

IPPN Submission Budget 2026

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

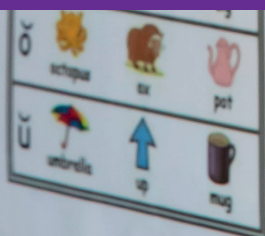


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Introduction and Summary of Proposals

The Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) is the professional body for over 6,000 Principals and Deputy Principals who lead 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 ensuring that the State gets value for money for its investment in education by enhancing leadership effectiveness, school effectiveness and better outcomes for children.

IPPN's proposed budgetary priorities for 2026 can be summarised as follows:

GIVE SCHOOL LEADERS TIME TO LEAD

The rollout of the Revised Primary Curriculum Framework will 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. However, 54% of primary school principals teach four out of the five days in a school week. 98% of primary school deputy

principals have full-time teaching duties. Their lack of leadership time means that the implementation of the curriculum, and the State's investment, will be less effective than it might be. Accordingly, to ensure the State gets value for money from its investment, allocating increased time for leadership in primary schools must be a priority.

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RESOURCE SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS PROVISION

The State's investment in Special Education is failing to keep pace with the number of children presenting with additional needs in our schools. 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.

ENHANCE SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN EXPERIENCING DISADVANTAGE

- a) Fund the initiative, announced in the Programme for Government, to create a new DEIS+ band to support the schools with children from the most deprived communities in Ireland.

- b) Expand 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.

INCREASE GRANT FUNDING

Increase capitation funding in all primary schools to at least €275 per pupil to meet running costs without resorting to debt or voluntary parental contributions.

The following sections provide context and key information about IPPN's proposals.

Give School Leaders Time to Lead

Decades of national and international research have established the inextricable link between leadership effectiveness and pupil outcomes. It should, therefore, be a priority that school leaders be empowered and supported to provide effective leadership of our schools. In a nutshell, this means giving leaders the time and capacity to focus on their core purpose – leading teaching and learning.

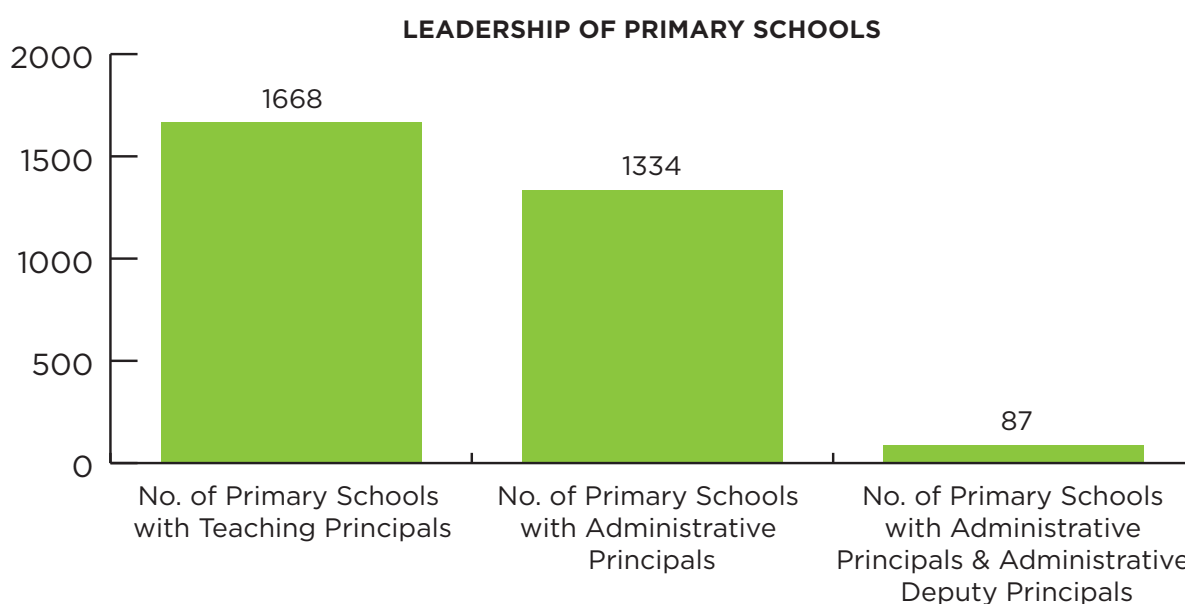
IPPN, through an evidence-informed analysis of primary school leadership, has highlighted the extent to which leadership effectiveness has been undermined. The research was published in our November 2022 report – ***Primary School Leadership: The Case for Urgent Action - A Roadmap to Sustainability*** – which can be accessed [here](#).

The research conclusively demonstrates that primary school leaders are consistently diverted from focusing on teaching and learning because of the breadth of their workload and responsibilities. This is impacting on the sustainability of their leadership roles, and also on their health and well-being. Even if we are indifferent to the impact on the person of the leader,

we should be very concerned about the impact on their effectiveness as this has real and measurable consequences for children.

UNESCO's 2024 Global Education Monitoring 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.

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.



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98% 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.

IPPN proposes the following model of leadership time allocation, based on pupil enrolment, which will have a profound impact on leadership and school effectiveness.

This proposed model details an increased allocation of leadership time to principals, in accordance with the size of the school. An allocation of one leadership and management day a week would give deputy principals dedicated time for their leadership responsibilities as well as increasing the potential for co-leadership and collaboration with the principal.

This would have a significant and positive impact on leadership effectiveness and the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

In the context of significant change in the primary sector, with the introduction of the revised Primary Curriculum Framework from September 2025, 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.

At the Primary Education Forum meeting, convened on 5th March 2025, all of the education stakeholders present supported IPPN's call for increased time for leadership.

PROPOSED MODEL FOR INCREASED LEADERSHIP TIME

Band	Enrolment	Status of Principal	Status of Deputy Principal	Number of schools	Cost
1	1 - 84	0.4 admin (2 days a week)	Full-time teaching	1002	7,785,540
2	85 - 168	0.6 admin (3 days a week)	Full-time teaching	821	12,758,340
3	169 - 572	Fully admin	0.2 admin (1 day a week)	1179	9,160,830
4	573 +	Fully admin	Fully admin	87	0
				3089	29,704,710



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 are in need of support.

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 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.

Furthermore, IPPN believes that all schools should support all children in their catchment area to access education in their local school, alongside their siblings and neighbours. Where children have needs requiring a special class and it is not possible for the school to open a full special class within the timeframe set out by NCSE, supports should be provided to enable the school to enrol the child(ren) using an enhanced emergency SET allocation, to facilitate the children's attendance, until the special class can be opened. In this way, every school would provide for the children with special educational needs in their

IPPN will work closely with NCSE to develop a workable transitional approach to ensure that all schools can support the children with special needs living in their local area.

locality. Currently, some schools are supporting the needs of many children outside their locality, who are transported past schools closer to their home that have no provision. This needs to change.

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.

PROPOSAL

Increase the State's investment in Special Education to keep pace with the number of children presenting with additional needs in our schools in order 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.

IPPN will work closely with NCSE to develop a workable transitional approach to ensure that all schools can support the children with special needs living in their local area.

Enhance supports for children experiencing disadvantage

IMPLEMENT DEIS+ IN THE MOST DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS

In last year's budget submission, IPPN set out the evidence showing the need for increased supports for the most disadvantaged communities given the disproportionate level of childhood trauma and additional needs within their schools. There is a collection of approximately 100 DEIS Band 1 schools in areas of Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Limerick that have been identified by the Pobal HP Deprivation Index as experiencing generational deprivation. These schools need to be categorised as **DEIS+ schools** and supported and resourced in order to meet the needs of the children within those schools.

The level of support teaching required in these DEIS Band 1 schools is four times greater than that in non-DEIS schools and almost double what might be required in other DEIS Band 1 schools. Principals in these schools say that 48% of the children had experienced an adverse childhood experience, with crime, violence, substance abuse, homelessness and bereavement being the most common.

The level of administration undertaken by all school staff, including school leadership, in completing Tusla referrals, AON referrals, AON reports of educational needs, School Support Plans, EWO referrals, attendance referrals and the associated meetings around all of these requires that additional posts of responsibility are allocated to these DEIS+ schools. School attendance has been a focus for the Department of Education over the last few years and the amount of administration completed in these DEIS schools around attendance is a multiple of what is done in non-DEIS and other DEIS Band 1 schools.

On foot of the commitment given in the Programme for Government to create a new DEIS+ band to support the schools with children from the most deprived communities in Ireland, IPPN renews its call for the resourcing of DEIS+ to deliver the following supports to such schools:

- Multidisciplinary Teams - counsellors, psychologists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists to work on the ground in schools with children
- Teaching posts, funding and classroom space dedicated to implementing trauma-informed practices and interventions
- Additional Posts of Responsibility to meet the additional administrative workload incurred by the number of children with additional needs in their schools
- Administrative status for deputy principals in schools designed as DEIS+.

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.



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.

IPPN fully supports the calls by our fellow education partners for enhanced funding for primary schools. IPPN reiterates the call for the basic capitation rate to be increased to €275 per pupil, and for sufficient ancillary funding to be provided for the payment of caretaking staff.

The allocation of funding for minor works, digital technologies and technical support also needs to be addressed so that schools have confidence in the cashflows relating to such expenditure on an annual basis.

PROPOSAL

- Increase the capitation grant at primary level to €275 per pupil
- Provide sufficient ancillary funding to enable schools to pay for caretaking services.



CONTACT US

We are keen to hear from school leaders and any other stakeholders who share our vision for primary education. You can contact us through one of the media below.

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More information about IPPN and the supports and services we offer to school leaders is available on our website www.ippn.ie.

Charitable Status

IPPN is a non-profit organisation and a registered charity with CHY number 17221

