts local, regional and national CPD events for school leaders each year – conferences, shared learning days, a comprehensive online summer course and webinars. More than 2,500 school leaders participated at these events across the 31 city/county networks over the past year.

These CPD events provided an opportunity to hear fresh thinking from leading figures in education and other sectors, to participate in stimulating workshops and to network with colleagues. A series of modules entitled '*Ducks in a Row*' was issued during the 2023/24 school year and explored:

- Admission/Enrolment
- Duty of Care/Safeguarding
- Code of Behaviour/Discipline
- Employment and Recruitment
- Data Protection and note-taking.

### Autumn City/County Network Meetings

There is an annual meeting of IPPN members held in each city/county network in September or October, bringing key updates, information on the 'hot topics' and offering support to members. It is an opportunity for members to meet their fellow principals and deputy principals. There is also an opportunity to become more involved with IPPN by representing their city/county network at National Council level.



### Education Expo at IPPN Conferences

Education Expo brings together school leaders and well over 100 companies providing supports and services to schools under one roof during the IPPN annual principals' and deputy principals' conferences.

### HEADSTART - SUPPORT FOR NEWLY APPOINTED SCHOOL LEADERS

Headstart provides support to newly appointed and acting school leaders on immediate appointment and throughout their first year. The emphasis is on developing personal engagement between the school leader and IPPN.

There are CPD opportunities, presentations, useful articles and materials relevant to the newly appointed leaders' role throughout the year. They are encouraged to engage with one-to-one mentoring, group mentoring and local support groups, as well as providing opportunities for conversations and reflection on leadership, to influence a positive culture of sustainable leadership.

Plans for the future of Headstart include the extension of its supports to deputy principals, middle leaders and emerging leaders, in line with the recommendations of IPPN's Sustainable Leadership Report.

### GROUP MENTORING

During the 2023/24 school year, 27 mentor groups were established to support 213 principals in their second year of leadership. Feedback and evaluations from 'mentees' has been very positive, with many expressing their appreciation for 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.

IPPN has also initiated a pilot group mentoring programme for deputy principals participating in the Tánaiste programme in four locations around the country.



## ONLINE SERVICES

### ippn.ie

A major website redevelopment project is well underway. Key priorities for the new website include compatibility with the mobile device platforms, and a restructuring of how resources are accessed, to facilitate easier and quicker searching by members.

### EducationPosts.ie

The leading website for education-related vacancy advertising across, pre-school, primary, post-primary and third-level sectors, the following functionality is now also available:

#### *Online Application Portal*

The Portal facilitates the acceptance of applications online using integrated Standard Application Forms or uploaded custom application forms. The portal functions in accordance with the Department of Education Information Note TC 0005/2023. These developments aim to reduce the administrative burden associated with recruitment. The portal also facilitates all communication with applicants, generates an audit trail and prompts the appropriate retention and deletion of data.

#### *Summer Programme Portal*

The Portal facilitates schools sourcing staff for the school-based summer programme. It allows Job Seekers (Teachers, SNAs, Students) to complete a form stating their availability and experience. Schools view

and filter the entries by location, occupation, dates and experience, and contact Job Seekers directly. In 2023, there were almost 2,000 notices posted on the Portal.

#### *Home-Based Summer Programme Noticeboard*

This allows Teachers and SNAs to post their availability for parents to view. Parents also have the option to create notices seeking Teachers and SNAs for home-based Summer Programme support in the home.

#### **Sub Seeker**

Sub Seeker facilitates the short-term recruitment of teachers registered with the Teaching Council by primary and post primary schools.

#### **TextaParent.ie**

TextaParent is a fast, reliable and cost-effective way for schools to contact parents and staff. In the 2023/24 school year, over 5 million individual text messages, along with over 1 million 'push notifications' sent via the app, were delivered to parents and staff. It now also features a 'permission slip' function, allowing schools to send out and receive permission slips via a URL link.

#### **School Suppliers Catalogue**

The School Suppliers Catalogue is a valuable resource to primary school leaders and provides them with a comprehensive list of quality school suppliers.





# Governance

IPPN identified Governance as one of its five priorities in the *Strategic Priorities 2021-2025*. The stated objective was to strengthen IPPN's governance structures to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability at all levels within the organisation.

Under the guidance of a Governance consultant, a Review Group was formed by the Board of Directors to progress this work, including in relation to:

- building capacity within the network at National Council and Board level
- reviewing the involvement of the National Council to better serve the needs of members
- ensuring a broad range of skills and experience among members of the Board of Directors
- facilitating the ongoing provision of peer-to-peer support at local level and
- ensuring that the senior leadership structures in the organisation best serve the membership
- compliance with the governance code of the Charities' Regulator.

The review culminated in a revised constitution, new organisation structures and electoral procedures, which were ratified by the Board and National Council in June 2023.

The Charities Institute of Ireland awarded IPPN Triple Lock Standard, an indicator of IPPN's commitment to governance best practice.

## NATIONAL COUNCIL AND ITS COMMITTEES

- Each member of the National Council:
  - ensures effective two-way communication between the National Council and the City/County Networks and Local Support Groups
  - represents the key professional issues, concerns and needs of the member's City/County Network to the Board, National Council and its Committees and Working Groups
  - assists the Board of Directors and National Council in developing IPPN policy
  - attends the Annual General Meeting of the Company.

The 93 National Council representatives (3 from each of the 31 City/County Networks) serve on one of the three committees of the National Council:

### Advocacy & Communications

This committee is involved in the advocacy work of IPPN, informing and shaping IPPN's engagement on relevant issues with the education stakeholders.

### Professional Development

This committee impacts and shapes the professional development opportunities that IPPN designs and delivers, ensuring that the CPD that members need and want, is provided.

### E-services

This committee impacts and shapes the web services supports that IPPN offers to members, ensuring that those services do what members need them to do in terms of functionality and accessibility.

The list of current National Council members is available on [ipn.ie](http://ipn.ie) under the About Us menu.

[Click here for an online list of current National Council members by county](#)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

IPPN's Board of Directors has the principal responsibility for the governance of the organisation - to achieve its mission and the legal accountability for its operations. As a group, the Board establishes a clear organisational mission, forming the strategic plan along with the oversight and evaluation of the plan's success.

Its current membership is as follows:

	Board Members	Role	Capacity
1	Catriona O'Reilly	Chairperson	Elected
2	Deirdre Kelly	President-elect	Elected
3	Linda Dennehy	Treasurer	Elected
4	Bryan Lynch		Elected
5	Catriona Donohue		Elected
6	Diarmuid Hennessy		Elected
7	Diarmaid Moore		Elected
8	Selina Carmody		Elected
9	Eileen Pike		Elected
10	Finbarr Hurley		Co-opted
11	Brian Bowden		Co-opted



## THE SUPPORT OFFICE TEAM

The team that leads and implements all of these projects is comprised of:



**Páirc Clerkin**  
*IPPN CEO*



**Louise Tobin**  
*IPPN President*



**Nora Peters**  
*General Manager*



**Brian O'Doherty**  
*Deputy CEO*



**Geraldine D'Arcy**  
*Advocacy &  
Communications Manager*



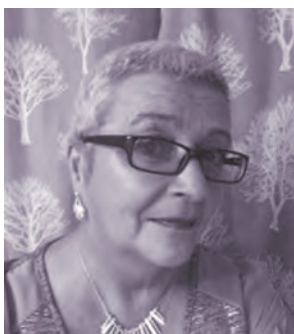
**Jennifer McCarthy**  
*Operations Manager*



**Jack Durkan**  
*Supports & Services  
Manager*



**David Buckley**  
*PA to CEO/President*



**Jackie O'Reilly**  
*Supports & Services -  
Headstart and Retired Members*



**Jacqui Ahearne**  
*Accounts*



**Sarah McNamara**  
*TextaParent and  
Education Expo*



**Sinéad O'Mahony**  
*Education Expo &  
Leadership+ Advertising*



**Maeve O'Mahony**  
*EducationPosts.ie*



**Susan Forde**  
*Front of House*



**Linda O'Brien**  
*Front of House*



## 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

☎ 1800 21 22 23

✉ [info@ippn.ie](mailto:info@ippn.ie)

🌐 [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie)

in @IPPN    🐦 @IPPN\_Education

### IPPN National Support Office

Glounthaune

Co. Cork

T45 P406

More information about IPPN and the supports and services we offer to school leaders is available on our website [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie).

### Charitable Status

IPPN is a non-profit organisation and a registered charity with CHY number 17221