

Budget 2024 - Some gains but missed opportunities to support school leadership (Oct 2023)

Budget 2024 is a mixture of some gains and significant frustration at the missed opportunity to more adequately support school leadership.

As you'll recall, [IPPN's Budget 2024 submission](#) focused on four key areas:

- **enhancing leadership capacity** in schools
- the resourcing of schools to meet **SEN needs**
- the need for a **review of the current governance** structure
- the provision of **adequate funding** to schools.

There has been some progress in all four areas. There remains significant scope for further progress.

Enhanced Leadership

The announcement that all deputy principals in Special Schools will have administrative status is a welcome but long-overdue recognition of the acute challenges experienced by school leaders in such settings. While this should ensure greater leadership capacity within Special Schools, the failure to restore and expand the provision for 'release' time for deputy principals in all schools, not only undermines leadership capacity, but also compromises leadership effectiveness and leadership sustainability. School leaders are being expected to lead their schools with at least one hand, if not both hands, tied behind their backs. No detail has yet been provided with regard to the €4m '*made available to provide additional posts of responsibility in 2024*'.

Special Education

IPPN's position paper on SEN Allocations, Resources & Appeals emphasises the crucial importance of the accurate and adequate allocation of resources to schools to meet additional needs. It also recognises the key role that SENOs have to play in such a process, to ensure intimate familiarity with the evolving complex needs' profiles of schools. In this context, IPPN welcomes the announcement in the Budget of the additional teaching and SNA posts to support inclusion as well as the related announcement of a national recruitment campaign for SENOs. It remains to be seen if such measures will impact positively on the allocations to schools when schools are re-profiled in the spring.

Governance

Central to IPPN's submission on the issue of school governance was a call for a review of the existing Board of Management governance structure. You may recall that when the Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2023-27 was published three weeks ago, the Minister referred to such a process of review in her foreword as follows - "*The Primary Education Forum offers a platform for discussion with our partners as to what the future governance arrangements for schools might look like. This platform also offers an opportunity to consider how in future boards might be supported and strengthened in their key governance role in schools. I am also*

conscious of the small school's project, which may offer some insight and ideas for this purpose. It's a conversation that can provide real benefits to Boards in exploring areas such as shared governance arrangements or the future composition of boards, mindful of the pressures on volunteerism in today's society." As stated previously, IPPN looks forward to working with the other members of the Primary Education Forum to progress this important piece of work, in the best interests of schools.

School Funding

Finally, IPPN collaborated with the management bodies and other education partners to secure enhanced funding by way of capitation to schools. On 22nd September, organisations representing children, parents, teachers and primary school managers wrote to the Minister to highlight our shared concerns in this regard. IPPN notes the €60m once-off capitation funding and the €21m core capitation funding announced in the budget and that the combined €81m funding is less than the once-off funding of €90m announced in last year's budget. All increases to capitation funding should be placed on a permanent footing, and IPPN reiterates the call for the basic capitation rate to be increased to €275 per pupil.

IPPN will continue to seek progress on all our established priorities.