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## Redeployment Panels improved practice

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*The Louise O'Keeffe Case:  
Implications for Schools  
and the Department of  
Education & Skills*

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Principal Teachers –  
In Clear Focus*

*The Homework  
Debate*

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a class: some  
considerations*



Before Rainbows,  
I had all these feelings  
building up inside  
me and  
sometimes I  
just exploded  
(a 10 year old)

I got the bad feelings out  
and put the good feelings in  
(a 7 year old)

I thought it was because I  
was not tidying my room  
that my parents split up  
(an 8 year old)

Before Rainbows, I  
could only  
walk slow,  
I can walk  
faster now  
(an 11 year old)

BEFORE RAINBOWS, THE  
ONLY PERSON I COULD  
TALK TO WAS MY TEDDY  
(a 6 year old)



**Colm O'Brien**, CEO of Carambola.ie, meets and interviews **Anne Staunton**, National Director of Rainbows Ireland - [www.rainbowsireland.com](http://www.rainbowsireland.com) or (01) 473 4175.

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# Redeployment Panels improved practice

By Seán Cottrell and Brendan McCabe



Five years ago, we wrote about the impact of redeployment panels on principals, namely the timing and other difficulties associated with ‘taking teachers off the panel’. We challenged the logic of placing the main recruitment period bang in the middle of school holidays suiting neither teacher nor Principal nor Chairperson. Many principals dreaded making appointment as it meant losing a considerable part of their only real break during the school year. This is an issue we have raised with the relevant DES officials on several occasions. Last year, significant progress was made and this year, for the first time, it is likely that the vast majority of recruitment activity will be finished before the end the third term.

*Many principals dreaded making appointment as it meant losing a considerable part of their only real break during the school year.*

If the process were a line of dominoes, the first piece to fall had to be the staffing schedule. This year, it was published at the end of January, a massive improvement from the days when it came out in May. Members of IPPN’s Executive and DES officials have worked hard over the last two years refining the process further to gradually bring forward the key dates for both panels. The department have to be complimented for taking the necessary steps to make this happen. Another positive element is the department’s commitment to allow temporary ‘local arrangements’ in relation to the day to day work arrangements in full-time shared posts so as to avoid teachers travelling unnecessarily between schools – an example of how such a temporary local

arrangement can operate is set out on page 11 of the Department’s staffing circular.

*Both from research and from experience, we know that the teacher is vital to a child’s learning; the most important thing a school does is to hire the best teachers available that are suitable for the school at any given time*

While the redeployment panels play an important role, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed. Appointment by merit, using open competition through advertising and interviewing, is being gradually replaced by the forced allocation of teachers to schools from redeployment panels. Redeployment panels undoubtedly play an important role.

However, while it is important that teachers on the panel have a say regarding their choice of school, schools must be given an equal say regarding their choice of teacher. Both from research and from experience, we know that the teacher is vital to a child’s learning; the most important thing a school does is to hire the best teachers available that are suitable for the school at any given time. Where else would you see a leadership role where the leader had so little say in the selection of staff but so much responsibility for the quality of their performance? From time to time, there is a bottleneck on some panels due to the perception, real or otherwise’ that a particular teacher may be challenging in their behaviour

or unable to teach to an acceptable standard. Principals sometimes report that teachers on the panel don’t respond at critical times and this can delay the process by several weeks. It should be noted that teachers on panels have three calendar days to respond to an e-mail request to attend an interview – if they don’t do so then they lose their panel rights. It should also be borne in mind that schools can use interviews to select teachers from the panel.

Panel operators, principals and teachers all have a key role to play in making sure that the redeployment arrangements work well. If everyone plays their part we can all look forward to a good summer free from the stresses of panel business.

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# Legal Diary

by David Ruddy BL, Principal of Talbot BNS, Clondalkin, Dublin 22



## The Louise O'Keeffe Case - Implications for Schools and the Department of Education & Skills

In late January the State lost the final and penultimate leg of a long-running legal battle with Louise O'Keeffe. The State was held by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to have failed to protect a child from sexual abuse. Louise O'Keeffe was abused by her school principal Leo Hickey at Dunderrow National School in Cork. The State was ordered to pay her €30,000 in damages, and €85,000 in costs.

The former principal pleaded guilty to the abuse of 21 pupils, including Ms O'Keeffe. He was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment. In a prior separate civil action against her abuser, Ms O'Keeffe was awarded damages of €300,000. An action was also taken by Ms O'Keeffe against the Department of Education and Skills (DES) for its failure to have systems in place to protect children. This action failed in the High Court in 2006. A subsequent appeal was also lost in the Supreme Court in 2009. The reason that Louise lost in both Irish Court actions was because of the simple fact that it was held that the DES are not employers of teachers and that, as a result, it could not be held vicariously liable for the negligence or abusive actions of its employees. It was successfully argued by the DES that if anyone had a case to answer it was the management of the school and the school patron (as an employer of the school principal). The Irish courts recognised that there was a unique relationship between the State and Church in relation to the operation of the education system and as a consequence no liability could attach to the DES.

It is undisputed that complaints were made against the then school principal in 1973 by parents of pupils attending Dunderrow National School to the manager. On foot of

these complaints, the manager moved him to another school where he taught until his retirement. There were no known complaints about this man in his new school from 1973 until his retirement in 1995. Complaints about events prior to 1973 in Dunderrow National School were only made to the Gardai and the DES in the 1990s when an investigation commenced. In any event the State rather than the Manager/Patron was sued.

*Is there a duty on the DES inspectorate when conducting inspections of schools to enquire as to the existence and implementation of a schools' child protection policy?*

However, the ECHR was not content with this historical perspective and stated that this convenient relationship would not absolve the State from protecting vulnerable young children. In a damning judgement the Court found that the State had an obligation to protect young children from ill treatment. The State was held to be aware of sexual abuse of pupils in schools by adults prior to the 1970s. There was a failure to provide State controls and potential complainants were directed away from the State by delegating that obligation to private bodies and individuals.

### THE FUTURE – AFTER THE O'KEEFFE JUDGEMENT

The State has six months to present an action

plan to implement the recommendations of this judgement and show that any necessary measures have been taken to avoid similar violations in the future. It is inevitable that the 'Children First' guidelines will be put on a statutory footing. The new Child and Family Agency has now replaced the role of the HSE in child protection. There are robust Child Protection policies and templates in operation in schools with stringent reporting mechanisms to Boards of Management (BoMs).

Will the current provision, whereby it is the duty of BoMs to monitor and ensure compliance, be enough? Is there a duty on the DES inspectorate when conducting inspections of schools to enquire as to the existence and implementation of a schools' child protection policy? Practice seems to indicate that the DES is most vigilant in ensuring that such compliance exists. If a school does not have an effective policy in place and a child suffers abuse, who might be sued, the BoM or the DES? Prior to the O'Keeffe judgement one would think the BoM, now it may well be that both could be potentially liable.

The big question is whether there are further potential consequences for the DES in relation to the management of schools, as it were, by proxy. The new guidelines on anti-bullying (to include cyber bullying and gender-based bullying) have reporting and oversight mechanisms which bear an uncanny resemblance to the child protection guidelines. The requirement to have revised anti-bullying policies in place by Easter 2014 ironically reflect the sentiments of this landmark ruling in that the DES accepts that it has a duty to provide robust structures to protect children





# Priorities for Principal Teachers – In Clear Focus

IPPN and international research has identified a strong link between effective school leadership and the quality of children's learning. It is therefore understandable that school leadership is seen as the essential catalyst in implementing a school improvement agenda at local level by the wider educational community. The role of principal has the capacity to overwhelm and school leaders need, as a matter of urgency, to find the correct balance between higher order (leadership) tasks designed to improve staff, pupil and school performance, routine maintenance of present operations (management) and administrative duties which may be delegated. If a principal is to really lead learning in their school, and if they are to prevent personal burn-out, there is a need to re-focus on priorities either by means of delegation or by de-prioritisation. IPPN's new publication – *Priorities for Principal Teachers – In Clear Focus*, issued to all schools in February – aims to provide:

- support to the very many principals who are struggling to manage their workload and are unsure what aspects of their role they can and should delegate or deprioritise
- a fresh perspective on how the wider educational community might be used as

a support mechanism given the range of their talents

- a starting point and a means of defining the priorities for the leadership role of principal.

The leadership aspect of the role – leading the teaching and learning within the school – is ultimately the same regardless of the size of the school or the resources available. Our approach to prioritisation, as outlined in the document, attempts to take into account the needs of both teaching and administrative principals. That said, the document should be of particular use to teaching principals who, because of their full-time teaching duties, have an even greater need to share the load.

Schools need to build distributed models of leadership and develop and make effective use of the administrative, technical and practical skills available within the school community. If the leadership potential of principals is to be utilised to the optimum, they need to be able to concentrate on leading learning. The balance between leadership and management needs to be re-aligned as a critical priority. *Priorities for Principal Teachers* attempts to put initial steps in place to enable that process to occur in a wide variety of school contexts.

The document focuses on the interactions with each of the groups with which the principal interacts and devotes a chapter to each:

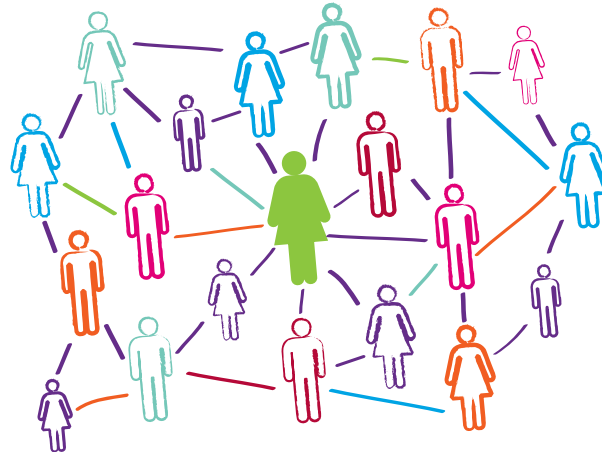
- Children
- Staff
- Parents/Parent Association
- Board of Management/Patron
- External Agencies.

Each chapter categorises a small number of tasks under the headings:

- **Key Priorities for the Principal – Must Do:** Critical duties which should always be the direct responsibility of the principal (permanent or acting)
- **Other Priorities – Could Delegate or Share:** These are priorities which the principal could fulfil personally but, alternatively, could delegate to or share with other members of staff, the BoM or other relevant qualified stakeholders.
- **Other Tasks:** These are tasks that the school may collectively agree to de-prioritise for a time, as well as duties which the principal should not need to personally undertake.



## Priorities for Principal Teachers – In Clear Focus



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Leading and Learning

At the end of each chapter is an **un-prioritised** list of additional activities schools are typically involved in, in relation to the relevant group (children, board, parents etc). The context of the particular school will determine the priority into which each of the activities should be assigned. We invite schools to categorise these tasks and activities for themselves, depending on their own priorities and school context. We envisage that this process would be carried out with the staff and the board of management over a period of time to refine and clarify the priorities of the school for all stakeholders, including the principal teacher.

It is advisable that principals consult with and gain the buy-in of the Board of Management and the staff to change how work is prioritised and allocated throughout the school.

The sample school and role priority matrices in Appendix 2 may be helpful as a tool to discuss, document and communicate the agreed priorities for the school for a given school year. The idea is that each item listed is allocated a priority level to indicate which items must be done and which could be pushed back, should circumstances indicate that all priorities cannot be accommodated.

There are a number of appendices that may also be useful in helping to put a structure on the prioritisation process within individual schools:

- Appendix 2 – School and Role Priority Matrices
- Appendix 3 – Teaching Principals – A possible approach to timetabling
- Appendix 4 – Administrative Principals – A possible approach to timetabling
- Appendix 5 – Teaching Principals – Ciall Ceannaithe
- Appendix 6 – Primary School Governance – Challenges & Opportunities - Executive Summary

- Appendix 7 – Giorraíonn Beirt Bóthar - A Vision for Shared Leadership: Creating Deputy Capacity – Excerpt.

Another publication that is very useful in relation to parents is *Supporting Each Other – a guide to best practice for the effective partnership between Principals and Parent Associations* (NPC and IPPN). These publications are available to view and download from [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie) and [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie).





# Ready to fly the coop?

By John Allen retired Principal, Kilbarry NS,  
Macroom, Co. Cork and former manager of Cork and  
Limerick Senior Hurling teams



Last September I finally completed the work/life circle. It took forty years. I began that circuitous journey in September 1973 when I first set foot inside the gates of Coláiste Mhuire Marino. Bonny (infamous lecturer in Oideachas) and co. left us out to the children of the country two years later.

In 2013 the website hostel world brought me back there to Marino on All Ireland hurling weekend as a paying guest in their accommodation wing.

As I walked out the gate onto Griffith Avenue, after depositing the case in the room on the Friday evening of that great sporting weekend, a group of young ábhair oidí passed me out. Some had Marino GAA shirts on. Were they Titch, Midge, Big Ned, Kevin Haugh, Chuck Coyle and myself on our way to town?

I felt like calling them back and telling them about the old days or saying "Lads, take a look at me. This is what you might look like in forty years time". (Not a boast)

Obviously the journey from then to now is a personal one. Getting to the other side unscathed is an impossibility. Getting to the other side in a reasonable state of sanity is an achievement in itself, but is possible.

I don't remember having a master plan of clocking in the thirty five years and exiting. But I do remember, be it a rational decision or not, deciding on becoming one of the AVC contributors in the early 2000s. And attending the pre-retirement course. One needed all those facts before taking this life-changing decision.

But this decision is absolutely personal. It has to 'sit right' with you. There are so many angles to consider. Can you handle all the extra free time? Will you survive on the pension? Is the mortgage paid off? Are there still 'chicks in the nest'? Can you handle not being the boss anymore? What about the reduced status?

I thought I was ready and on many levels I was. I loved teaching always and I certainly didn't leave because I'd had enough. No. I left mainly because I wanted to be free from the routine of the previous fifty plus years since I first made my way across the road from home to Aghabullogue N.S. The attraction of those flights to Lanzarote in late September called and the Chelsea flower show in May has been on the shortlist for a long time as well as that Caribbean cruise. Those over 55 breaks on the newspaper travel sections always had a certain allure about them.

September 2011 arrived and I flew the Kilbarry N.S. coop. Within three weeks I had swapped in the freedom pass for a two-year commitment to manage the Limerick Senior hurling team. So much for knowing what one wants.

It seems I wasn't ready for all this freedom after all. I took a few days to make up my mind to forgo this much sought-after emancipation. Now, two years later, I'm free again and I'm a bit surer this time that this is kind of what I want. (That sounds like a man who knows his mind!)

But make no mistake about it, this freedom takes a lot of getting used to. There's only so much coffee that can be drunk and so many foreign destinations that can be visited before one begins to feel pangs of guilt. (Am I having too much of a good time?)

My considered advice at this stage is to do what feels right for you and your immediate family. Everybody's circumstances are different. Trust yourself to make the correct decision for you. You are the sole occupant of your headspace. Follow your own star. You mightn't go far wrong. (Well, maybe!)

*You can email John with your comments to rothar798@gmail.com.*



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# Risk Management for Schools General Maintenance

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Every year, many schools end up with property loss or damage as a result of poor or non-existent maintenance. In many cases, schools could have prevented or limited these losses by implementing a structured maintenance and risk management plan, including regular inspection and repair of school property.

In general terms the areas which boards of management should consider include:

## FIRE SAFETY

Please refer to the *Risk Management for Schools – Fire-related Damage* article in Leadership+ Issue 78.

*Where fuses are “blown” frequently or circuit breakers repeatedly trip on a particular circuit, this may indicate a serious underlying problem.*

## ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION

- if the system is old or has not been inspected for some time, it should be inspected by a qualified electrical contractor to determine if wiring updates or other modifications are needed
- Repairs or additions to the system should only be carried out by appropriately qualified persons
- Temporary wiring (including extension leads) should not be used in place of permanent wiring
- Regular inspections should verify that
  - electrical circuits are not overloaded
  - fuses are the proper size for each circuit
  - major electrical appliances are properly connected and earthed
  - electrical panels have clear access.

Where fuses are “blown” frequently or circuit breakers repeatedly trip on a particular circuit, this may indicate a serious underlying problem. In such circumstances, the system should immediately be inspected by a qualified electrical contractor. **Do Not** use fuses of a higher rating or tape down or bypass a circuit

breaker to avoid such problems.

## Heating Installation

- if the system is old or has not been inspected for some time, it should be inspected by a qualified heating contractor to verify that:
  - boilers are properly installed
  - rooms containing boilers are of appropriate construction
  - there are sufficient clearances from heating equipment and vents to combustible materials
- Repairs should only be carried out by a qualified heating contractor
- Regular inspections should be carried out to ensure that
  - boiler rooms are clear
  - combustible materials are not stored in boiler or furnace rooms
  - doors to boiler rooms are kept closed
  - equipment is free of obvious damage

**Do Not**, under any circumstances use open bar electric fires or gas heaters of any kind (particularly heaters using gas cylinders) in schools. Where it is necessary to use portable heaters, only thermostatically controlled electric oil-filled radiators should be used. They should not be used in public areas and should be kept clear of any combustible material.

## SECURITY

Below are some issues which should be considered:

- Provide outdoor perimeter lighting. Motion detection activated lights could be more effective from an energy consumption viewpoint.
- Keep shrubs and trees trimmed and under control
- Secure potential access routes such as stairways and fire escapes
- Store valuable items in unmarked and secure cabinets, safes or storage rooms
- Install a security alarm system
- Use properly installed deadbolt locks on exterior doors
- Establish and enforce key control procedures

- Establish and enforce written lock-up procedures for users of school property.

*Do Not, under any circumstances use open bar electric fires or gas heaters of any kind (particularly heaters using gas cylinders) in schools.*

## Water Damage

There are various ways in which property can suffer from water damage, including storm, flood, burst pipes, overflowing of drains, damaged roofs etc. Attention to the following should be of assistance in limiting damage from these sources:

- Plumbing systems which are old or have not been inspected for some time should be inspected by a qualified plumbing contractor to determine if updates or other modifications are needed
- Insulate plumbing from cold temperature extremes or maintain heat in areas where piping is present to prevent freezing and burst pipes
- Roofs should be inspected by a suitably qualified person on a routine basis to identify and repair deficiencies which could result in leaks or wind damage
- Ensure roofs have adequate drainage and that gutters / drains are clear and undamaged
- Ensure there is adequate drainage around the perimeter of the premises, thus enabling water to be diverted away from the buildings.
- Look for evidence of wood rot or water damage in walls, floor joists, window frames, doors roofs or roof joists. Where found, identify causes and ensure repairs are carried out as necessary.

## WEATHER

Please refer to the *Risk Management for Schools – Weather-related Damage* article in Leadership+ Issue 76 and *Risk Management for Schools – Flood-related Damage* article in Leadership+ Issue 77.

Further information is contained in the Allianz Guide to Insurance, Safety and Security in the School. Visit [www.allianz.com](http://www.allianz.com).

# ICT Tips Decisions, Decisions...

By Robbie O'Leary, Principal of An Chroi Ro Naofa Senior,  
Killinarden, West Tallaght, Dublin



In the early 1990s, when I first began to be interested in the use of technology in schools, the big and burning question was 'Which platform is better, Acorn or Apple?' Since then, as the pace of technological change gained momentum, this question was rapidly replaced by a succession of other core questions: with the introduction and evolution of the PC, principals and teachers were increasingly preoccupied with asking 'What software is the best?' In the not too distant past, the question was 'Which interactive whiteboard should I buy?' And, of course, as technology has evolved, the questions on principals' minds in this regard are becoming increasingly complex. It's not that long ago since terms like wifi, cloud computing, eBooks and apps were simply unheard of. Be that as it may, it has become very evident that today's big question is 'Which tablet should I buy?'...

Naturally, money is scarce, and principals are rightly taking great care to ensure that every euro spent is put to the best possible use in terms of benefits to pupils. Unfortunately, however, there is no right or wrong answer to this question. Obviously, every school is unique, with a completely individual set of needs, problems, strengths and existing resources. Also, given the very haphazard and uncoordinated development of ICT usage in primary schools since those early days, every school is situated in a particular place on the spectrum of ICT usage. Consequently, the ideal solution for one school may be totally inappropriate for another.

So how does one decide which set of tablets to buy – or, indeed, if it is tablets (rather than, for instance, laptops) that should be acquired? In my experience, the best – in fact, the only – place to start is by looking at the needs of the pupils and the objectives of the school in terms of its implementation of the curriculum. In this respect, there is a variety of questions that need to be asked, such as:

- Where are our pupils weakest? Is it problem-solving, comprehension, oral language, writing, mathematical concepts etc...
- What are we learning from our SSE process? Can our technology assist with achieving our agreed objectives?
- Are there particular subsets of pupils that

we need this technology, for special needs, infant classes, high achievers, mainstream classes...?

- Am I, as principal, generally happy with the percentage of time devoted to whole-class teaching, independent work, group work?
- Is it important that printed work be generated from this new technology?
- Will the new devices be used predominantly for content-rich or content-free applications?

...and perhaps the most important question of them all, arising from the above...What do we want the pupils to be actually doing when they have this new technology...?

And, of course there are some unknowns....what new wonderful technology is just around the corner? And wouldn't it be so helpful to know if and when primary schools are going to receive high speed broadband capacity? It would also be particularly helpful to know if primary schools are to benefit from grant aid in the coming years, and, if so, will there be stipulations as to how it must be spent...

Although the fence can be a cosy place to sit, I'm happy to share my own conclusions regarding the considerations listed above:

1. I have always felt that tablet computers should be viewed as the icing on the cake, rather than the cake itself. In other words, there is no substitute for a solid, school-wide infrastructure based on interactive whiteboards in every class and a plentiful supply of desktop and / or laptop computers, with colour printer and wifi connectivity, and a network where resources can be shared and stored.
2. The single most effective technology solution I ever purchased for use in my own school was a mobile laptop trolley (not much use if your school has stairs and prefabs).
3. In my opinion, the most versatile tablet to buy for use in primary school (for all ages and ability groups) is the iPad. At the moment, compared with the Windows 8 and Android operating systems, the quantity and quality of inexpensive educational apps for the Apple system is light years ahead. While it is more expensive than many of its rivals and there is no support for Flash, the sheer flexibility and versatility of the iPad makes it the most suitable tablet for primary school. At least, in this school...





# Children repeating a class some considerations

By Angela Lynch



At this particular time of the year the issue of retaining a pupil in a particular class for a second year quite often arises. There are a number of considerations which may be of assistance in determining whether to allow a pupil repeat a class. Sometimes pressure may come from parents who consider that the child may be too immature from a social perspective or that a second year would allow them to overcome learning difficulties which they are having. At other times it may be the considered opinion of teaching staff that retention for another year would be of benefit. It is vital that consultation takes place between parents, Learning Support/Resource Teacher, Class Teacher and Principal to decide if repeating a year would be educationally beneficial to the child.

Circular 32/2003 refers to the DES policy on children repeating a class. This circular replaced Circular 11/2001. The DES does not encourage pupils to repeat a class generally so it needs to be justified on the basis of sound educational reasons which would benefit the needs of the child. The circular refers to 'exceptional circumstances'. Social immaturity is not considered reason for a pupil to repeat a class.

Some examples of educational reasons include:

- The child has not achieved sufficient levels of literacy or numeracy
- The child has missed a significant level of schooling
- The child has emotional/behavioural issues that impeded their learning during the course of the year.

Following consultation, a record outlining the educational basis for the decision should be kept.

A letter needs to be submitted to the school from parents requesting that the child repeat a year. In addition, once the decision to retain the child is made, an IPLP should be drawn up indicating what interventions would be put in place for the child to maximize the learning experience. It should record precisely what new approach will be used and what the expected outcomes would be.

Refer to Circular 32/2003 for further guidance on this issue. The circular states that, where retention has staffing implications, DES Primary Payments need to be notified. It should also be noted that where a pupil is retained in 6<sup>th</sup> class he/she will not be counted for capitation purposes.



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# National Centre for Leadership and Innovation (NCLI)



The National Centre for Leadership and Innovation (NCLI) has been developed by the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) and is dedicated to the radical transformation of primary school education through professional leadership.

IPPN has provided key support services to principals and deputy principals over the past 14 years and through the development of the National Centre for Leadership and Innovation, we have positively re-imagined the Irish educational landscape by putting leadership as the centre force for real change.

IPPN believes that each and every child should have a fair start in life and be in a position to have equitable access to all educational opportunities that are available. A child's early years in primary school are the most formative and the definite link between strong leadership and the quality of learning has been proven both through IPPN's own research and international studies. NCLI is dedicated to creating the leadership structures necessary to deliver the best possible primary school education to Ireland's children, allowing them to thrive in their future academic, professional and personal lives.

The vision of the NCLI is that of a national centre of excellence, where leadership and innovation are taught, resourced and supported for anyone aspiring to, or currently in a leadership role.

NCLI will provide a new infrastructure to deliver unrivalled leadership programmes. Our plans to facilitate school leaders in achieving accredited qualifications in leadership and innovation will mean they will be exceptionally equipped to fulfil their demanding roles and bring their individual schools to international standards in learning.

Aside from the Dedicated Educational Leadership and Management Training Programme, we have designed courses offering the broader school community unique opportunities to learn and grow as leaders. These include:

- An Understanding Leadership Programme for Children
- An Innovation and Award Scheme for Children
- A Leadership Programme for Parents

*IPPN believes that each and every child should have a fair start in life and be in a position to have equitable access to all educational opportunities that are available.*

In the longer term, NCLI will become a key point of reference for all those engaged in leadership activity across private, public and not-for-profit sectors and will invite collaboration from each of these parties. We clearly see the tangible contribution that NCLI will make to the long term economic stability of Ireland, through its role in the formation of a well-educated workforce and an increasingly attractive location for multinationals.

We are currently seeking partners to join us in the development of this exciting new centre which will bring excellence to Irish primary education in every school throughout the country; an investment in NCLI is an investment in our children's future.

www.ncli.ie is currently being developed. In the interim we will provide regular updates in Leadership+ and via Twitter @NCLI\_Leadership. Please direct any queries to Claire at [claire.odonovan@ncli.ie](mailto:claire.odonovan@ncli.ie)

Twitter: @NCLI\_Leadership

LinkedIn: National Centre for Leadership and Innovation (NCLI)

Mail: [info@ncli.ie](mailto:info@ncli.ie) or [claire.odonovan@ncli.ie](mailto:claire.odonovan@ncli.ie)



# Principal in Profile Bismillah ar Rahman ar Raheem Assalamu alaykum

By Bernadette Brennan,

Principal of the Muslim National School, Clonskeagh



Having trained for my B.ED. at Carysfort in the early 1980s, where I was one of 4 mature students, I initially took a number of substitute and temporary positions as there were very few permanent jobs at the time – much like today. I got my first permanent job in 1992 at the Muslim National School in Clonskeagh, and I have never left. The school was founded in 1990 and was originally situated beside the Mosque on South Circular Road. I joined the staff in 1992, and taught about 26 infants in what was originally a sitting room. However there were some compensations for lack of space. The aromas emanating from the restaurant at the rear were tantalizing. Kebabs for lunch on Fridays were a treat.

The school moved to its present location in Clonskeagh in 1993. Since then we've expanded considerably and now share a campus with the largest Mosque in Ireland. It is a lively, vibrant place. Our proximity to the Mosque facilitates senior pupils in attending prayer daily and attending Jumah, as Friday prayer is commonly called.

I 'stepped up to leadership' just over three years ago. Working at the school has broadened my perspective as I have had the privilege of learning about Islamic contributions to civilisation.

Leadership involves leading or guiding the school community. It involves liaising with the Islamic personnel of the Mosque, maintaining cordial relationships and co-operating regarding the use of facilities. It is like a 'mini' United Nations.

What do I see as the differences between leadership and management? Leadership requires a holistic way of being. Leadership involves the heart, intellect and soul. Management involves the intellect. Leadership requires trust. When someone is appointed leader it is a bestowing of trust. Therefore that person must attempt to honour that trust. From an Islamic perspective, trust is a key component of leadership. In fact the Prophet – Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was called 'Al-Amin' by the people, meaning 'the trustworthy one'. Leadership implies vision. The leader must see the big picture. A good leader should inspire others, through clear, honest communication. In a school the staff are key! It is through the staff that we provide for the pupils. Our goal is to do our very best for the students. Good leadership is about finding ways to let the staff shine and give them

credit for their work and ideas. A good leader will not feel threatened by other people's expertise. Staff who are trusted and affirmed enhance the whole school and indeed make the principal look more efficient than he or she may be.

Good leadership ensures good management, as management is a secondary role. Many managerial tasks can be delegated. Leadership too can be shared. In the principal's role there is constant interplay between leading the school community and managing people and resources. Good leaders enable others to create, express and develop ideas.

In my case leadership requires sensitivity to the complexity of the Muslim community. An example of this sensitivity is the fact that it is rude for a Muslim to stare or to make prolonged eye contact. Irish people tend not to trust someone who won't meet your eye. A mutual sense of humour helps. Common sense is a key requirement for the position. At first I tended to fixate on my lack of technological expertise. I know now that 'people skills' are far more important and, as some of the staff are computer whizzes, they help me out when I get bogged down.

I trust my deputy to remind me and prod me into 'updating policies'. If the secretary wasn't so efficient, all communication would be in long hand, and only for Nekrouf, the caretaker, the whole place would disintegrate.

When staff feel valued they give of their best. Such goodwill is precious. In my three years as principal, staff have given of their best. Respect is the other essential ingredient.

## MY ADVICE TO NEW PRINCIPALS

### Don't

- Sweat the 'small stuff'
- Nit-pick
- Act the martyr.

### Do

- Cultivate an attitude of gratitude
- Keep in touch with the classroom/children
- Listen
- Ignore minor glitches
- Have a teapot and some bikkies in the office
- Look after your health
- Have hobbies.

I've stated that a leader must have vision. What is my vision? It is that our pupils will contribute to Irish society as thinking, evaluating Muslim citizens. Secondly, I hope to see in the future some young Muslim men and women in the teaching profession. This would bring the wheel full circle for the community.

It is just over a month since the death of the great leader Nelson Mandela, 'ar dheis Dé a raibh a anam'. We have much to learn from his example. He knew that people must work together to achieve dreams.

When the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) was asked to decide who would have the honour of replacing the 'black stone', the foundation of the Ka'ba, he took his cloak, placed the black stone in the centre and called a representative from each of the tribes to hold a corner of the cloak. Thus, he included everyone, insulted no-one and gave all ownership of the sacred task.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to the Patron – Sheikh Yahya Al Hussein, the Board of Management and to the Muslim community for their trust in me. I wish to thank my colleagues for their support and the parents who entrust their children to our care.

Ní 'fás aon oíche e' – an mèid thuas ach fios a scagadh – as mo shaol do dtí seo.  
Ón dán – Sa sèipeal dom  
– le Sèan O' Riordán.





# A New Model for Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs?

By Pat Goff, Principal of Scoil Mhuire, Coolcotts, Wexford  
and IPPN SEN representative



The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has published a policy advice paper on 'Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools'. It is a discussion document and in total, the Council has made 28 recommendations. Will these recommendations, if implemented in full, improve both the education of our Special Needs pupils and the resources allocated to support them? One would expect so. However, if just some of the recommendations are cherry picked with no real commitment to reform, leaving the status quo would be of greater benefit to both children and schools.

*Ideally the DEIS & SEN allocations should be reviewed together. The profile of the school must provide a clear picture of the entire school community as well as its environs.*

The first recommendation was made 10 years ago – “*The EPSEN Act to be fully implemented as soon as resources permit*”. Regrettably, ten years further down the road, the failure to implement this recommendation does not inspire much confidence. There does not appear to be any serious commitment or even a long term plan by the government to fully implement the EPSEN Act.

The second recommendation: “*A new model should be developed for the allocation of additional teaching resources to mainstream schools which is based on the profiled need of each school, without the need for a diagnosis of disability*”.

This recommendation has potential and merits further discussion. One of the criticisms of the General Allocation Model (GAM) is that resources are provided to schools irrespective of the needs of the pupils in that particular school. Some schools, particularly in advantaged areas, may have small numbers of pupils entitled to learning support. Yet these schools get an equal level of GAM support as

other schools of similar size which may have large numbers of GAM pupils, be they newcomers where English is not their first language, Traveller pupils, special needs or pupils below the 12% percentile. The key question here is the criteria to be used when profiling a school. These criteria should reflect the number of pupils at the different percentile levels and schools already have this data available. In addition, the number of pupils for whom English is not a first language, the number of Traveller children and the number of pupils from a disadvantaged background should also be reflected in the criteria.

Ideally the DEIS & SEN allocations should be reviewed together. The profile of the school must provide a clear picture of the entire school community as well as its environs. Included also should be the low incidence or resource pupils. There should be a base allocation for these pupils based on the previous year's numbers. A threshold should be established whereby if a school loses a lot of SEN pupils (GAM & Low Incidence) or, just as importantly, gains a lot of extra pupils in any one year, a balancing mechanism would be in place. This would cater for the vast majority of schools where there is not a huge level of change in any one year.

The advantage of this is that schools would know all of their staffing from the end of the previous September. The benefits would be considerable. No more SEN allocations coming out the day of the Summer holidays, no more scrambling around in July & August trying to cluster part-time resource hours. Even schools affected by large changes in enrolments could be dealt with much earlier as the SENOs would only have a small number of schools to deal with. In order for this to work, the DES would have to allow schools to combine GAM & Low Incidence in order to get rid of the scenario of teachers passing each other on the road going between two schools when there is a full time job in one of the schools.

Having looked at the possible benefits, there are some serious negatives to consider. There has always been an element of ‘some schools

*being better at SEN*’. There may be a huge risk where the profiling of a school might showcase the differences in schools and create types of ‘ghetto schools’. Would the new model impact on DEIS? Would the DES now say that disadvantage is included in the new model of profiling schools? Would this new model allow schools to have autonomy to decide how to best utilise their staffing i.e. how many class teachers and how many support teachers? In some schools, using a support teacher to give much smaller classes may be the best solution. This autonomy for schools should be given irrespective of a new or the old model.

*There has always been an element of ‘some schools being better at SEN’. There may be a huge risk where the profiling of a school might showcase the differences in schools and create types of ‘ghetto schools’.*

There are 26 more recommendations in the report, many of them worthy of debate. I would encourage everyone to read this policy advice paper – ‘*Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Schools*’. If the Minister is serious about this reform then a statement of intent would go a long way towards stimulating a good and informed debate. Any statement merely needs to confirm that, at a minimum, the same level of resources and ratios that currently apply to SEN (and DEIS) will be maintained for at least three years. This will allay any possible fears that the new model is simply a cost-cutting exercise or another ploy to cut allocations.

Let the debate focus on the real issue – what is best form of provision for pupils who have some form of special need or learning disability?

# Primary Education – Great Expectations

Citywest Hotel & Convention Centre  
Thursday 23rd & Friday 24th January 2014



## Ms. Justice Catherine McGuinness

Catherine McGuinness is a retired Supreme Court judge, former senator and lifelong activist. In January 2012 she was appointed to the Council of State by President Michael D. Higgins.

In 1994 she was the first woman judge to be appointed to the Circuit Court. She was appointed to the High Court in 1996 where she served until her appointment to the Supreme Court in 2000. In 2005, Ms. Justice McGuinness was appointed Adjunct Professor at the Faculty of Law, National University of Ireland, Galway. She was also appointed President of the Law Reform Commission in 2005 and held that position until 2011. In recent years, she has received the Lord Mayor's Award and People of the Year Award for her contribution and long standing service to Irish society.

For some twenty years, Catherine was a member of one of the first Boards of Management of a primary school, a school that her children and grandchildren attended. She has seen at first hand the role and work of a primary principal and commented about 'the wonderful inspiration principals can be to the children themselves and the constant burden of administration and of trying to match resources with demands'. Catherine remembers in the 1960s that clerical school

managers seemed to feel that parents, and indeed teachers and principals 'should be kept in their place' and comments that it is now 'a different world' and that 'there has been surprisingly little in the way of review or reform of the system as a whole'. IPPN's research entitled Primary School Governance – Challenges & Opportunities was 'full of interest and value. It was the first large-scale review since the establishment of boards 40 years ago. I can only hope that the results are heeded'.

'We are now in the midst of consultation on the far-reaching changes in the system of primary school patronage; surely this is the right opportunity to couple this with analysis and reform of the management system. I do not mean taking away the role of parents and the community but a strengthening of their appropriate governance role and a realisation that micro-management cannot in reality be properly carried out by strictly part-time volunteers.'

Catherine also commented on the 'constitutional background of our primary education system and the anomalous role of Boards of Management as employers of teachers. [...] The phrase 'provide for education' was important and was a way to avoid children and parents claiming rights



against the State. [...] There is a huge problem of civil liability of Boards of Management who are cast in the role of employers as proxies for patrons. [...] Boards of Management are not qualified to act as employers in this sense. The role as employer is largely a convenient fiction, convenient for the State. [...] Surely we can find a solution to the accountability gap which is caused by the present fictional employer/employee relationship'.

In relation to the Children Referendum 2012, in which Catherine was involved, the purpose was 'to bring a change of balance, increasing children's rights but preserving those of parents. The initial part of Article 42 is unchanged and unfortunately we are still left with 'provide for'. There was no specific change in relation to education as such but the general declaration of rights in the first paragraph was an important change of principle.'

*Catherine's full speech text and video clip are available to view and download from [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie) – Events – Principals' Conference – Principals' Conference 2014 – Keynotes*



# Brendan McCabe IPPN President

Excerpts from his address at Conference 2014



## PROGRAMME FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT (PISA)

PISA results for 2012, after the 2009 blip, are back up to, and slightly above, where they had been in 2006. But it seems the only news worth reporting from the education world is bad news. Can we not highlight the myriad of good things that happen almost on a daily basis in Irish schools – the huge levels of commitment given by principals to your school community, the incredible level of pastoral care provided by you and your teachers and all the sport, drama, choirs and other extra-curricular activities which you voluntarily undertake? Furthermore, do we really want to use PISA as the main indicator of our educational achievement? What kind of societies are we measuring ourselves against? Do we want to be like Singapore, where corporal punishment in schools and judicial canings are still the norm?

*The architects of our curriculum now need to turn their attention to imaginative and innovative ways through which it can be delivered.*

## CURRICULUM OVERLOAD

On the curricular front there is still the major problem of trying to fit in all eleven subjects. Teachers don't want to have to skim over topics so as to cover all aspects of the curriculum. They want to teach well. They want to give children time to explore.

You are being asked to give more time to literacy and numeracy. It is hugely important, the cornerstone of all education, where teachers are more than happy to put more emphasis. The Department needs to offer schools clear guidance and indicate from which subjects this time should be taken and to provide realistic alternatives so as to seriously address the problem of curriculum overload.

The architects of our curriculum now need to

turn their attention to imaginative and innovative ways through which it can be delivered. There is need for major investment by the department in continuous professional development for principals and teachers, to ensure that they continue to enhance their skills, so as to ensure the highest possible standards in all our schools. Many of you here this evening are teaching principals struggling with the double role of principal AND classroom teacher. The CPD provided for you needs to reflect that reality.

Teachers are being virtually shell-shocked by barrages of 'semi-changes' that sap the energy while making few positive or substantial differences. If we're going to have change let it be meaningful and purposeful, and let it be accompanied by adequate resourcing and training.

## GREAT EXPECTATIONS

The fact that society does have such great expectations of schools is, in some ways, a great compliment to principals and to teachers. Parents have a deep trust in their school principal. This puts principals in a very privileged position. It is imperative that we never forget what we are about – children.

In reading newspapers or in listening to political commentary, one could easily be led to the belief that schools can respond to all changes and cure all of society's ills. The country has a drugs problem. Schools will fix it. Children are bullying each other on the local estate. Schools will fix it. Some children are coming to school hungry. Schools will fix it. We have an obesity problem. Schools will fix it. Is it realistic to expect schools to respond to all of society's demands? Should they even try? Is it possible that asking schools to carry the mantle for all domestic and social problems is allowing others to avoid their rightful responsibilities? Schools solving problems can sometimes allow primary carers to shirk their duties. It's time they too stepped up to the plate. Schools cannot provide the cement to plaster over all of the cracks in modern Irish society. We must look towards the primary source of the problem.

## READINESS FOR SCHOOL

The needs of children seem to be becoming

increasingly complex. Some would argue that children are picking up mixed messages at home, leading to confusion about acceptable manners and behaviour. This is essentially a parenting issue. Let's recognise that parents don't send us the wrong kids. They send us the best kids they've got. What is debatable though is the question of school readiness. Some children are being sent to school before they are sufficiently mature. Sometimes this is caused by the lack of affordable pre-school facilities, leaving the school to act effectively as child minders. The free ECCE year has been a great help. I would call on the Government to ensure that all pre-schools have fully trained staffs and meet acceptable standards and to give those children who need it a second free year.

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Schools have welcomed in a large cohort of pupils with special educational needs, in good faith, believing that the DES would put in place necessary supports. By and large they did. However, we have seen ongoing cutbacks and this is of grave concern to us. Is the DES going to make further cutbacks at the expense of the most vulnerable children in our schools? This would be intolerable.

## HOPE

I have seen through my own school, St. Colmcille's in Kells, that many families are surviving in economically straitened circumstances. Children feel and sense what is going on around them. Despite all the challenges facing us, it is important that we give these children hope. They need our help and support more than any recent generation of Irish children. We cannot let them down.

I call on every principal to continue to make their school the very best it can be, to give our pupils the very best start in life. We have hugely talented teachers in our schools. Make sure they know that they are valued and celebrate with them your many successes. Let our leadership and motivation be the catalysts to give our young people the bright future they so richly deserve.

*Brendan's full speech text is available to view and download from [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie) – Events – Principals' Conference – Principals' Conference 2014 - Keynotes*

# Seán Cottrell IPPN Director

Excerpts from his address at Conference 2014



Minister, they say that 'timing is everything'. Unfortunately, you picked a terrible time to be Minister for Education. Even your greatest critics will admit that you have been courageous in seeking to reform aspects of our education system. You have personally driven the literacy and numeracy strategy. You have tackled the status quo about school patronage and pluralism. You have shown character by admitting to getting some things wrong. You are tackling the blight of prefabs. You have given greater recognition to the role of parents. And credit must be given for the vastly improved department website and for finally biting the bullet on a primary schools database.

When you think about all that has happened in education in the past twelve months, it's quite staggering new anti-bullying guidelines, child protection guidelines, parental surveys about school uniforms, School Self Evaluation and a new Admissions Act. While each initiative is worthwhile in its own right, the impact of multiple initiatives landing on principals' desks one after another is colossal. Principals and teachers have no difficulty taking on board new initiatives, provided there is a clear benefit for children, and that there is sufficient time and space as well as enough training and support.

Since the year 2000, the department has issued 430 individual circulars to primary schools, 34 last year alone. That's nearly one a week. The shelf is now full, there's no room for more circulars. The biggest threat to the quality of children's learning is the initiative fatigue that is draining morale from teachers and principals. The level of expectation on principals is not just great, it's unreasonable.

No matter how competent, confident and enthusiastic a principal is, if their workload is constantly increased, and their in-school management team is gradually reduced, that principal will eventually buckle from work overload. Principals should not be treated like this. We need some breathing space and an opportunity to digest and absorb all of the existing initiatives. Minister, we've had a moratorium on posts of responsibility. How about a moratorium on new initiatives?

Minister, you have failed to protect children with special needs from cutbacks; children with Down

Syndrome continue to be in limbo and most supports for traveller education have gone by the wayside; You have continued to add to principals' work overload; You have penalised those schools and principals who showed enterprise in setting up a Book Rental Scheme. In these instances, you have failed to put children first.

We were encouraged to read of the Secretary General's concerns about the impact of any further cuts on the quality of our education system. We share his concerns entirely. In fact we are deeply concerned about the impact of previous cuts on the quality of children's learning. We've regained our economic sovereignty. This is a unique opportunity to reset the imbalances between primary, second and third level education. It is time to put primary school children first.

## *Principals have worked hard to maintain pre-recession standards with post-recession resources.*

Stress levels are reaching crisis point. The Department must accept that they have a key role to play in resolving this crisis. IPPN also has a role to play and we are responding to the challenge of principals' work overload in four ways: by expanding our Principal Advice and Leadership Recovery services; by publishing our new framework document '*Priorities for Principal Teachers*' which offers principals a new approach that focuses on defining whole-school and personal priorities; by designing a comprehensive health and wellbeing survey of principals and, by analysing the duplication of paperwork in primary schools, which will be used in the design of the department's Primary Online Database. We hope that these four IPPN actions will collectively make a significant difference to each of you in the short and medium term.

Of course, long-term solutions are still required, specifically in relation to the dual role of teaching principal, board of management structures, middle management capacity and the role of deputy principal. Meanwhile, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed urgently so that principals can protect their health and wellbeing

and focus on their role as the leader of teaching and learning.

Administration days are a lifeline for all teaching principals. There's just one problem – there are not enough of them. Teaching principals must be given, at a minimum, one non-teaching day per week to focus on their leadership role. In addition, a full-time skilled administrator is a fundamental resource that all schools need. You tell us that these two specific actions would have the greatest impact on reducing your work overload. With so many teachers and administrators unemployed, surely there must be a pragmatic solution.

It is hard to believe that our own Teaching Council wants to place the probation of new teachers on the backs of already over-burdened principals. Of the 51 schools taking part in the Droichead pilot programme, only 12 are primary schools and only one of those schools has a teaching principal. This is hardly valid research. I call on the Council to reconsider our proposal to utilise the skills and experience of principals in their first two years of retirement as part of the pilot, similar to the approach of the teacher training colleges in the supervision of teaching practice. The Council must also take into account the workload crisis of principal teachers. We don't want Droichead to become known as the Bridge of Sighs.

Principals have worked hard to maintain pre-recession standards with post-recession resources. We are fast approaching the point where this will no longer be possible. It is in primary school that children learn many of the skills that lay the foundation for success in their lives and careers. We cannot fail them at the first step on that journey.

As leaders of primary schools, it is our professional duty to draw attention to anything that puts the quality of children's education at risk. Primary education must be made a priority within the department and within government. There is a moral imperative to speak up for the children in our schools. We too have great expectations.

*Seán's full speech text and video clip are available to view and download from [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie) – Events – Principals' Conference – Principals' Conference 2014 - Keynotes*





## Dr. Yong Zhao

Yong Zhao is an internationally known scholar, author, and speaker. His works focus on the implications of globalization and technology on education. He has designed schools that cultivate global competence, developed computer games for language learning, and founded research and development institutions to explore innovative education models. He has published over 100 articles and 20 books.

In a high energy and high impact keynote speech, he describes how education systems

prepare (or not) our children for the future and how radical change is needed to prepare them for a future no-one can imagine. As well as his comments on the value of Lady Gaga and Kim Kardashian in our society, the following are some snippets from Dr Zhao's input:

- '53% of US graduates have no job; they are staying in their parents' basement. The purpose of education is to get our children out of our basement. But education today isn't getting people to work.'

- 'There are over 2 million unfilled vacancies in Europe despite the youth unemployment crisis. Over 10 million unfilled in the US'
- 'Traditionally, our schools are like a sausage machine, churning out homogenous talents. Children are born curious and entrepreneurial and these talents are suppressed.'

A video clip of Yong's keynote address is available to view on [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie) under Events – Principals' Conference - Principals' Conference 2014 – Keynotes

## Sir John Jones

Sir John Jones is one of a small, select band of educational professionals who have not only had their achievements recognised in the New Year's Honours List (2003), but have been able to help and inspire others with their knowledge and passion. One of the most entertaining, inspiring and sought-after speakers on the global educational stage, his achievements and reputation for straight-talking, leadership and creativity have led him

to be invited on to a number of panels and think-tanks.

In an emotional and thought-provoking speech, Sir John describes the three 'must get rights' in education:

- Teacher quality
- Teacher passion
- Student expectation.



A video clip of Sir John's keynote address is available to view on [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie) under Events – Principals' Conference - Principals' Conference 2014 - Keynotes

## Joe Schmidt

A former head teacher, Joe worked in several coaching roles in New Zealand including New Zealand Schools, Bay of Plenty and at Auckland as assistant coach.

Joe took over as Leinster head coach for the 2010/11 season and guided the province to their second Heineken Cup title in his first season. Leinster won back to back European titles in 2012 and Joe signed off his tenure with Leinster by guiding them to a treble in 2013 capturing the Amlin Challenge Cup, Rabo Direct Pro12

and British & Irish Cup titles. In April 2013, Joe Schmidt was appointed head coach to Ireland's Rugby Team.

Addressing over 1,000 principals at IPPN's conference, Joe describes his views on leadership, both as a principal and as a coach as well as, shares some anecdotes about his time leading a second-level school in Tauranga, New Zealand and the impact on his family of the support provided to his son who has special educational needs (SEN).

A video clip of Joe's keynote address is available to view on [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie) under Events – Principals' Conference - Principals' Conference 2014 - Keynotes



# Minister for Education & Skills, Ruairi Quinn

Excerpts from his address at Conference 2014



## INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

In most countries, there is a huge desire to improve education systems, for the benefit of individuals, as well as both societies and economies. Differing approaches to improving quality and accountability have emerged in recent years.

IPPN has added significantly to the debate. You regularly bring leading international educationalists to Ireland, to advise on how change can be advanced – this Conference is no different, with inputs from Sir John Jones, and Dr. Yong Zhao.

Given Finland's persistently impressive PISA results, everyone has looked northwards in recent years, to see how school systems can be improved. We need to look internationally, and learn from successful and unsuccessful attempts at reform. But we also need to look at our own nation, and our own culture – to learn from the very best of ourselves.

*We must aim for models of accountability that validate the excellent work taking place in all schools.*

From studying attempts at educational reform in some countries, we have learned the dangers of an excessive focus on testing – a focus which leads to a substantial narrowing of the curriculum.

The literacy and numeracy strategy includes some increase in the use of standardised tests. We will use standardised tests to support school improvement, and not to narrow the education provided to our children, to give teachers and schools the information they need to respond to the learning needs of children, but also to provide valuable system-wide information to support our efforts to improving teaching quality.

Arguably, in both the US, and parts of the UK, we have seen a focus on testing move beyond simply attempting to measure the learning of children, into measures which can be used to punish individual schools and teachers. This is not my vision of accountability.

We will continue to resist any publication of school league tables. The roll-out of School Self-Evaluation will create a culture of internal reflection and accountability, rather than an artificial accountability, which is better for political sound-bites than it is for educational improvement. Similarly, the Inspectorate's evaluations of schools strike a balance between improvement and accountability. They affirm good practice and seek to encourage improvement. And when inspections find significant flaws in the teaching and learning of schools, we will continue to work with those schools through the Department's school improvement group. Rather than announcing that these schools have failed, the schools will be given the time, space and support to make the improvements needed.

We must aim for models of accountability that validate the excellent work taking place in all schools. I want to help ensure that all of our children are prepared to contribute socially, culturally and economically, to our nation.

In Ireland, DEIS is our primary mechanism for systematically promoting greater equity within our school system. And we are beginning to see compelling evidence that DEIS works in primary schools. Absenteeism is down in DEIS schools, while the performance gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools is narrowing.

## QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The forthcoming consultation on the new integrated language curriculum for primary schools will represent the first step in moving beyond the 1999 curriculum.

A very significant focus in improving quality in our schools must be to ensure that we have the best quality teachers in every classroom. We are incredibly fortunate in Ireland. Teaching is a widely respected and sought after profession. As a result, we have considerable competition for places within the Initial Teacher Education system. We need to continue to ensure that most entrants to Initial Teacher Education come from the top 15% of all Leaving Cert students.

We have expanded the B.Ed. from 3 years to 4 years, with an increased focus on pedagogy. I also want to see Higher Level Mathematics become part of the minimum entry requirements for Initial Teaching Education. Ensuring that our

teachers are prepared to the very highest standard is essential. So is ensuring that school leaders are equally well trained. We are continuing to look closely in the Department, at how school leadership in Ireland can be strengthened. IPPN, of course, has a particular interest in the CPD component of that work. The creation of the National Centre for Leadership and Innovation by the IPPN is enormously welcome. I know that your leadership will be meeting with the Teacher Education Section of the Department to plot out how NCLI will act on behalf of the Department, delivering relevant CDP to school leaders.

*The forthcoming consultation on the new integrated language curriculum for primary schools will represent the first step in moving beyond the 1999 curriculum.*

This year, I will bring forward legislative changes which will further empower the Teaching Council to function as a fully autonomous professional body for teachers. Making all teachers accountable to their own regulatory body is a key component of improved accountability within our education system, and a very serious endorsement of the profession as a whole.

## BOOK RENTAL SCHEMES

On every occasion on which I have spoken about this issue, I have started by thanking the school leaders and parents' associations who have already established book rental schemes. The work which you have done to reduce costs to parents has been particularly valuable over the past few years, and I know that parents greatly appreciate the support. I understand that it feels unfair to those schools who have invested time and money to establish such schemes, that they now cannot benefit from the additional funding which was secured as part of the Budget. Of course it is unfair, but equally, the status quo was deeply unfair on many parents. The parents who had no access whatsoever to book rental schemes needed more support.



With the limited funding available, I believe that targeting this funding – to make sure that every parent in Ireland has access to some level of a book rental scheme – was the greatest good that could be achieved.

### ACKNOWLEDGING RAPIDLY GROWING SCHOOLS

In relation to class sizes, you will be aware that schools should deploy their teachers so that class sizes are as small as possible, particularly at the junior end of your schools.

I am conscious that this is not easily achieved in schools that have a significant increase in their junior infant enrolments but are not growing rapidly enough to benefit from posts under the developing schools criteria. I want to alleviate

some of the pressure on these schools by adding a bit of flexibility to the developing schools criteria.

This will operate through a new criterion for appeals to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board. The Appeals Board will have some flexibility to provide an additional teacher to ensure that very large infant classes do not become a feature of these schools. The full details of the new appeals criterion are in the Department's primary staffing circular for the coming school year.

By publishing the circular now, we hope to have redeployment panels in place by mid-March – a month earlier than normal. We hope that this will be of benefit to school leaders in having earlier certainty on your staffing arrangements for September. I am also aware that the announcement of resource teacher allocations in

June of 2013 was too late for many of you, and caused some difficulties. The NCSE hopes to announce the first tranche of resource teacher hours by May of this year.

### CONCLUSION

I recognise that there will be further reforms needed to improve quality and accountability in our schools, and look forward to engaging with you on those. I look forward to continuing to work with the IPPN this year – particularly in relation to providing greater support to school leaders, and improving the quality of school leadership in our schools.

*The Minister's full speech text is available to view and download from [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie) – Events – Principals' Conference – Principals' Conference 2014 - Keynotes*

# Weaving Magic

By Damian White, Principal of Scoil Shinchill, Killeigh, Co. Offaly



John Jones, a supporter of the Everton boys  
But not for a million would he take home  
David Moyles.

A child who'll reach 200 is already on earth  
But not of disadvantage from the day of  
their birth.

A box of Immodium might save many young  
And help them to reach life's ladder's next rung.

Joe Schmidt has many cousins in his  
native town.

No wonder he found it easy to soon  
settle down.

A leader by trade in a secondary school  
Who kept 1200 ladies from a brave young fool  
Who hurdled a fence in an act of defiance  
But was driven right back by Joe's annoyance.  
A last minute try might have upset his station  
But he'll soon recover to win the Six Nations.

I'll leave with the thoughts of John Jones'  
magic-weaver,

The person who made us our own self-believer.  
I can't contact mine for she's not with us now  
But the late Maura Carr can take a bow.  
She lived by a beautiful lake near our home  
A place where in childhood we often did roam.  
In a two-teacher school she loved every child  
Even on occasion when we were s  
omewhat wild.

She gave me a manuscript as a fifth class boy  
Said 'go write a book, lift your pen and enjoy'.

Her 46 years here on earth were too brief  
The swans on the lake were her  
mourners in chief.

As they stood to attention on that sorry day  
I watched them take my dream-maker away.  
So call your dream-maker and say something nice.  
Don't leave it too late or you won't  
have the choice.

We've gathered again at the Saggart Hotel.  
We've been told it's a year that has gone  
really well.

A sombre Taoiseach has addressed the state  
Containing his giggles with visages so straight.

Farewell dear Troika, your job it is over;  
After 4 hardy years we are back in the clover.

We've sold a few bonds and made  
3 handy million.

A massive gamble, an audience coup.  
Hard times over, on to pastures new.

Since last year, we have a new Pope;  
The success of our provinces gives us s  
ome hope.

The Dubs and the Banner are teams of the year  
Since Jimbo and Davy ruled out any beer.  
Garth Brooks is coming to play in Croke Park  
To thousands of fans home as old as the Ark.

We descend on the Wednesday for an early start  
And a late night session that tested the heart.

Our bearded President in shades of brown  
Hands a challenge for progress down.  
That socialist writer, Charles Dickens so great  
Was metaphorically paraphrased to  
describe the state.

Who is this tall leader who could  
rule Abu Ghraib  
It's not Fidel Castro but Brendan McCabe.

Then Catherine McGuinness with  
élan and grace  
Had the 42<sup>nd</sup> Article in its proper place.  
Our traders were selling what every  
school needs  
From management systems to lunchtime feeds.  
Onto the bar and a queue from deep  
For pints of Guinness that were none too cheap.

A generous clap for old Ebenezer  
No fence sitting splinter for the Labour geezer.  
Staighre na hEaspag is a mitreless zone  
Though a call will come through from the Palace  
iPhone.

But watch that stairs, it's a slippery slope  
To an office once climbed towards with passion  
and hope.

Yes, mind that stairs, it could soon be defiled  
By a fast-moving cougar with Maria Doyle.

Yes, Waterford's finest is on the loose  
But to melt her heart, just play her some Bruce.  
And back to you Minister, what are you at?

For 12 to 12:30 is God's daily chat.  
Numeracy at that time is for counting the beads  
And the parable of the mustard seeds.

About a message spread widely which  
many will follow

Though some seeds will fail where soil  
cover is hollow.

And seeking for teachers with an honour  
in Maths

Would see many principals on different  
life paths.

This guy for one would not be here now  
But blackening Offaly with the great  
and the good  
Having washed his hands first as his Mam said he  
should.

Our long walk to freedom for principals all  
Is led by a man with his eyes on the ball.

But opprobrium and Invictus aside,  
Ruairi and Seán look quite well side by side.  
The stage was then set for the great Yong Zhao,  
Anyone who missed it, they're sorry now.  
Education systems can be so obscene  
As they force innovation through a sausage  
machine.

Creative people are reducing in number  
As governments everywhere continue to slumber.  
Relying on PISA to claim they are top  
Is a practice Zhao says just has to stop.

He talked of two classes, service and creative  
Of Lady Gaga, New York meat-wearing native  
Of Kim Kardashian and her reasons for fame  
Of Old Henry Ford, why it's just not the same.

His excitement at Seán and Ruairi's exchange  
Was revealing and emblematic of  
political change.

For China wouldn't tolerate such brash inquisition  
Of a politician in such an important position.  
And Olivia with questions hard and long  
She's always right, but could never be Wong.



# Presentations, videos, speeches and much more on [ippn.ie](http://ippn.ie)



Once again, over 1,000 principals attended the IPPN conference in January. We are delighted to be able to make keynote speech texts and videos as well as seminar materials available to all members via our website, as well as press releases and a photo gallery.

To access Conference 2014 materials go to [ippn.ie](http://ippn.ie), log in with your username and password then and click on the Events tab. All materials are available within the *Principals' Conference – Principals' Conference 2014* section. Alternatively, scan the QR code above with your smartphone and you'll be taken directly to the webpage.

## KEYNOTE SPEECHES

- Choose from videos, speech texts and biographies for Conference 2014 keynote speakers:
- Brendan McCabe, IPPN President
- Ms Justice Catherine McGuinness, retired Supreme Court judge
- Ruairi Quinn TD, Minister for Education & Skills
- Seán Cottrell, IPPN Executive Director
- Dr Yong Zhao, education scholar, author, and speaker
- Sir John Jones, former head teacher, author,

chancellor of Sefton Children's University

- Joe Schmidt, head coach to Ireland's Rugby Team and former principal.

## SEMINARS:

Seminar materials prove extremely popular, not only among those who have attended the sessions, but also by principals looking for some practical guidance on a particular issue. The following presentations are available to download:

- Be(com)ing a Digital School – **Robbie O'Leary**
- Building a Resilient Workforce – **John Conaghan**, Carecall
- Dealing Effectively with Bullying – **Seán Fallon**, National Anti-Bullying Campaign
- Family Law and the School Principal – **David Ruddy**
- From Managing Others to Managing Self – In Search of Equilibrium – **Joe O'Connell**
- Is minic a bhain seangán greim as gearrán: Seabhú agus foghlaim na Gaeilge i scoileanna Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta – Dr. **Seán Mac Corraídh**
- Leading and Managing the Special Needs Assistant Working in the Primary School

Environment – **Mícheál O'Sullivan**

- Lifting the Lid: The Realities of Using Restrictive Practices and Physical Interventions in Schools – **Siobhán Allen and Aileen Lyons**
- Mindfulness and Wellbeing for Teachers – **Ann Caulfield and Derval Dunford**
- Preparing for the next crisis: Empowering the Board of Management to be ready – **Pat Gately and James Murray**
- Priorities For Principal Teachers – **Tom McGann and Páirc Clerkin**
- "School Policies, Practices, Procedures – how to avoid litigation – **Pat Goff**
- SOS – Success over stress – **Anne Marie Ferris**
- Workload Management for Teaching Principals – **Gerard Ruane**.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Press Releases are available in the *Advocacy – Press Releases* section
- Photo Gallery – photos of conference attendees, exhibitors and keynote speakers are available in the *Principals' Conference – Principals' Conference 2014* section of the website.
- Education Expo Guide.



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# IPPN Annual Principals' CONFERENCE 2014



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We would also like to thank Lindt Chocolates for their kind contribution



IPPN would like to thank our Education Expo exhibitors this year for their support in helping deliver our annual conference and contributing to its success. Please consider our exhibitors when making purchases for your school over the coming year. An interactive version of the Expo Guide is available on the conference web pages or by scanning the icon on the right.



Finally, we would like to thank the many principals who have referred companies onto the National Support Office and who go on to exhibit at our Education Expo. Your support has helped us make Education Expo the largest trade event for school suppliers.

## PASSPORT GIVEAWAY



Saundra Ní Chiosóig, Caherconlish NS, Co. Limerick, winner of the Memory Lane Photography hotel break and family portrait prize. Pictured with Mike Guinee.



Passport prize winners (Left to Right) Evelyn Smyth, Roscomroe NS, Co. Tipperary, Dermot Cleary, Maree NS, Co. Galway, Ita Teegan, Scoil Bernadette, Cork, and Anne Bergin, Rushall NS, Co. Laois.

We would like to thank Allianz, Edco, Gill & MacMillan, Junior Entrepreneurs Programme, and 4schools.ie for contributing prizes for the Passport Giveaway



# Principal Advice

## Do you know what a winner is?

By Angela Lynch, Principal Advice Manager



In the aftermath of IPPN Conference 2014, I had been contemplating the many highs I had experienced and the many wonderful people I met, when I came across the following. I really wanted to share it with you. Walter Payton, the American football running back who played most notably with the Chicago Bears and was the author of many books before his untimely death at the age of 45 years, wrote in his autobiography:

*'If you ask me how I want to be remembered, it is as a winner. You know what a winner is? A winner is somebody who has given his best effort, who has tried the hardest he possibly can, who has utilised every ounce of energy and strength within them to accomplish something. It doesn't mean that they accomplished it or failed, it means that they've given it their best. That's a winner.'*

As soon as I read it, I thought again of all the winners I had met, not only at Conference but through the many conversations I have had with principals in the course of my work with IPPN. The common denominator with these principals in their work and in the difficult situations in which they find themselves is that they have tried so hard and given of their best. The theme of Conference was 'Great Expectations', expectations be they realistic or unrealistic from society and from the stakeholders within the

school community. Principals are expected to solve or resolve all problems. I think that principals have bought into this expectation. I know that in the course of my time as principal I certainly bought into it. Unless I accomplished what I had set out to do and succeeded in solving the problem, I considered that I was a failure. One day I was discussing a difficult situation that I was failing to resolve with a trusted friend. Having discussed all that I had done so far to resolve the issue, he asked a question – 'Have you done everything that you can do to resolve this?' and followed it with 'Is there anything else you can do here?' Answering 'yes' to the first and 'no' to the second question, he then said 'Well, you have to let it go.'

You might say 'easier said than done', but there are some things over which we have no control. We all like to be in control. Losing control can feel uncomfortable at times, yet holding on to a sense of failure and unrealistic expectation can be damaging to our health and wellbeing. Sometimes it can be hard to ask ourselves these two questions. Discussing problems within the trust and confidentiality of a Principals' Support Group, ending with these two questions is often a good mechanism to tease out the wood from the trees. Contacting the IPPN Support Office to request a call back from the Principal Advice Panel allows you to access the guidance and advice of a fellow principal. The more you connect with your

colleagues through the many channels – networking mailing lists, Support Groups, County Network meetings, CPD events, local principals and IPPN Support Office – the less isolated and the more empowered you will be to keep moving forward. Again, as Walter Payton said:

*'We are stronger together than we are alone.'  
Or as we often say in this network 'Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine.'*

Acknowledge yourself this week as the winner you really are and winners always get a prize. Treat yourself!

### PRINCIPALS' LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS:

Where would you go to de-brief with colleagues who understand you without explanation? where you can discuss your concerns and leave with a clear plan of action, develop skills as a reflective practitioner and establish an effective means of self care? Don't wait, find your local Principals Support Group. Scan this QR Code or visit [ippn.ie](http://ippn.ie) for more details.



## Progress on the development of a Primary Online Database (POD)

By Nicola Tickner, Statistician, Department of Education and Skills



Work is progressing by the Department of Education and Skills on the development of an individualised Primary Online Database (POD). POD will collect individual information on each pupil, including their Personal Public Service Number (PPSN). We would strongly encourage schools to start to collect pupils' PPSN if they do not do so already, as POD will require pupil PPSNs to be returned by schools.

POD will also seek information on an optional basis on pupils' ethnic or cultural background and on their religion. Schools should note that parental/guardian consent is required for the collection of this information. While the information on ethnic or cultural Background is optional, schools should note that this information will be used to pay the Enhanced Capitation Grant for pupils who are members of the Traveller community. This information will also be used to monitor the progress of different groups as well as for statistical purposes.

The Department has met with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner in relation to the collection of the PPSN and all other data and they have confirmed that this is in compliance with Data Protection legislation. The Department (in consultation with the Management Bodies) have produced a Fair Processing Notice which will clarify to schools their roles and responsibilities in relation to the collection, storage and transfer of data; this is currently being circulated to schools.

Schools are reminded that a pilot of the process will take place in Easter 2014, with a rollout to all schools in 2015.

For further information, please contact Nicola by email to [Nicola\\_Tickner@education.gov.ie](mailto:Nicola_Tickner@education.gov.ie).





# Child and Family Agency

By Gordon Jeyes

On the 1st of January 2014 the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) became an independent legal entity, comprising HSE Children & Family Services, Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board. Under Chief Executive Gordon Jeyes, the Agency assumed service responsibility for the following range of services:

- Child Welfare and Protection Services, including family support services
- Existing Family Support Agency responsibilities
- Existing National Educational Welfare Board responsibilities
- Pre-school Inspection Services
- Domestic, sexual and gender based violence services and
- Services related to the psychological welfare of children.

*Many held the view that a mere realignment of services and the amalgamation of a number of bodies would not be enough to deliver on the fresh start so much called for throughout the sector.*

The Child and Family Agency is now the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. It represents the most comprehensive reform of child protection, early intervention and family support services ever undertaken in Ireland. It is an ambitious move which brings together some 4,000 staff and an operational budget of approximately €600m.

The Agency operates under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, a progressive piece of legislation with children at its heart, and with families viewed as the foundation of a strong healthy community where children can flourish. Partnership and co-operation in the delivery of seamless services to children and families are also central to the Act.

The establishment represents an opportunity to think differently, where appropriate to behave

differently and to seek a wide range of views regarding the most effective way of working together to deliver a wide range of services for children and families. It promotes an approach which is responsive, inclusive and outward looking.

Prior to the establishment date, widespread consultation with all stakeholders sought to capture the hopes, and indeed fears, which key influencers had regarding the new Child and Family Agency. Many held the view that a mere realignment of services and the amalgamation of a number of bodies would not be enough to deliver on the fresh start so much called for throughout the sector. It was felt that what was required was a new identity which captures a new sense of purpose shared by all those who together will deliver children and family services going forward.

## Children First

*Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (DCYA 2011) remains the cornerstone document for the safeguarding of children in Ireland. The government is currently in the process of finalising legislation to place Children First on a statutory footing. This legislation will have implications for all organisations and staff members working directly with children and their parents. It is not possible at this stage to detail the content of the legislation as this still has to be finalised. It is clear however, from the communications given by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Francis Fitzgerald, that the government is committed to creating a safer environment for children by introducing a range of legal safeguards which will include mandatory reporting.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs, under the sponsorship of Minister Fitzgerald, has formed an inter-government departmental Children First Implementation Group (CFIDG) that is leading on the implementation of and monitoring of Children First. It is intended that the CFIDG will be placed on a statutory footing in the Children First Bill. Those government departments with services that will fall under the Children First legislation, including the Department of Education and Skills, are members of the CFIDG. The Child and Family Agency is working with CFIDG members to support their implementation plans for Children

First and to assist them in their preparation for the Children First legislation. The Department of Education and Skills' implementation plan for Children First can be found on its website.

*In preparation for the Children First legislation, it is advised that schools ensure their child protection policies and procedures are up to date.*

At this time there is no set date for the issuing of the Children First Bill although the strong indication is that the legislation will be introduced in 2014.

## Advice to schools

In preparation for the Children First legislation, it is advised that schools ensure their child protection policies and procedures are up to date, that Designated Liaison Persons are appointed and that all staff members are familiar with their responsibilities under Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2011. 4.8, page 22). As per Children First, where someone has reasonable grounds to suspect a child is at risk from harm, this, in consultation with their Designated Liaison Person where possible, should be reported to the Child and Family Agency local social work office.

## Gordon Jeyes Chief Executive

*Gordon was the UK's first Director of Children's Services and provided advice to governments in Scotland and at Westminster on the development of children's services. Former Chair of the Anti-Bullying Network and a member of the SEED Review Group on Youth Crime. Member of the Ministerial Strategy Group on Continuing Professional Development (Teachers) and the National Youth Justice Strategy Steering Group. Led the critical incident response to the Dunblane school massacre in 1996. National Director, HSE Children and Families Service from 2011 to 2013. Awarded an OBE for services to Children in 2011. Co-author of the Revision of Scottish Teachers' Conditions of Service for the 21st Century. Executive Chairman of Scotland's first urban regeneration company. Member of National Oversight Group (England) for Electronic Common Assessment Framework.*

# The Homework Debate

By Caroline Ruth B.Ed., B. Sc. (Psych), Dip. SEN (ASDs),  
MA Ed. Psych, Educational Psychologist



'Homework! Oh Homework! I hate you! You Stink! I wish I could wash you away in the sink!' are lines taken from a popular children's poem which reflect the sentiments of many primary school children. But it is not just amongst children that the topic of homework is a thorny issue. This topic has been a battleground for decades, with public, researcher and educator opinion being divided. Historically, the debate raged between those who question the value of homework and those who support it. The research on homework is exhaustive, with most researchers allying themselves to the pro or anti camp. An argument that has recently been levelled against homework is its marginalisation of pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). It is only in recent years that the Irish debate on the value of homework has catapulted into action.

## IMPACT OF HOMEWORK ON PUPILS

Research identifies that the impact of homework is affected by various factors, including pupils' understanding of its purpose and their attitudes towards it. Extensive research findings also reveal that:  
Pupil attitudes are positively related to parental attitudes to homework

There is a positive relationship between homework and attainment at second level, but not at primary level  
Homework can have a positive impact on the retention and understanding of knowledge and the improvement of study skills.

Research findings also reveal the negative impact of homework:

- Over-emphasis on work comes at the expense of familial and personal well-being
- Satiation of academic material leading to negative attitudes towards school work
- Teachers cannot always justify that assignments are beneficial and meaningful
- Less leisure and social opportunities for children.

## IMPACT OF HOMEWORK ON FAMILIES

Research identifies the following positive influences:

- Homework is 'a linchpin in the relationship

between home and school'

- A combination of well-planned assignments, specifically designed to involve parents, leads to achievement gains
- Effective parent-teacher communication results in more positive involvement.

A conflicting body of research identifies limitations associated with family involvement:

- It can go beyond simple guidance, which devalues the purpose of homework and can cause over-reliance on adult assistance
- Parents may use different instructional techniques to teachers, thereby confusing pupils
- It can cause tension in families by putting pressure on parents to assume undesired roles
- Home background is a major factor in the success of homework. Economic and social disadvantage can negatively affect engagement with homework.

## RESEARCH

The overall aim of the current study was to gain a better understanding of homework practices in urban Irish primary schools and to gain an insight into parental and teacher perspectives regarding its effectiveness.

## FINDINGS

Discussion groups were held with groups of parents and teachers from both DEIS and non-DEIS schools. Survey questionnaires were distributed to parents and teachers of South East primary schools. Overall, significant patterns of difference between DEIS and non-DEIS schools did not emerge, including homework practices; the purpose of homework; perceived effectiveness; and the need for change. However, an unexpected pattern of difference between parent and teacher views, regardless of school type, was observed across these topics.

*A vast majority of parents felt their role involved the teaching of concepts, a role understood by only a minority of teachers.* This 'perception gap' between parents and teachers points to the need for a review of homework and more effective parent-teacher communication in relation to homework expectations.

*Significantly more teachers than parents saw an*

*obligation of adherence to school policy and 'keeping parents happy' as reasons for assigning homework.* Such reasons devalue the practice of homework and undermine its importance in academic terms.

*Revision of the day's work was the main purpose identified by most teachers and parents.* It may be interpreted that homework that serves other purposes – such as preparation, extension and creativity – is not being employed. Lack of variety may lead to satiation of material and negative attitudes towards school work.

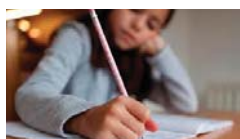
*Homework is viewed as more advantageous than disadvantageous by parents and teachers.* The majority of teachers reported revision as the main benefit, whereas parents additionally identified monitoring of progress; good preparation for post-primary and later life; and the improvement in grades. Such a limited teacher perspective on the value of homework echoes earlier reported findings with regards to its purpose and the need for variety.

*38% of parents and teachers surveyed see a need for change to current practices.* Those most in favour are parents from non-DEIS schools. Teachers from non-DEIS schools emerged as those least in favour of change, which sums up the teacher-parent discrepancy that pervade the results of this study.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Current findings add nuances to an already complex and highly-debated topic. The discrepancies between teacher and parent perceptions of the purpose and value of homework arguably create a barrier to effective assignments and educational outcomes for children. Rather than continuing to focus on whether homework enriches learning, it is more important to strive to improve the quality of homework through the recognition of individual differences and home contexts and by ensuring homework assignments are meaningful for each pupil. The current study highlights the need for Irish educational policy-makers to consider such findings and to bridge the gap between home and school understandings of homework. The development of guidelines to support schools in establishing effective and more creative whole-school homework policies is strongly recommended.

*Caroline can be contacted by email to [c.ruthpsych@hotmail.com](mailto:c.ruthpsych@hotmail.com).*







EMS Copiers would like thank all who visited our stand at the 2014 IPPN Conference! The conference was a great success and we are excited about the new and improved products and solutions that we were able to feature and demonstrate.



Congratulations to Margo Gillooley of Scoil Naisiunta Caitriona Naionain, Coolock

Dublin 5 on winning an iPad 2 in our free draw. Pictured is Carol Burke-Heneghan of the IPPN drawing the winning entry with John Cahill of EMS Copiers.

### Featured at the show were:-



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## Latest resources



If your school has a policy or plan that is not available on [ippn.ie](http://ippn.ie), or which would supplement available resources, we would appreciate if you would submit it for review by email to [rachel.brannigan@ippn.ie](mailto:rachel.brannigan@ippn.ie).

The following are the new resources available in the different sections of the website:

### RESOURCES

#### School Policies

- Anti-Bullying Policy/Statement – Seán Fallon
- Anti cyber-bullying exercise sheet

#### DES Circulars

2014

- 0007/2014 – Staffing arrangements in Primary Schools for the 2014/15 school year
- 0003/2014 – Teastas Iarchéime in Oideachas Scoláirí le Neamhoird Speictrim Uathaigh orthu (NSUanna) le haghaidh múinteoirí ag obair le Scoláirí le NSUanna orthu i Scoileanna Speisialta, i Ranganna Speisialta nó mar Mhúinteoirí Acmhainne i mBunscoileanna
- 0001/2014 – Combined Post-Graduate Diploma Programme of Continuing Professional Development for Teachers involved in Learning Support and Special Education

### Forms & Templates

- School & Role Priority Matrices

### SUPPORTS

#### Leadership+

- Leadership+ Issue 78 – Jan 2014

### ADVOCACY

#### Press Releases

- 11<sup>th</sup> November 2013 – IPPN Welcomes Proposal to Cut School Uniform Costs
- 7<sup>th</sup> November 2013 – IPPN Welcomes the Minor and Summer Works Scheme Contribution
- 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013 – IPPN's Reaction to Budget 2014

### EVENTS

All IPPN Conference 2014 materials relating to keynote speakers and seminars are under the following menu path

#### Principals' Conference

##### Principals' Conference 2014

- Keynotes
- Seminars

# A Bizworld Workshops making a difference in Irish Primary Schools

By Fiona McKeon, CEO, Bizworld

**BIZWORLD**  
Ireland



Bizworld workshops have taken place in primary schools in six counties since 2010, reaching over 4,000 children to date. These workshops take place in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> classes over two school days – either consecutively or over two weeks. Bizworld provides tutors for each workshop – the class teacher is not required to teach the programme. The workshops are sponsored by local businesses and are delivered at no cost to each school.

These workshops are cross-curricular, covering Numeracy, Literacy, Information Technology, Social Personal and Health Education, Visual Arts and Drama. Over two full days, pupils are brought through the entire entrepreneurial cycle from company formation, applying for jobs in the companies, conducting market research to acquiring seed capital from venture capitalists. Each company designs, produces, markets and sells their unique product. In Bizworld's case, it is a short animated movie and children must keep financial ledgers and 'balance the book' on completion.

## **BIZWORLD PARTNERS WITH TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES**

Bizworld trains B.Ed and H.Dip students to provide these workshops, requiring no input from the class teacher. Bizworld has also become an elective module on the B.ED. at NUI Maynooth. Bizworld hopes to offer a summer on-line course to teachers through Education Centres.

## **IMPACT**

Results from the pre- and post-assessment tests for the program showed that 88% of all students showed an overall improvement in their understanding of maths skills, business concepts and entrepreneurship.

Bizworld participants can also acquire seven of the eight key competencies for lifelong learning recommended by the European Parliament in 2006. These are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes ranging from mathematical, digital, civic and communication competencies to learning to learn, cultural awareness and a sense of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Bizworld's programme is also in line with the six priorities identified as a result of the 2012 NCCA Primary Priorities report. These were identified as the development of communication and life skills, increased personal well-being, motivation and engagement. It should also

promote numeracy, literacy and life-long learning and encourage a greater sense of identity, belonging and citizenship.

Bizworld has been mentioned specifically in Minister Bruton's Forum Report on Entrepreneurship published January 2014.

## **BIZWORLD ENCOURAGES CIVIC AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

*'The BizWorld Ireland Foundation consists of a group of educators and people from the business sector who have come together in order to provide the children in our primary schools, especially those living in disadvantaged areas, a platform on which to express their knowledge of the curriculum and the opportunity to learn the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills which they will need in order to become responsible and successful adults. We believe that when students reach their potential, so does society.'* BizWorld Mission and Vision Statement

Bizworld graduates are invited to use their new skills to address a need in their local community and enter our Social Entrepreneur of the Year competition. This is Bizworld's annual event and projects from participating finalists are showcased each year in May. Bizworld themselves won the 2014 David Manley Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award which is a great achievement.

## **TESTIMONIALS**

*'The children absolutely loved it and they gained a wealth of knowledge and experience on how business work. It was also extremely beneficial on a social level due to the children working in groups and presenting to their classmates and peers. The children have just*

*finished writing a recount on the two sessions and it is clear from reading them how much they enjoyed the sessions and how important it is for them to be afforded opportunities to engage in workshops.'* Mary Hayes, Principal, Granagh N.S.

*'The Bizworld programme offers pupils a tremendous opportunity to engage in collaborative work that promotes the development of organisational, communication and leadership skills. It is delivered by well trained, professional tutors. The interactive class discussions, student presentations and the practical application of business theory that the programme advocates, are invaluable in developing the pupils' confidence and strategic thinking abilities. We recommend the Bizworld programme to any school looking for a unique and excellent learning experience for the children.'* Peter Coakley, Principal, Maynooth N.S.

*'Critical thinking underpins this programme and I have witnessed the enthusiasm for Bizworld in schools. The range of skills acquired by participating children, and indeed our own student-teachers who deliver the programme as part of an elective, are central to self-development and life-long learning.'*

Séamie ÓNéill, Head of Education, Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood, NUI Maynooth

## **CONTACT**

For further information or to register your interest in availing of a Bizworld workshop please email [admin@bizworldireland.ie](mailto:admin@bizworldireland.ie).

You can contact Fiona by email to [fiona.mckeon@bizworldireland.ie](mailto:fiona.mckeon@bizworldireland.ie) or by phone to (086) 2209750.





# Uniformity

By Damian White, Principal, Scoil Shinchill, Killeigh, Co. Offaly



It is said that awkward conversations are best held in the car, especially when the driver is doing the probing. My poor unfortunate son got more than he bargained for when he posed a question which occurs to most 11 year old boys as we left from O'Connor Park. "Oh why didn't we stay talking about the match?" he moaned to himself as we drove home on the kind of day when neither birds nor bees would emerge from slumber. Travelling with the long-since retired principal of Kilcormac Vocational School, my alma mater and the product of his working life's vision and focus, I figured it was time to pose a question of my own – one wrapped up in a theory.

*Peter Ustinov told of his early confrontation with his school principal. "You're a very smart fellow" the poor old cliched head of his school thundered, "we'll soon knock that out of you".*

"We were in 3<sup>rd</sup> year when you introduced uniforms", I began, "how hard did you have to work at coming up with the most unflattering, unsexy, unbelievably awful combo of chocolate brown slacks and jumper topped off with a beige shirt? The girls had the added delight of wearing brown wool stockings which disappeared into their long brown skirts so early that we never knew if they had knees or not. This clobber would have made Mrs Brown out of Miriam O'Callaghan", I continued, warming to my

subject. "In fact, I looked at an old school photo recently and we looked like a multi-pack of naked choc ices!" We both laughed at the memory. "Well, it served its purpose" he finally opined in that wise 'nod is as good as a wink' way he always had. Results were always good in KVS. When these results landed us in college, where shackles were removed, we took flight like calves released into a field for their maiden graze.

My neighbour and close friend, Declan, three years younger, had to suffer the choc ice for five years, though he found ways to cope. He purchased brown jeans, then a bit of a rarity, and proceeded to rip a pocket off. Badges and patches were applied which took the bad look off it, or added to it if you were in authority. Two years after finishing school, he was drummer for the glam rock group 'No Sweat', reaching number 1 in the Irish charts with 'Heart and Soul'. Declan, by this stage, was more Mark Bolan's T Rex than Marks and Spencers' V neck. He is now vice president of Creative Affairs at Universal Music, New York – a choc ice who escaped the wrapping!

Peter Ustinov told of his early confrontation with his school principal. "You're a very smart fellow" the poor old cliched head of his school thundered, "we'll soon knock that out of you". What is meant to be achieved by the wearing of uniforms to school? A fashion parade is avoided for a start. Comparisons between what some children can and cannot afford is another problem possibly deflected. A parent doesn't have a battle with children every morning on what apparel is appropriate. A uniform identifies a child as being a student in a particular school. For choir competitions or award ceremonies,

there is a pride for the school itself in students looking neat and identifiable.

What are the downsides to a school uniform? The argument for suppression of individual flair and style is often advanced. Some uniforms, particularly where there is a blazer involved, have the effect of giving children the notion that they are somehow better than or part of a different social class to their jumpered neighbours. Are girls not discriminated against occasionally by being forced to wear skirts, even during cold weather? Does 'uniform' stretch to cover hair or jewellery? Are school badges reflective of an ethos that may not be supported by all families attending the school?

Like many other schools, we have a uniform. We don't specify where it should be purchased. Up to a few years ago we didn't have a crest, but since we have adopted one, the school jumper is now much more attractive and there is no issue about people not wearing them. Where my children attend primary school they have a novel and in my view, brilliant idea. Boys and girls wear regular navy crested school jumpers and white polo shirts with no rule about the bottom half other than that it is blue denim. Every child has a pair of jeans. They don't fight against wearing them to school. Girls can wear skirts or pinafores but they must be denim. In my view, it is one of the most workable compromises I've encountered.

Recently, we decided to paint a wall in our house chocolate brown. I looked at it for a long time after I had finished, it wasn't too bad. It had taken 30 years but I had finally buried my brownophobia.



# House Swap Ideal for Teachers?

By David Ruddy and Geraldine D'Arcy



These days it's getting more and more difficult to afford to get away with the family to enjoy some time abroad. As most holiday options are payable by the day or week, it is even more challenging for teachers to really benefit from the summer holidays without going into debt. Have you ever thought about doing a house swap? The idea behind it is that you find a compatible person/family in a location that suits you who is/are interested in swapping with you and then arrange to swap whatever you are comfortable with – house or holiday home, car(s), bicycles etc – for the duration of your stay, with no money changing hands. David Ruddy, whose family has done numerous swaps over a period of many years, believes that Scandinavian countries are a great place to start for families – communicating in English doesn't pose too much of a challenge!

## The benefits of house-swapping include:

- Low cost holidays for as long as you wish as many times a year as you wish – paying only travel costs and incidental expenses – no car hire, accommodation or transfer costs (if both parties travel to and from the same airport)
- All the comforts of living in a well-equipped home as opposed to a sparsely-furnished self-catering apartment or cramped hotel room
- All bills are paid by the home-owners e.g. broadband, gas, electricity, security system, house insurance
- Each swap party agrees the terms of the swap e.g. whether existing car insurance covers the third party or a new policy is required, whether towels and bed linen are included in the swap or you bring your own with you etc.
- You can have your pet(s) minded while you are away, avoiding the stress (for the animal) and cost of kennels/cattery
- You can get to know people in other cultures by living as they do within their community – not in a touristy area
- You can make friends with the people you swap with. Typically you will speak to or Skype with them a number of times to finalise all the details and this can lead to friendship along the way.
- Insurance companies often prefer the property to be occupied than unoccupied. Likewise, car insurance companies will often cover additional adults provided they have a full, clean driving licence. In all cases, be sure to let the insurance

companies know of the swap and confirm that the house/car is covered as normal. An additional fee may be payable to cover the house swap, although this is not always the case.

## Some of the downsides include:

- People not treating your home as you would wish
- Potential for property to be damaged or stolen
- If the other party cancels at short notice, it can be difficult to make alternative arrangements
- Property is not what you expected or is not in the sort of area you expected
- Neighbours may not like the idea of strangers living in the area for short periods
- Responding to swap queries.

## How to avoid some of the pitfalls

1. Do your research on the area (e.g. TripAdvisor.com, Lonely Planet Guide etc) to ensure you know what to expect. Look at Google Earth to view the immediate vicinity of the property and ensure its proximity to amenities is as specified by the home owner.
2. Ensure you review the other party's profile carefully. Is this their first swap? Do they have a long history of successful swaps? If they have good feedback from other swappers, it's more likely there will be no issues.
3. Seek people with similar circumstances to your own i.e. in general, avoid swapping with a retired couple with a pristine home and no pets if you have small children and a menagerie of pets for them to look after...
4. Find out whether they live as you like to live – 'spick and span' or 'cluttered and homely'?
5. Agree in advance how any damage/breakages will be dealt with
6. Put away any precious/valuable/private items to avoid accidental damage
7. Clear a space for their clothes e.g. a small wardrobe and a few drawers per room
8. Agree up front precisely what you will or will not swap e.g. Is the wine rack off limits? Can they use the crystal glasses/computer/phone – for local and/or international calls?
9. Leave a welcome pack of fresh goods for their arrival e.g. bread, ham, cheese, cereal,

milk, tea, coffee – request the same in return

10. Let your neighbours know the arrangements in advance
11. Arrange for a family member, neighbour or friend to call and help them to settle in – request the same
12. Leave an 'information pack' detailing how everything in the house works and with suggestions of things to see and do in the area (this can be reused) – request the same
13. Always sign a contract setting out the details of the swap including all of the above plus
  - Specify the dates and times of arrival and departure
  - Insurance policy requirements – ask to see a PDF copy to satisfy yourself that their policy covers them to drive your car(s) if applicable and reciprocate.
14. Create template emails (both in response to requests and to send queries to potential swap partners) to make contacting families easier
15. There is also the possibility of a student exchange, particularly if your children have already stayed in the house.

## How to go about it

1. There are many dedicated house-swapping websites. Most operate on the basis of an annual membership fee. A quick Google search for 'house swap websites Ireland' or a similar search will bring up a list of websites to review. Some have dedicated websites or web pages for Irish members. Browse through to see which ones you like – browse through homes available to swap and, if you are interested in finding out more, consider taking out a membership.
2. Once you are a member, you can set up a profile of your home and its facilities. State your preferences – location, type of property, dates available, whether or not you have children, whether you need pets to be minded etc.
3. You can either search for your ideal swap partner or wait for them to find you. All initial contact is done through email/direct through the website's internal communication system. There are template contracts to view and tailor to your own needs.

Good luck with your house swap!



# And Finally...

# DOUBT!

After a day of listening to my 6<sup>th</sup> class exchange gossip, I decided to quote Mark Twain to them: 'It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt.'

After considering my words, one of my students asked, 'What does it mean to remove all doubt?' Sigh.

## Thanks, I Think!

I recently ran into an old student of mine, who said, 'I always liked you. You never had favorites. You were mean to everyone.'

## QUOTATIONS

What is a teacher? I'll tell you: it isn't someone who teaches something, but someone who inspires the student to give of her best in order to discover what she already knows..

Paulo Coelho



## QUOTATIONS

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.

Henry Ford

## On your behalf

Since the last issue of Leadership<sup>+</sup>, IPPN has continued its advocacy and representative role on behalf of principals, through meetings, events and submissions in relation to the following:

### JANUARY

- Martina Hartford, The Educational Company of Ireland
- Prof. Brian MacCraith, President of Dublin City University
- Laya Healthcare Pendulum Summit, Dublin Convention Centre
- Principals of schools with Autism classes at the IPPN Support Office
- Shay Bannon, National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals

- Survey of Health and Wellbeing
- Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street
- Teaching Careers Fair, University College Cork
- IPPN Annual Principals' Conference – 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> January, Citywest Hotel and Convention Centre, Dublin.

### FEBRUARY

- Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street – Seán Ó Foghlú
- Launch of Child and Family Agency by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, TD and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald, TD – Dublin Castle

- Progress of the Development of a Primary Online Database (POD) – Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street
- Teaching Careers Fairs at
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Dublin
- National University of Ireland, Galway
- Marino Institute of Education.

### MARCH

- Principals Special Schools meeting – IPPN Support Office
- Teaching Careers Fair – University of Limerick.



Ms. Antoinette Brady, Bohermeen National School



My  
Advice

With the  
right support  
you can handle  
any challenge.

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