

A Critical Analysis of Supports for Children with Additional Needs, and their School Leaders in Irish Primary Schools

National Principals' Forum

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This is a one page summary of a report that has been collated from the responses of over 500 working principals and describes 9 simple recommendations to improve supports for children with additional needs and for the school leaders that manage them.

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1

Increase SET Allocations to Meet the Needs of AEN Provision

84.4% of schools surveyed have seen an increase in pupils with AEN in the past 4 years. 72.2% of those schools report that their current SET allocation does not meet the needs of AEN in their schools..

2

Recognise the Management of Additional Educational Needs by School Leaders

It is evident that principals are under immense pressure with an unsustainable workload. A very unfair aspect of their role is that they are only recognised in remuneration or release time for managing the teachers in their schools. They are not paid, or afforded time for managing SNAs, Bus Escorts, Secretaries, Caretakers or any other staff, despite the workload involved.

3

Prioritise the Health of Principals

84% of teaching principals surveyed had considered stepping down from their position. 70% of principals reported mental health issues as a direct result of their job.

4

SET Allocations should be organised by the Department of Education

66% of school leaders report that this time consuming, divisive process should be organised by the Department of Education.

5

Allocate adequate supports to Special Schools

70.5% of Special School principals reported that they felt a child, or a staff member, were in danger because a particular child was refused access to SNA provision.

6

All SNA Allocation appeals to the NCSE must be investigated in a timely manner

In almost 40% of appeals sent in by principals, they reported that the school was informed that their allocation would remain the same without any further visit from the SENO or any investigation from the NCSE

7

Continue the "Pause" of the Frontloading Model

67.2% of principals do not have a full understanding of the Frontloading Model yet it is to be rolled out this September

8

Review Section 37a of the Education Act

Despite having opened special classes in the last number of years, the high majority of these principals believe that schools should not be forced to open Special Classes, but rather consultation and forward planning and guaranteed supports and resourcing are essential.

9

Restructure the NCSE

82% of school leaders believe that the entire structure of the NCSE needs to be reviewed.