

IPPN Budget 2027 Submission

The focus of our budget submission is on enhancing leadership and school effectiveness and achieving better outcomes for children. IPPN's budgetary priorities for 2027 can be summarised as follows:

Give school leaders time to lead

Nearly half of all primary school principals teach four out of the five days in a school week and more than 95% of primary school deputy principals have full-time teaching duties. This lack of discrete leadership time compromises both leadership and school effectiveness given the extent of their leadership and management accountabilities, outlined in IPPN's research publication (see link in Appendix I). It should also be noted that the approach taken to the allocation of leadership time in primary schools is in marked contrast to the approach taken to the allocation of leadership time in post-primary schools.

The rollout of the Revised Primary Curriculum Framework will formally begin this September. Over the course of the next 6 years, the State will invest significant funds to support the implementation of the curriculum in schools. The lack of discrete time for leadership will significantly reduce the effectiveness of this implementation and the impact of the State's investment will be less than intended. Accordingly, allocating increased time for leadership in primary schools must be a priority. IPPN recommends that in each of these 6 years, every school be allocated six additional leadership and management days. These additional leadership and management days can be availed of by the person best placed in the school to lead the specific curriculum enactment work prioritised by the school.

Resource Special Education Needs Provision

Special Education resourcing is not keeping pace with the number of children with additional needs in our schools. IPPN's research confirms that 31% of pupils require additional support from a Special Education Teacher through the Continuum of Support Model, far short of the 25% figure used by the DEY when determining Special Education Teacher allocations to schools. This means that there is a 22% deficit or a shortfall of 3000 SET posts within the system.

IPPN's research also shows that, on average, 23.4% of primary-age children have an identified care need requiring support from a Special Needs Assistant. The current definition of 'care needs' described in Circular 0030/2014 does not reflect the current reality and the spectrum of care needs presenting in classrooms. The Circular needs to be updated and SNA allocations need to be revised based on a more accurate assessment of the level of need in schools.

67% of those who co-ordinate special education provision in our schools have no leadership time. To empower schools to implement and embed best practices in inclusion, formalise the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) role and provide leadership and management time to undertake this important work. See research on the SENCO role in Appendix II.

Sufficient investment is required to ensure that every child with additional needs has access to an appropriate school placement and to the therapies, equipment, resources and supports they need to achieve their potential, alongside their peers. IPPN acknowledges the rollout of supports to Special Schools. The rollout now needs to be speedily expanded to all schools.

Enhance supports for children experiencing disadvantage

IPPN acknowledges the significant investment and the targeted supports to be provided through the DEIS Plus scheme. IPPN further acknowledges the recent announcement of the assignment of Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing coordinators within schools in the DEIS Plus scheme and the plan to pilot the assignment of home school community liaison coordinators in some Rural DEIS and Non-DEIS schools.

Building on those targeted supports, IPPN calls for:

- a) the extension of the Education Therapy Service, currently available to schools in the pilot project and to Special Schools, initially to DEIS Plus schools, then to those in DEIS1, DEIS2 and DEIS Rural
- b) funding and classroom space to implement trauma-informed practices and interventions
- c) prompt implementation of the recommendations from the pilot project on HSCL supports in Rural DEIS schools.

Increase Grant Funding

The Minister has acknowledged that there is a structural funding deficit in education. She has committed to *'making sure that schools and teachers were adequately resourced'* and that her *'department was properly funded to do that.'*

To better ensure that this is the case, IPPN proposes that capitation funding be increased in all primary schools to €350 per pupil to enable schools to meet running costs without resorting to debt or local fundraising. In addition, sufficient ancillary funding must be provided to enable schools to pay for caretaking services.