





IPPN Submission Budget 2027

Prepared for:

- the Minister for Education & Youth
- the Minister for Finance
- the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Services Reform and Digitalisation
- the Secretary General of the Department of Education



Table of Contents

Summary of Proposals	4
<hr/>	
Appendix I - Additional Information	8
■ Give school leaders time to lead	6
■ Fully resource Special Education Needs provision	8
■ Enhance supports for children experiencing disadvantage	9
<hr/>	
Appendix II - Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) Role	11



Summary of Proposals

IPPN is the Network for Principals and Deputy Principals of Ireland's 3,200+ primary schools. IPPN is recognised by the Minister for Education as an official Education Partner and works with the Department, management bodies, unions, education agencies, and other key stakeholders to advance primary education.

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.

It is deeply disappointing that an allocation of discrete time has not been prioritised as a key support from the outset of the enactment process. School leaders are being asked to lead a very important and complex change management process without being given any additional capacity to do so. Leadership is the key lever in the success of any implementation

process. It merits prioritisation for inclusion in the suite of supports that are offered from the very outset of the process.

Allocating increased time for leadership in primary schools must be a priority for the 2027/28 school year. IPPN recommends that in each of the remaining years of curriculum enactment period, 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.

Primary school leaders consistently report that the leadership of teaching and learning is starved of attention by the myriad other responsibilities that fall to them and make such significant demands on their leadership time. An ongoing failure to prioritise an allocation of leadership time to support curriculum enactment will do nothing to alter that reality.

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.

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.



Appendix I – Additional Information

Give school leaders time to lead

There is at this stage an inextricable link between leadership effectiveness and pupil outcomes. IPPN's research, published in November 2022 in *Primary School Leadership: The Case for Urgent Action - A Roadmap to Sustainability* conclusively demonstrates that primary school leaders are consistently diverted from focusing on teaching and learning because of the breadth of their workload and responsibilities. We should be genuinely concerned about the impact on their effectiveness as this has real and measurable consequences for children.

UNESCO's 2024 Global Education Monitoring 2024 report identifies this very dynamic and concludes that school leaders in Ireland have insufficient time to focus on the leadership of teaching and learning, which compromises the quality of that teaching and learning.

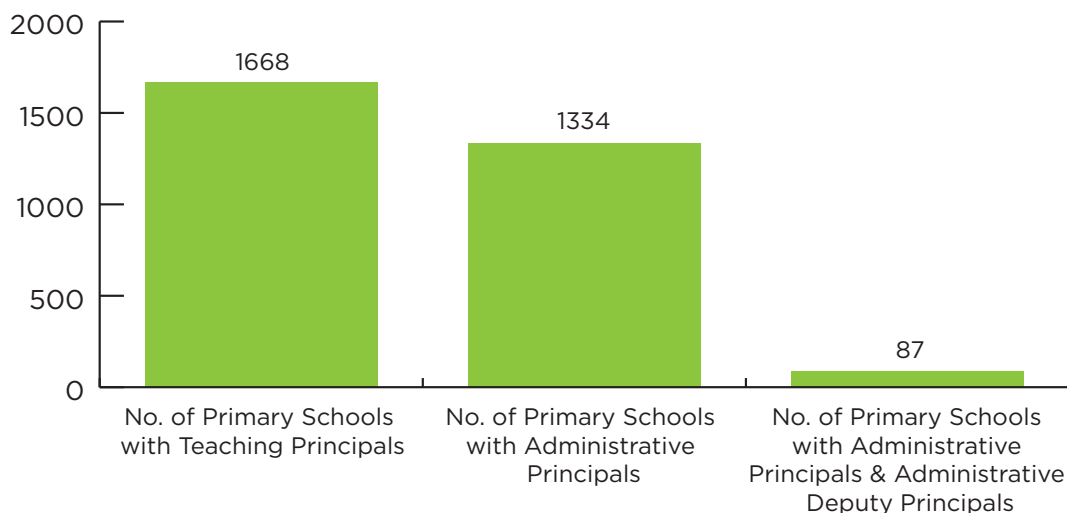
For this reason, at the Primary Education Forum meeting in March 2025, all of the education stakeholders present supported IPPN's call for increased time for leadership.

Over the past 2-3 years, IPPN has made proposals to introduce a graduated approach to the provision

of discrete leadership time for principals and deputy principals in primary schools. In 2026, based on the learnings from the small schools' action research project (2022-2026), we have taken a different approach.

CURRENT APPROACH

The number of leadership and management (L&M) days that are allocated to primary schools is based on the number of pupils in the school, which then determines the status, teaching or administrative, of the principal and deputy principal.



54% of primary school principals teach four out of the five days in a school week.

more than 95% of primary school deputy principals have full-time teaching duties.

At post-primary level, a graduated approach is taken to increasing leadership time as pupil numbers increase. Increments are in 0.25 of a full-time post until such time as a full-time administrative post for the deputy principal is achieved. A post-primary school with 150 pupils has nearly six times more leadership time allocated to it than the equivalent sized primary school (208 v 37 leadership days).

There is an urgent need for an equivalent graduated approach to the allocation of leadership time to be used in primary schools. In the context of notable change in the primary sector, with the implementation of the revised Primary Curriculum Framework from September 2026, the provision of adequate leadership time is essential.

Over the course of the next 6 years, the State will invest significant funds to support the implementation of the curriculum in schools. **The current lack of leadership time in primary schools means that the**

implementation of the revised curriculum, and the State's investment, will be significantly less effective than it could and should be. To ensure the State gets value for money from its investment, allocating increased time for leadership in primary schools must be a priority. IPPN recommends that at a minimum, in each of these 6 years, every school be allocated six additional leadership and management days.

IPPN recommends that in each of the remaining years of curriculum enactment period, 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.

Primary school leaders consistently report that the leadership of teaching and learning is starved of attention by the myriad other responsibilities that fall to them and make such significant demands on their leadership time. An ongoing failure to prioritise an allocation of leadership time to support curriculum enactment will do nothing to alter that reality.





Fully resource Special Education Needs provision

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. It must also be based on up-to-date data that reflects the actual numbers presenting in schools who need support.

IPPN has consistently stated that additional 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 resources to better ensure that they can meet the needs of all children and that those resources are distributed fairly and equitably.

In this regard, 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 approximately 3000 SET posts within the system.

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, rather than the level of need that presents in schools, then special education educational need cannot be fully met. Special educational need is met only to the level allowed by the budget allocated for it.

PROPOSALS

1. Increase the State's investment in Special Education to keep pace with the actual number of children presenting with additional needs in our schools, to ensure that every child has access to an appropriate school placement and to the therapies, equipment, resources and supports they need to achieve their potential.
2. Formalise the Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) role that is informally in place in many schools and provide leadership and management time to undertake this important work.



Enhance supports for children experiencing disadvantage



IPPN commends the introduction of the DEIS Plus scheme, announced in March, which we advocated for over the past several years. It is heartening that it includes additional leadership time for both principals and deputy principals, as well as additional teachers for wellbeing/mental health and Home School Community Liaison work. It will be important to track the impact of these vital resources and supports on the children in these schools, so they can be extended to support all children experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

BUILDING ON SUPPORTS WITHIN THE DEIS PLUS SCHEME

Building on the targeted supports already provided within the DEIS Plus scheme, IPPN calls for

- the extension of the Education Therapy Service, currently available to schools in the pilot project and to Special Schools, initially to DEIS+ schools, then to DEIS1, DEIS2 and DEIS Rural
- funding and classroom space dedicated to implementing trauma-informed practices and interventions.

REVIEW THE ELIGIBILITY OF RURAL DEIS SCHOOLS FOR INCLUSION IN THE DEIS PLUS SCHEME

IPPN recommends that research be carried out to look specifically at the challenges faced by schools in the Rural DEIS category. School leaders in that sector have expressed a keen sense of exclusion from the review process and believe that many of their schools meet the criteria for DEIS Plus. It needs to be ascertained whether this is the case and, if so, the same supports need to be made available to them. IPPN welcomes the pilot project providing HSCL support to Rural DEIS schools and seeks prompt

implementation of the recommendations from the project to support all Rural DEIS schools.

EXTEND SUPPORTS TO ALL CHILDREN EXPERIENCING DISADVANTAGE

Children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds attend schools that are not designated disadvantaged. Based on the Eircode data in the Pupil Online Database (POD) and the Pobal HP Index, the State can identify all such children. This data is already being used by the DE to calculate a school's profile for Special Education Teaching Allocations.

IPPN calls for the expansion of DEIS supports to include children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, who attend schools that are not designated disadvantaged. This would deliver specific and much needed supports to ensure equity of access and provision for all children. The learning and implementation of recommendations from the HSCL pilot project in non-DEIS schools are an example of such supports and would provide a more equitable approach to inclusion across all school types for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.



Despite recent increases, the capitation grant remains wholly insufficient, with schools still grappling with sharply higher expenses for utilities, insurance, and essential resources.

Increase grant funding

All stakeholders agree that primary schools are not adequately funded. While responsibility for school finances rests with the Board of Management, it is school leaders who inevitably deal with the impact on a daily basis.

CAPITATION FUNDING

Despite recent increases, the capitation grant remains wholly insufficient, with schools still grappling with sharply higher expenses for utilities, insurance, and essential resources. Primary schools increasingly struggle to cover these basic operating costs. A further increased capitation rate over the next few years would ensure that schools are properly resourced to provide safe, well-maintained, and well supported learning environments and would also address the anomalous disparity in grant-funding between primary and post-primary schools.

IPPN reiterates the call for the basic capitation rate to be increased to €350 in 2027.

ANCILLARY AND OTHER FUNDING

We also call for sufficient ancillary funding to be provided for the payment of caretaking staff, in line with developments announced by the DEY in 2024 to provide equity across schools and a central, directly funded model similar to that provided to school secretaries.



Appendix II – Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) Role

Source: NASEN Journal of Research in SEN

An Anatomy of SENCOs in Irish Primary Schools

(Gallagher, Fitzgerald, and Purtill, 2026)

MAIN FINDINGS

- The SENCO role is complex with a significant overload, but not formally defined in Irish policy, yet most SENCOs now operate as senior leaders, often holding a post of responsibility and shaping whole school inclusive practice.
- SENCOs are positive enablers in the school providing collaboration, supportive school leadership, strong SEN teams, professional learning, and teaching experience.
- SENCOs report widespread challenges: insufficient time, heavy workloads, multiple responsibilities, limited external professional supports and ambiguous policy guidance.
- SENCOs adopt a strategic, collaborative, and distributive role to cater to children with SEN.
- SENCOs assume roles in advocacy and pedagogical leadership, acting as mediators of change and gatekeepers of knowledge in their schools.
- To consolidate SENCO's agency, leadership capacity, and impact, it is recommended that the SENCO role in Ireland is formalized recognized in policy, allocated ring-fenced time and inclusion in the senior leadership team in the school.
- Professional learning specific to the SENCO role and development should be provided for SENCOs by the system.

CONCLUSION

The role of SENCO is a multi-faceted, complex role. It is a leadership role, a pedagogical leadership role, a strategic leadership role and an operational leadership role in the school. It is a role which should be protected to afford necessary status and seniority to influence school policy at strategic level. It is important in capacity building in the school for future SEN leaders. To sustain meaningful inclusive education, Ireland must move from relying on SENCO's goodwill and leadership capacity to system level recognition and structural support.





CONTACT IPPN

General Enquiries

☎ +353 21 4824070

☎ 1800 21 22 23

✉ info@ippn.ie

🌐 www.ippn.ie

in @IPPN **ig** @ippn_education

IPPN National Support Office

Glounthaune

Co. Cork

T45 P406

More information about IPPN is available on our website www.ippn.ie.

© IPPN, June 2026