



Contents

roreword	∠
Introduction	3
Approach Summary	3
Clarifying Our Identity	4
Who We Are	4
What We Do	4
How We Do It	4
Why We Do It	4
Refreshing Our Vision And Mission	5
Vision	5
Mission	5
Honouring Our Values	5
Framing The Reality	6
The Reality: What The Research Tells Us	6
The Challenge: What Leadership Needs to Flourish	6
The Progress: Signs of Growing System Awareness	7
The Strategic Response: What IPPN Must Now Do	7
Strategic Theme	8
Leading for Impact	8
Stratogic Framowork Structure	Ω

Pillar 1 - Supporting For Impact	9
Goals	9
Goal 1.1	9
Goal 1.2	10
Pillar 2 - Communicating For Impact	11
Goals	11
Goal 2.1	11
Goal 2.2	12
Pillar 3 - Collaborating For Impact	13
Goals	13
Goal 3.1	13
Goal 3.2	14
Pillar 4 - Evolving For Impact	15
Goals	15
Goal 4.1	15
Goal 4.2	16
Implementation Prioritisation and Timeline	17
Strategic Enablers	18
Budgetary Considerations	18
Bringing the Strategic Framework Together19	
Looking Ahead	20



Foreword

2025 has been a significant year for the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN). The organisation's 25th anniversary has provided an opportunity for us to reflect on the achievements of the past, to re-imagine how our organisation can respond to and support the current and emerging needs of over 6,000 school leaders and to renew our commitment to shaping educational policy, practice and priorities into the future.

Much of the work of re-imagining and renewing has been undertaken through a robust process of developing *Leading for Impact - IPPN's Strategic Plan 2026-2030*. In keeping with IPPN's collaborative and solution-based approach to the work it does, input was sought from members and both internal and external stakeholders. The resulting strategy is based on the collective wisdom of school leaders, the considered feedback of respected stakeholders and both national and international research.

Leading for Impact - IPPN's Strategic Plan 2026-2030 provides clarity around who we are, what we do, how we do it and why we do it. At this pivotal time in Irish education, it is vitally important that we are ready as an organisation to continue leading for impact by supporting, communicating, collaborating and evolving.

In challenging ourselves to deliver on the ambitious strategic objectives in this plan, IPPN aims to collaborate with our members and the wider education system to provide an environment in which school leaders can flourish in their roles and lead vibrant schools ensuring improved outcomes for the children we serve. We will have an opportunity to showcase what is possible when IPPN hosts the European School Heads Association (ESHA) Biennial Conference in November 2027. Ireland's commitment to supporting and empowering school leadership will be shared with both European and

worldwide leadership organisations and education systems attending that conference.

During this special year for IPPN, we are delighted to welcome the publication of a carefully considered strategic approach that will guide and direct our work over the next five years. We extend our sincere thanks to everyone involved in the development of Leading for Impact – IPPN's Strategic Plan 2026-2030 and we acknowledge in particular the time, effort and commitment of IPPN's Deputy CEO, Brian O'Doherty and of Róisín Coughlan and her colleagues at Mantra Strategy.

IPPN is the officially recognised professional network for Irish primary school leaders. We take the responsibility of that position seriously, and we are confident that this strategic plan will enable us to remain faithful to the values of our founding members as we evolve and respond to a changing leadership landscape - Because leadership matters.



Catríona O'Reilly
Chair of the Board of Directors



This strategic plan sets out IPPN's renewed direction and priorities for the coming years. It builds on two decades of growth and impact, responding to the evolving needs of school leadership and the changing context of primary education in Ireland. The strategy is the result of a comprehensive, evidence-informed process, grounded in the lived experience of school leaders, enriched by extensive stakeholder engagement, and informed by national and international research. It reflects a shared ambition for what leadership in Irish primary education can become and the role IPPN must play in enabling it.

APPROACH SUMMARY

The strategic planning process followed a structured, evidence-informed methodology rooted in design thinking and positive psychology. It was built to maximise insight, balance aspiration with realism, and ensure genuine engagement across the education ecosystem. Over five distinct phases; Discover, Reflect, Engage, Align, and Mobilise (DREAM), the process combined system analysis, internal and external review, and extensive stakeholder engagement.

During the Discover phase, input was gathered from a wide range of stakeholders across the education system, with contributions from school leaders, staff, Board and Council members, and external partners such as the Department of Education, NCSE, NCCA, Oide, INTO, the National Parents' Council, and the Ombudsman

for Children. Engagement methods included a national member survey with 757 responses, 25 one-to-one interviews, regional workshops with members, and dedicated engagements with staff, Board, and Council.

This breadth and depth of consultation ensured that the strategic direction reflects not just the organisation's internal priorities, but the wider context in which leadership operates. These inputs were layered with organisational analysis, trend scanning, and scenario thinking to ensure IPPN's strategy is not only grounded in lived experience but also future-ready. The resulting strategy reflects collective insight, practical wisdom, and a shared ambition for what leadership in Irish primary education can become.

Clarifying Our Identity

As IPPN marks 25 years since its founding, it is timely to reflect on how its identity has evolved. While the organisation has grown significantly in reach, influence and impact, a degree of confusion has emerged about what IPPN is and is not. This strategy process provided an important opportunity to revisit and clarify IPPN's core identity. By reaffirming who we are, what we do, why we exist, and how we work, IPPN is better positioned to communicate its purpose, align its work, and ensure that its role is clearly understood by members, stakeholders and the wider education sector.

Who We Are

IPPN is the officially recognised professional network for primary school leaders in Ireland.

We connect, support and empower school leaders by harnessing the collective experience and wisdom of the network to enhance school leadership practice and deliver better outcomes for children, schools, communities, and the wider education system.

What We Do

IPPN works to support and strengthen the leadership of Ireland's primary schools and contribute to shaping education policy and practice.

How We Do It

- We connect school leaders through a trusted national network to share experience, insight and support
- We listen carefully to the challenges and priorities of school leaders across all contexts
- We provide practical supports and services to develop and enhance school leadership practice
- We communicate to keep school leaders informed and offer clarity, guidance and shared learning to support their leadership

- We carry out targeted advocacy grounded in the professional insight of school leaders
- We collaborate with education partners to help shape policy, practice and system priorities.

Why We Do It

Impactful school leadership transforms the lives of children by enhancing their experience of school, the culture of learning, and the quality of education in Ireland.

All evidence confirms that school leadership is a key determinant of improved outcomes for children and school communities.



Refreshing Our Vision And Mission

As part of this strategy process, IPPN has developed new statements of vision and mission to better reflect its purpose, values and future direction. The new vision and mission statements are the result of deep reflection and robust consultation.

Vision

The quality of a child's experience in primary school is deeply shaped by the leadership of their school. Therefore we are working towards a future where every school leader is empowered and supported to help all children thrive.

Our vision is:

Empowered school leadership helping every child to thrive.

Mission

Our mission is:

To create the environment in which school leadership can flourish.

We create this environment through support, communication and collaboration.

Honouring Our Values

IPPN's values represent the spirit and ethos of the organisation. They speak to the reality and aspiration of school leadership, how relationships are built, and what ultimately matters most in the work of school leaders.

These values are intentionally grounded in IPPN's legacy. Is d'aon ghnó a úsáidtear na focail i nGaeilge - aithníonn sé ról na gairme i gcaomhnú agus i gcur chun cinn na teanga.

- Misneach (Courage): We understand and value the steadfast courage it takes to lead every day.
- Tacaiocht (Support): We recognise that support is fundamental to how we connect and collaborate as a network of school leaders.
- Spreagadh (Inspiration): We are inspired by and seek to inspire leadership that positively impacts children, schools and the communities that they serve.

The use of the words in Irish is deliberate; it acknowledges the profession's role in preserving and promoting the language.



Framing the Reality

This strategy has been developed in the context of significant strain on school leadership in Ireland. The demands placed on school leaders have increased dramatically, while the time, resources and system supports available have not kept pace. The sustainability of the leadership model is now in question, with serious implications for recruitment, retention and, ultimately, outcomes for children.

The Reality: What the Research Tells Us

IPPN's national research and international reports highlight a growing crisis in primary school leadership:

- 54% of mainstream school principals have only one day per week for leadership
- 98% of deputy principals have no leadership time at all
- Teaching principals rate the sustainability of their role at 2.88 out of 10
- 97% of principals identify excessive nonteaching workload as a major issue
- Primary leaders' health scores are double the negative average of the working population
- **54%** fall into high or severe burnout categories
- 88% of deputy principals say they would not apply for a principalship.

Internationally, the 2024/25 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report reinforces this picture and identifies the transformative potential of school leadership on school communities and the lived experience of children, whilst warning that its impact is increasingly undermined by administrative and bureaucratic overload.

The Challenge: What Leadership Needs to Flourish

Leadership in primary schools will only flourish when:

- There is clarity about the core purpose and focus of the leadership role
- Leaders have sufficient time allocated to carry out that work
- Structures and resources are in place to support leadership practice
- Leadership can be shared meaningfully within school teams
- The role is sustainable and does not come at the cost of leaders' health and wellbeing.



The Progress: Signs of Growing System Awareness

There is a growing recognition across the system of the realities of school leadership and what's needed to support it. This is reflected in:

- Acknowledgement of the validity of the research data and analysis
- Acceptance that the current leadership model is untenable
- Recognition of the personal impact on school leaders' health and wellbeing
- Broad agreement on the need for system-level action
- Piloting of administrative support roles
- Recognition of the importance of dedicated leadership time to deliver on system priorities.

This marks a shift in system understanding, which is an important foundation to build on for the structural changes that are now needed to sustain and strengthen school leadership.

The Strategic Response: What IPPN Must Now Do

In light of this progress, IPPN's strategic focus must now centre on four key areas:

- Supporting school leadership practice to enhance its impact and long-term sustainability
- Communicating the extent to which current challenges constrain leadership and compromise outcomes for children
- Collaborating to build a coalition of support for practical, system-level improvements
- 4. Evolving the organisation's structures and roles to ensure the capacity to deliver on the mission.

These imperatives form the basis of our strategic theme and direction.





Strategic Theme

Leading for Impact

Leading for Impact is the central theme of this strategy. It reflects IPPN's belief that empowered and supported leadership is key to better outcomes for children, stronger school communities, and a more sustainable school leadership profession.

To realise this impact, leadership must be recognised, enabled and resourced across the education system. This strategy sets out how IPPN will contribute to that goal by supporting leadership practice, communicating insight and challenge, collaborating for practical change, and evolving its own structures to lead by example.

Strategic Framework Structure

The following section sets out the four strategic pillars that will guide IPPN's work over the lifetime of this strategy. Each pillar is supported by clear goals, specific strategic actions, and measurable indicators of progress. This structure is designed to provide focus, ensure accountability, and support implementation over time.

Pillar 1 Supporting for Impact

IPPN is committed to empowering school leaders to lead confidently and with impact because this changes what is possible for children, schools and communities.

Goals

Based on this strategic intent, IPPN has identified the following goals to guide this area of work:

- 1.1 To ensure school leaders have access to supports, services, tools and resources that enhance their leadership practice and role sustainability.
- 1.2 To support aspiring and emerging leaders in their preparation for leadership.

Strategic Actions & Metrics

Each goal is supported by a set of strategic actions and measurable outcomes to track progress and impact over time.

Goal 1.1

To ensure school leaders have access to supports, services, tools and resources that enhance their leadership practice and role sustainability:

Ref	Strategic Actions We Will Take	How We Will Track Progress
1.1.1	Continue to provide high-quality supports and services	Annual reporting on service quality, uptake and outcomes; yearly member pulse surveys on relevance and impact
1.1.2	Identify, develop and promote tools that enhance leadership practice	Number of tools developed tracked; member engagement rate assessed
1.1.3	Ensure readily available access to relevant and up-to-date resources	Quarterly review of website resources; website analytics of utilisation
1.1.4	Develop new ways of facilitating peer-to-peer sharing of experience and ideas	Expansion of <i>Leaders Supporting Leaders</i> website area tracked
1.1.5	Increase promotion of peer-to-peer sharing experiences	Types/frequency of promotion reviewed; website analytics of utilisation
1.1.6	Evolve the <i>Stepping into Leadership</i> programme in response to emerging needs	Yearly Newly Appointed School Leaders pulse surveys to assess relevance and impact of Stepping into Leadership
1.1.7	Undertake a systematic review of each support/service to ensure quality and impact	Review complete with update and improvement plan in place





Goal 1.2To support aspiring and emerging leaders in their preparation for leadership.

Ref	Strategic Actions We Will Take	How We Will Track Progress
1.2.1	Develop a dedicated section of the website for aspiring and emerging leaders	Content agreed; section developed; utilisation tracked via website analytics
1.2.2	Develop and implement a <i>Prepare and Dare to Lead</i> campaign targeted at aspiring leaders	Campaign elements developed and implemented; impact assessed through engagement data and feedback
1.2.3	Collaborate to develop the concept of a Leadership Portfolio for use by emerging leaders	Prototype developed and trialled; relevance and impact evaluated
1.2.4	Promote leadership pathways and provide targeted initiatives to increase the number of aspiring leaders seeking senior leadership roles	No. of initiatives. Application trends monitored via portal data; qualitative insights gathered from prospective leaders



Pillar 2 Communicating for Impact

IPPN harnesses the power of its network to articulate the real experience and professional insight of school leaders in order to shape educational policy, practice and priorities.

Goals

In line with this strategic intent, IPPN has identified the following goals to guide its work under this pillar

- 2.1 To promote and channel the collective experience and insight of school leaders to inform practice, shape policy and influence the sustainable implementation of system priorities.
- 2.2 To provide evidence-informed communications to members, stakeholders and the wider public about key issues, sectoral developments and organisational priorities.

Strategic Actions & Metrics

Each goal is supported by a set of strategic actions and measurable outcomes to track progress and impact over time.

Goal 2.1

To promote and channel the collective experience and insight of school leaders to inform practice, shape policy and influence the sustainable implementation of system priorities

Ref	Strategic Actions We Will Take	How We Will Track Progress
2.1.1	Ensure that all advocacy is strategic, evidence-informed and aligned with the organisation's mission and priorities	Submissions and position papers aligned with mission; advocacy impact assessed
2.1.2	Ground advocacy in the collective professional experience of school leaders and credible research	Frequency of use and impact of member surveys / focus groups assessed Issues identified by LST, Networking and advocacy emails logged and tracked
2.1.3	Maintain momentum on and evolve the Sustainable Leadership project	Progress against report recommendations tracked and reported
2.1.4	Advance proposals for enhanced governance structures in schools	Proposals developed in consultation with stakeholders; progress on implementation monitored
2.1.5	Collaborate with researchers and academic partners to strengthen the evidence base	Research partnerships established; projects completed, and findings applied



Goal 2.2

To provide evidence-informed communications to members, stakeholders and the wider public about key issues, sectoral developments and organisational priorities.

Ref	Strategic Actions We Will Take	How We Will Track Progress
2.2.1	Communicate key messages, priorities and sectoral developments with clarity, consistency and accuracy	Core messaging framework established and applied Impact of messaging evaluated
2.2.2	Develop, implement and review the relevance and impact of the organisation's Member Engagement, Communications and Media strategies	Development of each strategy completed Effectiveness monitored through usage data and engagement metrics
2.2.3	Use a range of formats and platforms to reach members and stakeholders effectively	Different media trialled, engagement tracked to determine effectiveness
2.2.4	Produce and promote <i>Leading for Impact</i> podcasts	Podcast series recorded Member engagement with series evaluated, Downloads, feedback and reach analytics



Pillar 3 Collaborating for Impact

IPPN builds strategic partnerships and coalitions of support to strengthen school leadership, to impact on the work of schools and to ultimately deliver better outcomes for all children.

Goals

In line with this strategic intent, IPPN has identified the following goals to guide its work under this pillar:

- 3.1 To nurture and develop key partnerships that support the achievement of strategic objectives.
- 3.2 To work collaboratively across the education sector to address shared challenges, deliver impact and improve outcomes.

Strategic Actions & Metrics

Each goal is supported by a set of strategic actions and measurable outcomes to track progress and impact over time.

Goal 3.1

To nurture and develop key partnerships that support the achievement of strategic objectives.

Ref	Strategic Actions We Will Take	How We Will Track Progress
3.1.1	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	Shared priorities established
	and collective action with key partners/leadership organisations	Co-ordinated action delivered
		Impact assessed
3.1.2	Coordinate shared policy positions and joint submissions	Policy positions established
	with key partners on issues of mutual relevance/concern	Joint submissions made
		Impact assessed
3.1.3	Work in partnership with Oide to support the ongoing evolution and delivery of high-quality professional development for school leaders	Relevance, uptake and quality evaluated through participant feedback
3.1.4	Collaborate on research with key partners and leadership organisations	Research priorities agreed; projects completed, and outcomes reviewed
3.1.5	Co-host working groups/roundtables to explore shared priorities and solutions	Working groups/roundtables convened
		Number and relevance of events held tracked; impact of outputs assessed





Goal 3.2To work collaboratively across the education sector to address shared challenges, deliver impact and improve outcomes.

Ref	Strategic Actions We Will Take	How We Will Track Progress
3.2.1	Engage constructively with national stakeholders, key agencies and international leadership organisations	Shared priorities agreed Coordinated actions delivered Impact assessed
3.2.2	Coordinate joint submissions with other stakeholders on issues of mutual relevance/concern	Joint submissions made Impact of submissions assessed
3.2.3	Promote/facilitate the piloting of regional/localised collaborative initiatives	Initiatives identified Initiatives piloted Impact of initiatives assessed

Pillar 4 Evolving for Impact

IPPN continues to evolve its structures, operations and governance to strengthen organisational capacity, uphold credibility and remain a trusted voice in Irish education.

Goals

In line with this strategic intent, IPPN has identified the following goals to guide its work under this pillar:

- 4.1 To ensure that optimal structures, processes, skillsets and leadership capacity are in place to deliver the organisation's mission into the future.
- 4.2 To ensure that all elements of the organisation's activities are aligned in service of mission.

Strategic Actions & Metrics

Each goal is supported by a set of strategic actions and measurable outcomes to track progress and impact over time.

Goal 4.1

To ensure that optimal structures, processes, skillsets and leadership capacity are in place to deliver the organisation's mission into the future.

Ref	Strategic Actions We Will Take	How We Will Track Progress
4.1.1	Uphold the highest standards of governance and accountability across the organisation	Work of Governance & Risk Committee embedded and developed
		Further Independent Directors appointed
4.1.2	Complete a comprehensive organisational review covering	Review completed
	 Structure Roles Responsibilities Required capabilities/capacity Resource allocation 	Recommendations actioned and implementation monitored
	Succession planning	
	Culture Audit and planning	
	Decision-making structures	
4.1.3	Provide staff with high quality induction and targeted professional development opportunities.	Induction of new staff completed Programme of CPD delivered to staff Leadership-specific supports provided where relevant



Goal 4.2

To ensure that all elements of the organisation's activities are aligned in service of mission

Ref	Strategic Actions We Will Take	How We Will Track Progress
4.2.1	Define strategic purpose of commercial services to align income generation with mission delivery	Organisational restructuring addressed
		Existing commercial activity refined
		New commercial opportunities identified and explored
4.2.2	Advance IT and digital development to enhance member experience, organisational oversight and operational efficiencies.	Digital tools and technologies embedded; improvements in efficiency and experience measured
4.2.3	Strengthen brand identity and ensure messaging consistency across communications	Brand and messaging guidelines applied across platforms; consistency and clarity reviewed
4.2.4	Ensure organisational culture remains a priority area of focus by embedding shared values into recruitment, development, internal communications and daily ways of working	Values actively reflected in staff onboarding, team learning, team meetings, and decision-making processes; annual culture pulse survey introduced to assess alignment; value check in for Board/Staff twice yearly



Implementation Prioritisation and Timeline

To guide the delivery of this strategy, each goal has been assigned a level of strategic priority over the fiveyear period. Goals are categorised as either primary or secondary areas of focus within a given year:

- Primary areas require more immediate, sustained focus and resource allocation
- Secondary areas remain important but may be sequenced for later emphasis or require less intensive input at specific points in time

Some goals will be prioritised early (Years 1-3) and move into a maintenance or secondary phase once key elements are embedded. Others may become more prominent in later years or as organisational capacity grows. This flexible approach ensures that the strategy remains responsive, deliverable, and aligned with IPPN's evolving context and resources.

Strategic Prioritisation Timeline 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 **PILLAR 1: SUPPORTING FOR IMPACT** 1.1 To ensure school leaders have access to the supports, services, tools and resources that will enhance their leadership practice and role sustainability 1.2 To assist aspiring and emerging leaders in their preparation for leadership **PILLAR 2: COMMUNICATING FOR IMPACT** 2.1 To promote and channel the collective experience and insight of school leaders to inform practice, shape policy and influence the sustainable implementation of system priorities 2.2 To provide evidence informed communications to members, stakeholders and the wider public about key issues, sectoral developments and organisational priorities **PILLAR 3: COLLABORATING FOR IMPACT** 3.1 To nurture and develop key partnerships that support the achievement of strategic objectives 3.2 To work collaboratively across the education sector to address shared challenges, deliver impact and improve outcomes **PILLAR 4: EVOLVING FOR IMPACT** 4.1 To ensure the optimal structures, processes, skillsets and leadership capacity are in place in order to deliver the organisation's mission into the future 4.2 To ensure that all elements of the organisation's activities are aligned in service of mission.



PRIMARY STRATEGIC FOCUS
SECONDARY STRATEGIC FOCUS

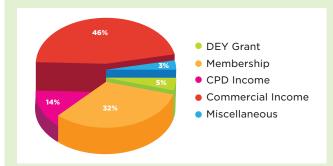
Strategic Enablers

In order to deliver on this strategic plan, the right conditions and strong foundations must be in place to enable progress and to support and sustain delivery. These strategic enablers ensure unity of purpose, responsiveness to evolving circumstances and the capacity to deliver lasting impact:

- Robust governance ensuring oversight, transparency and accountability
- Strong, impactful and empowered organisational leadership
- Committed and mission-aligned staff team
- Relevant skillset and staff capacity to respond to evolving need
- Prudent financial management
- Focused and aligned activity that is evidence-informed
- Organisational and logistical infrastructure to support delivery

BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

- As a not-for-profit for purpose organisation, IPPN operates on a largely break-even basis with marginal deficits and surpluses being reported in recent years
- The organisation maintains financial reserves to ensure continuity of operations in the event of any disruption to income streams
- Breakdown of Income Profile



Projected Expenditure

- An approximate increase of 4% per year in charitable and operational expenditure is assumed
- Over the lifetime of the strategic plan, this constitutes a cumulative increase

of approximately 20% in operational expenditure

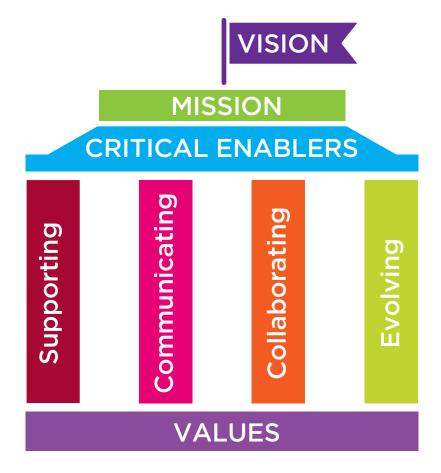
Sustainability Approach

While ongoing efforts will continue to ensure cost efficiency, with ongoing regular financial reviews conducted to monitor spending and evolving circumstances, the increased operational cost will need to be offset.

This can be done by:

- Expanding existing and developing new commercial income streams
- Identifying and securing new sources of funding
- Increasing membership fees
- Identifying areas for cost reduction
- A combination of all of the above
- IPPN's strategic objectives, and the capacity and resources required to deliver them, must be considered and progressed in the context of the budgetary position and these assumptions.

Bringing the Strategic Framework Together



This visual framework illustrates how IPPN's strategy is structured, connected, and aligned. At its foundation lie IPPN's core values (*Misneach, Tacaíocht and Spreagadh*) which underpin all aspects of the organisation's work. These values are the bedrock on which everything rests, providing strong, stable support for action and direction.

Rising from this foundation are the four Strategic Pillars (Supporting, Communicating, Collaborating, and Evolving for Impact). These pillars represent the key areas through which IPPN will deliver on its ambitions over the next five years.

Covering and protecting this work are the Critical Enablers which include organisational systems, structures, capacity, and funding needed to ensure the strategy is delivered effectively. Above this, the Mission acts as the strategic engine, articulating how IPPN will work towards creating the environment in which school leadership can thrive.

At the very top, the Vision flies like a flag representing a unifying sense of direction and purpose. It is why IPPN exists: to ensure that in our schools there is empowered leadership helping every child to thrive.





Looking Ahead

This strategy sets a clear and deliberate course for IPPN which is grounded in the realities of school leadership, informed by research and lived experience, and shaped by a shared ambition to lead for impact. It reflects both continuity and renewal: reaffirming IPPN's core purpose while adapting to meet the demands of a changing system. Its success will depend on disciplined implementation, ongoing engagement with members and stakeholders, and a willingness to evolve as new challenges and opportunities emerge.





Company Registration No: 410096 Registered Charity No: 20063634

CHY: 17221

Contact Us

The IPPN Support Office

Richmond

Glanmire

Co Cork

T45 P406

Freephone: 1800 21 22 23

Email: info@ippn.ie

Follow Us





