



## **Oireachtas Procedures**

**Submission to the  
Joint Oireachtas Committee  
on Education & Skills**

**September 2019**

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## Background

IPPN is the officially-recognised 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 DES, 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 6,500 Principals and Deputy Principals.

IPPN's mission is *Empowered Leaders; Inspired Learners* and, in that context, we advocate for Irish primary school leadership to be all it can be. We engage with our membership and undertake research to fully understand the challenges and potential solutions to a wide variety of leadership and management issues. We bring that knowledge and understanding to all the education stakeholders, including the Joint Oireachtas Committee, to ensure the voice of school leadership is heard by decision-makers and policy-makers.

### JOC Appearances by IPPN

IPPN representatives have appeared before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills on a number of occasions in recent years, including:

1. Pat Goff, IPPN Deputy CEO, 30th May 2019 – Reduced Hours
2. Páirc Clerkin, IPPN CEO, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019 – Teacher Supply
3. Páirc Clerkin, IPPN CEO, 29th August 2018 - Teaching Principals
4. Maria Doyle, IPPN President, Seán Cottrell, IPPN CEO, David Ruddy, IPPN Deputy President and Geraldine D'Arcy, IPPN Advocacy & Representation Manager – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2017 - Education (Amendment) Bill 2015 and General Scheme of an Education (Parent and Student Charter) Bill 2016.

In all cases, these appearances before the Committee were in relation to IPPN as an interested body making a submission or responding to an invitation by the Committee to participate. IPPN values the work of the Committee and opportunities to put forward matters relating to school leadership.

### Contact Information

This submission is made by Geraldine D'Arcy, IPPN Advocacy & Representation Manager. Geraldine's email address is [Geraldine.darcy@ippn.ie](mailto:Geraldine.darcy@ippn.ie). IPPN's phone number is 021 4824070.

## Recommendations

We have a small number of suggestions and recommendations relating to the specific areas highlighted by the Supreme Court, as follows:

1. **Remit:** *the need for Oireachtas Committees to have clear terms of reference and to remain within them*
  - a. No particular recommendations in relation to this matter. Our observations of the Committee's work would indicate that terms of reference are fully complied with.
  
2. **Invitations:** *the need for clarity of invitations issued from a Committee to witnesses, and for the Committee to adhere to the terms of such invitations*
  - a. Documentation provided is very comprehensive and useful. If it could be more succinct, it would help those preparing for appearances
  - b. It would be helpful for those providing opening statements and other documentation to know what is useful for Committee members – summary level information and/or detailed reports to substantiate the points made in opening statements. It can take a considerable amount of time to prepare this documentation so we would prefer to know that it is useful, and that it will be read.
  
3. **Conduct of meetings:** *the conduct of hearings by the Committee as a whole, and the supervision of such hearings by the Chair*
  - a. Those invited to make presentations are often kept waiting outside the Committee room for lengthy periods – up to two hours in some cases. This can have a considerable impact on the person's plans for the day, and can also result in changes to travel plans and also additional costs. This should be borne in mind by the Committee and further effort made to start and finish meetings on time.
  - b. If meetings will be starting late, a courtesy phone call and/or text message to those scheduled to attend would be appreciated.
  - c. It can be difficult to know how much time the invited person will need to make available for the meeting. An estimated finish time would be useful.
  - d. It would be useful to know who else is attending and/or presenting at a particular meeting, for example, the parties could potentially collaborate on the presentations to avoid unnecessary overlap.
  
4. **Remedies:** *the need for remedies to be available to persons who may be affected by a breach of their rights by a Committee*
  - a. No specific recommendations
  
5. **Other Recommendations:**
  - a. It would be helpful to have the Committee's **Annual Plan and relates reports** available in a very obvious place on the relevant Committee webpages on Oireachtas.ie as soon as it has been prepared. This would enable IPPN to plan our

advocacy work, and ensure that we have some time to consult our members in relation to the topics the Committee plans to discuss. When we asked whether this information was available, the clerk kindly showed us where to find it on the website. However, it's not obvious where to look.

- b. It was very useful to have been invited to **hear the Committee's report on reduced hours (???)** after the various hearings completed. If this could be done for all of the key discussions, that would be invaluable. Attendance isn't necessary, however access to the reports would be very useful.
- c. The live coverage of Committee meetings on Oireachtas.ie is invaluable to enable us to follow relevant proceedings, as are the ensuing transcripts and the various RSS feeds we can sign up to. It would be helpful to be able to **view proceedings after the fact**. It would also be helpful to be able to perhaps **download these as media files** for use on our own website, when for example an IPPN representative has provided an input at a particular meeting.
- d. When an organisation is reviewing the Committee's plans, it could be beneficial to the Committee to hear from that organisation in terms of a **proactive submission** on a particular topic, instead of waiting to be invited to present, as this could help inform the work of the Committee.

We would be delighted to discuss any of the above submission directly with the Committee on Education & Skills and/or with members of the Working Group on Oireachtas Procedures.