

Submission on

Ending Seasonal Clock Changes

Prepared for:
Department of Justice and Equality

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1. INTRODUCTION

IPPN is the officially-recognised professional body for the leaders of Irish primary schools. It is an independent, not-for-profit voluntary association with a local, regional and national presence. Recognised by the Minister for Education as an official Education Partner, IPPN works with the DES, the National Parents' Council, management bodies, unions, education agencies, academic institutions and children's charities towards the advancement of primary education. IPPN articulates the collective knowledge and professional experience of over 6,500 Principals and Deputy Principals.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposals to end seasonal clock changes, and to consider the implications for primary schools and their pupils. We included the questions posed in the consultation documentation in our membership consultation survey in November as follows:

Do you want to stop changing the clocks twice a year?

1. If the clock changes stop, do you want to
 - a. remain on summer time?
 - b. remain on winter time?
2. What would your opinion be if this proposal were to give rise to different time zones between Ireland and Northern Ireland?

In addition, to further explore the issues, we asked the following questions. Answers were provided in free format and are summarised in this submission:

1. What impact do you see on schools of the clock remaining on summer time?
2. What impact do you see on schools of the clock remaining on winter time?
3. Do you have any other comments to feed back in relation to the seasonal clock?

By 12th December 2018, 848 school leaders had responded to the survey, representing up to 26% of primary schools. Our submission is based solely on the feedback provided.

2. SCHOOL LEADERS' FEEDBACK

2.1. TO STOP OR NOT TO STOP THE CLOCK

Do you want to stop changing the clocks twice a year?

- Yes 53%
- No 47%

If the clock changes stop, do you want to

- remain on summer time? 79%
- remain on winter time? 21%

What would your opinion be if this proposal were to give rise to different time zones between Ireland and Northern Ireland?

- It would change my opinion - 43%
- It would not change my opinion - 57%

2.2. IMPACT ON SCHOOLS OF THE CLOCK REMAINING ON SUMMER TIME

The following comments are indicative of the type of feedback provided:

- I would feel it's more beneficial to have brighter and longer evenings as most of our after school activities occur at this time
- Would like more information on the pros and cons
- Remaining on summer time would have a very positive impact on staff as they may have an opportunity to be more active outside of school during the winter months.
- It can't happen soon enough. The dark evenings are long and not conducive to exercising outdoors.
- We should not be on a different time to the rest of the country
- Do not change!
- Unsure
- I would prefer to keep the clock changes
- Yes it needs to stop changing, and even here in the northwest beside border I would say that
- keep the tradition, it is a useful focus for teaching the children about seasons
- The link to DOJ information did not help. I would like to see the arguments for and against more clearly
- I don't have a strong opinion in favour or against changing clocks
- Longer evening increase chances of people getting in exercise and fresh air during dark winter months thus reducing depression and anxiety levels.

2.3. IMPACT ON SCHOOLS OF THE CLOCK REMAINING ON WINTER TIME

The following comments are indicative of the type of feedback provided:

- Getting dark in early evening which presents issues with children getting home safely as most of our children walk to school
- Less daylight hours for all to be about playing, walking etc.
- Don't need brighter mornings in summer. Bright anyway.
- Hours of darkness
- Darker evenings will not impact the school as we will largely be closed, could ease students having difficulty going to bed as it won't be as bright as late at evening.
- No major impact
- Could impact positively on mood and safety due to bright mornings
- Brighter mornings are always a positive
- Darker mornings and greater heat bills
- Very negative as evenings are too short
- Children going home in the dark. Safety issues.
- Children have no time to unwind and exercise after school. It is practically dark by the time they are home and have eaten.
- No great difference. Why is this important?
- May ease the burden slightly when icy if travelling to work or trying to open a school (may have thawed more)
- My school starts at 8.30 so brighter mornings would be more than welcome
- Children may be brighter in mornings!
- In Rural Ireland, we need light in the morning where there is no street lighting
- It will be dark until 10 a.m. each morning
- It will be very dark much earlier in the day and the same problem at the end of the day
- Not so much impact on schools
- Increase in electricity bill
- Too much darkness!!!
- Brighter mornings would be beneficial

2.4. OTHER FEEDBACK PROVIDED

School leaders were asked whether they had any other comments to make in relation to seasonal clock changes. Some felt unqualified to respond to the issue without further research. 'Leave well enough alone, it has done no harm' was a common response. A significant number of respondents also said they would go along with the majority decision and that people would adapt either way.

It is clear that this is not an issue that is prominent in most school leaders' minds, and they told us quite directly that it was not a priority for them. Some comments give pause for thought, however:

- It makes better sense to children to stay on the same time
- We have 84 students with Autism. The clock change is always very difficult for them. In particular they appear to struggle most with the Autumn change, which can lead in some to a down turn in mood and an increase in behaviours that can challenge us.
- If it gives rise to two different time zones on this tiny island it's ridiculous
- Winter in Ireland is grey enough without making it worse with a change to winter time.
- As a parent of a small child it's torture when the clock changes
- The best option in my opinion would be to change to winter time for December and January only
- Thought needs to be given to those most rural schools in remote country areas particularly in the North and West.

3. CONCLUSION

IPPN has provided feedback based on the responses received directly from our members. We hope that this will help in making the decision whether to stop or continue changing the clock according to the seasons.

We would be happy to meet with the decision-makers to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission.