

## Making Your Role More Doable

The purpose of this member communication is to ensure that you are kept informed with regard to the focus of IPPN's advocacy work and to what has been happening in terms of progress and developments in relation to:

1. Making your role more doable
2. Meeting Special Education Needs
3. School Funding
4. Extension of the Small Schools Action Research Project
5. Administrative Status for Deputy Principals in Special Schools.

### Making your role more doable

In keeping with our core purpose of enhancing leadership capacity, effectiveness and sustainability, a key focus for IPPN's advocacy work has been to seek progress on the implementation of the recommendations in the [Sustainable Leadership report](#).

IPPN published its progress report on the project in November, which can be accessed [here](#). This detailed all of the actions that had been taken to that point and was shared with all members and stakeholders.

At the IPPN/NAPD symposium on education and leadership in January, the DE acknowledged that it accepted the data and analysis with regard to the unsustainability of school leadership roles and that the focus now needed to move to actions and solutions.

To that end, IPPN proposed **specific actions** in the following areas:

- achieving greater role clarity
- ensuring increased time for leadership
- ensuring greater capacity to share leadership
- enhancing school governance structures.

IPPN has met with DE officials in March and April to progress these proposals which will also form the basis of our Budget 2025 submission. ***Prioritised within those proposals is an increased allocation of leadership and management time to schools based on the size of the school.*** The current approach to allocating leadership time to primary schools lacks flexibility and is characterised by thresholds and cliff edges. IPPN believes that a graduated, more nuanced approach is urgently needed.

### Meeting Special Education Needs

IPPN supports the principle of ensuring effective equal access to quality inclusive education for all learners. Such inclusion must be planned for, supported and adequately resourced by all relevant services. IPPN has consistently stated that special needs are either met or they are not and, if not, there is a consequential impact not only on the child with special needs, but also on the other children in the class.

IPPN's focus has been to ensure that schools are allocated sufficient teaching resources to better ensure that they can meet the needs of all children and that those resources are distributed fairly and equitably. Children with the greatest level of need should receive the greatest level of support.

IPPN understands the anger and frustration of schools where the allocation of SET hours received was not in keeping with the needs of the school. Some improvements to the

allocations model were made in relation to the use of a more accurate data set, a commitment to move towards schools declaring the level of resources they require and the recruitment of more SENOs. ***However, there is clearly some way to travel before the confidence of school leaders in the accuracy of allocations, and in the methodology used to calculate them, is achieved.***

***Central to achieving this will be increased investment in SEN.*** If the level of resources made available within the system is dictated by budgetary constraints, then it cannot be claimed that special education educational needs are fully met. It can merely be asserted that special educational need is met only to the level allowed by the budget allocated for it. This will remain a focus for IPPN's advocacy work in the area of SEN and will also be a key feature of our Budget 2025 submission.

### **School Funding**

While recognising that the funding of schools is clearly an issue for the management bodies, and that IPPN's focus is on leadership effectiveness, school effectiveness and better outcomes for children, the lines inevitably get blurred. All stakeholders agree that primary schools are not adequately funded.

In its pre-budget submission for Budget 2021, the Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA) cited research undertaken by Grant Thornton in 2018 which "shows that the capitation grant which is meant to pay for the day to day running costs of schools and the provision of educational materials, on average covers just over half of school running costs." Inflationary pressures and significant increases in the cost of utilities mean that the situation has worsened since then.

School leaders report significant cash flow issues caused by the manner and timing of how grants are paid, as well as heightened levels of stress at having to find ways of stretching and supplementing budgets. The recent Ancillary Services grant issues have added to this stress. While these are matters for Boards of Management to address, school leaders are the ones who are living it on a daily basis.

***IPPN fully supports the calls by our fellow education partners for enhanced funding for capitation and ancillary services, in line with funding provided to post-primary schools.*** Some progress was made in this regard in last October's budget, however, all increases to capitation funding should be placed on a permanent basis and IPPN reiterates the call for the basic capitation rate to be increased to €275 per pupil.

### **Extension of the Small Schools Action Research Project**

The Small Schools Action Research Project has been running since January 2022, with innovative ideas and practices being trialled and shared. The project was due to conclude in June 2024. IPPN lobbied for the extension, or a second phase, of the project to be sanctioned to allow for further development of the work of the clusters and for the learnings to be shared with all schools. ***The DE last week sanctioned a second phase of the project to run to June 2026.***

### ***Innovative practices that have been trialled to date include***

- combining SET hours and Principal release days to form posts/clusters
- creation of an Administrative Officer role to support the schools in a cluster
- collaborative planning and policy development across the clusters

- clustered provision of CPD, including secretarial training
- enhancing student participation through shared events.

### **Administrative Status for Deputy Principals in Special Schools**

[Circular 0028/2024](#) confirmed that deputy principals in nearly all special schools would have administrative status from September 2024. This recognises the specific and onerous leadership and management challenges that exist within the special school sector. IPPN is happy to work with Oide to support principals and deputy principals in special schools to derive the greatest benefit from this additional leadership capacity.

IPPN will continue to work and advocate on your behalf to progress these and other issues, in the best interests of schools, school leaders and children.

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