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Wellbeing in Post-Covid Schools:
Primary school leaders' Reimagining of the Future.

Jolanta Burke and Majella Dempsey

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About the Authors

Jolanta Burke, Ph.D. is a chartered psychologist specialising in positive psychology applied in education. She is an assistant professor and researcher at Maynooth University Department of Education. Dr Burke is a programme leader of Master's in Educational Leadership and Management. She is the author of "*Positive Psychology and School Leadership", "The Ultimate Guide to Implementing Wellbeing Programmes for School*" and soon to be published "*Undertaking Capstone Projects in Education: A Practical Guide for Students*". For more information, please go to www.jolantaburke.com.

Majella Dempsey, Ed.D. is associate professor and researcher at Maynooth University Department of Education. Dr Dempsey lectures on curriculum studies and STEM education. She researchers in curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment. She is the author of *"Undertaking Capstone Projects in Education: A Practical Guide for Students"* which will soon be published by Routledge.

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1.1 Background

It is time to focus on the future. Since March 2020, all the resources went into helping schools maintain teaching and learning during the worldwide emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (UN, 2020). School Leaders in Ireland have moved swiftly along the stages of grief ranging from the shock of the pandemic, through to anger, despair and finally acceptance of the new reality of living and working in the midst of the coronavirus. The entire school community have shown a remarkable resilience in the way students, parents, teachers and leaders have come together and navigated through the maze of the Covid-education (J. Burke & Dempsey, 2020; Devitt, Bray, Banks, & Ni Chorcora, 2020; Fahy, Murphy, Fu, & Nguyen, 2020; Mohan et al., 2020; Quinn, McGilloway, & Burke, 2020). With the new vaccines, we are now hopefully reaching the end of the lockdowns. However, the havoc that the pandemic caused may be long-lasting.

Pre-pandemic, primary school leaders' role was already complex, "messy and demanding" (DES, 2016a; Stynes, McNamara, & O'Hara, 2018). They complained about the quantity of work, lack of time to focus on teaching and learning and resourcing needs (Reily, 2015). During the pandemic, their role has changed significantly. Apart from managing the day-to-day running of the school, leaders have also taken on additional duties associated with managing the Covid-19 safety, exacerbating the complexity of their role (Dempsey & Burke, 2020). It is now time to review leaders' loaded role and identify ways in which it can be altered to positively impact on their wellbeing, ensure sustainability of the position, as well as ensure that they have the time and space to focus on rebuilding the ruptured school communities for a brighter post-Covid future.

The impact Covid-19 had on the school community varied. Some children were at a disadvantage when their access to education was limited due to the Wi-Fi connection issues or access to computing devices (J. Burke & Dempsey, 2020; Dempsey & Burke, 2020; Doyle, 2020). Families complained about the negative impact the lockdown had on pupils who felt more isolated, anxious and began to experience maladaptive behaviours at home (O'Sullivan et al., 2021). This was particularly challenging for parents of children with special needs. A comprehensive analysis of young people's mental health in Ireland found that indeed, many have experienced lower levels of wellbeing compared with students pre-

pandemic, although some aspects of their wellbeing remained the same (Quinn et al., 2020). Similarly, many parents, teachers and leaders found it difficult to cope with Covid-19 adversity, which impacted on various aspects of school community's wellbeing (Devitt et al., 2020; Fahy et al., 2020; L. E. Kim & Asbury, 2020).

Wellbeing is " a journey of promoting and improving individuals' mental health and conditions, so that they can contribute to the school communities' overall wellbeing, and vice versa." (J. Burke, 2021). School leaders play an important role in promoting wellbeing and their leadership has a significant effect on their teaching staff, non-teaching staff and ultimately their students (Francisco, 2019; Serin & Akkaya, 2020; Wang, 2019). When individuals are not doing well, or when they withdraw psychologically from their role, it has a negative outcome on their performance (Erdemli, 2015). Thus, following the principles of "putting an oxygen mask first before assisting others", it is crucial that primary school leaders' wellbeing is considered to ensure the sustainability of their roles.

Psychological wellbeing can be assessed using at least a hundred of possible measures (Linton, Dieppe, & Medina-Lara, 2016). In the current research, we reviewed it from four perspectives. Firstly, we examined leaders' personal wellbeing using a Mental Health Continuum model (C.L.M. Keyes, 2009), which combines three main theories of wellbeing, i.e. psychological wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), emotional/subjective wellbeing (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999) and social wellbeing (Corey Lee M. Keyes, 1998). Then, we selected a model of illbeing which assesses participants' symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. Thirdly, we reviewed their work-related wellbeing (Kern, 2014). Finally, we assessed their perceived stress levels and work-life balance during the first term of the school year 2020-2021. Therefore the current research offers a holistic view of Primary school leaders' health.

Wellbeing measures provided us with an outline of the impact of Covid-19 on leaders. However, what matters even more is what actions can all stakeholders take to create a better future for the entire school community with primary school leaders having the time and space to lead the change. This is what this report focused its attention on.

1.2 What was the study about?

The main objective of the study was to identify wellbeing-related priorities and actions that can be taken in order to ensure the sustainability of school leadership and continuous enhancement of the school community's wellbeing post-Covid. Table 1 provides an outline of the project along with aims and research questions for each section. Figure 1 provides an outline of this report in a pictorial format.

Figure 1. The outline of the foci of the current research.
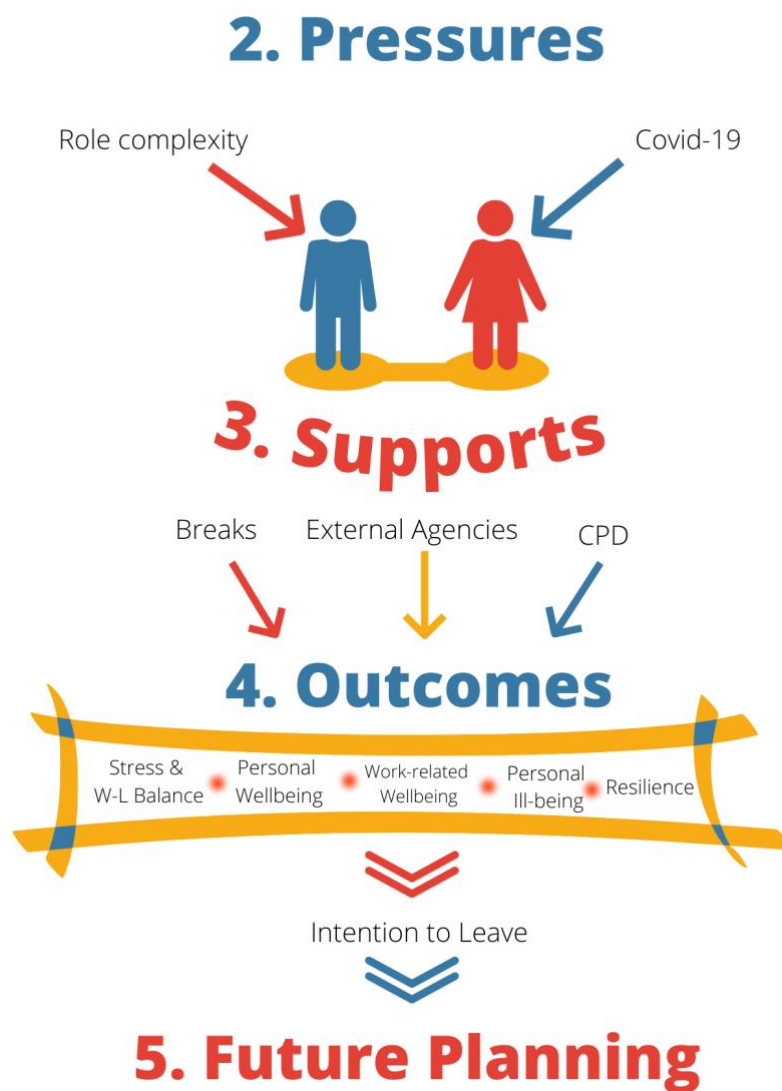
Table 1. The outline of the project.

Aims	Research Questions
Pressures	
To identify what actions can be taken in order to alleviate leaders' pressures.	What daily tasks have the biggest impact on leaders?
	What impact do Covid-19 measures have on leaders' wellbeing?
Supports	
To identify what changes are required in the current supports offered to leaders.	What changes can external agencies make to best support leaders?
	What professional development courses did leaders find most useful?
	What additional courses can be offered to leaders to help them develop their leadership capacity post-Covid?
	How often do leaders take on-the-job and off-the-job breaks?
Outcomes	
To assess leaders' wellbeing and how the pressures and supports contribute to it.	What is leaders' perceived stress and work-life balance during the first term?
	What is the impact of daily tasks, tasks after controlling for the Covid impact on leaders' stress?
	What are the differences in stress and work-life balance between administrative and teaching leaders?
	What are leaders' levels of personal wellbeing?
	How is leaders' personal wellbeing affected by breaks?
	What are the differences in personal wellbeing between teaching and administrative leaders?
	What other actions can leaders take to improve their wellbeing?
	What are leaders' levels of work-related wellbeing?
	How is leaders' work-related wellbeing affected by breaks?
	What are the differences in work-related wellbeing between teaching and administrative leaders?
	What leaders like about their jobs?
	What are leaders' levels of illbeing?
	How is leaders' illbeing affected by breaks?
	What are the differences in illbeing between teaching and administrative leaders?
	What are leaders' levels of resilience?
	How is leaders' resilience affected by breaks?
	What are the differences in resilience between teaching and administrative leaders?
Life Post-Covid	
To identify what other action can be taken to ensure leaders' role sustainability, wellbeing maintenance for leaders and the school community.	How many leaders intend to stay in their current position 5 years from now?
	What changes to the role would need to be made for leaders to stay?
	What provisions should be put in place to enhance leaders' wellbeing over the next 5 years?
	What provisions should be put in place to enhance teachers' wellbeing over the next 5 years?
	What provisions should be put in place to enhance students' wellbeing over the next 5 years?

1.3 Executive Summary

Demographic

- 861 of Primary school leaders completed the survey

- The majority of them were female (76%), aged over 40 (83%).

- 7 out of 10 leaders were in their role over 4 years

- All provinces, school types and sizes were proportionally represented

- 8 out of 10 leaders reported their enrolment to be stable

Pressures

- 96% of school leaders work over 36 hours, with 3 out of 10 leaders working over 50 hours a week

- 7 out of 10 teaching leaders teach more than 21 hours a week; 1 out of 10 administrative leaders teaches more than 5 hours

- The tasks impacting leaders significantly are: (1) Covid-related safety measures, (2) time pressures, (3) ensuring all DE guidelines are followed, (4) late night/Friday communications from DE, (5) procurement.

- Qualitative research revealed that other daily tasks that impacted on leaders were (1) teaching, learning and curriculum, (2) administration, (3) structural tasks, (4) personal impacts of the role.

- 7 out of 10 leaders reported that Covid-19 impacted their wellbeing

- Leaders suggested a list of many aspects of their role that should be centralised. The top two that emerged related to (1) building works, (2) hiring substitute teachers.

Supports

- To improve their interaction with external agencies, leaders requested more (1) communication, (2) collaboration, (3) scheduled interaction, (4) SEN supports.

- Within communication, what leaders asked for is (1) timely communication to address their needs, (2) clear communication, (3) decrease of paperwork, (4) sufficient time to deal with issues.

- The most useful professional courses leaders participated in were Misneach, CSL Coaching, various IPPN, INTO and PDST courses.

- Leaders ask for a clearer definition of their role.

- They would like more development in the areas of: (1) personal growth (e.g., mental health, coaching skills, self-motivation), (2) administrative development (e.g., time management, financial management, ICT skills), (3) professional leadership development, (4) future-focused development (e.g., sustainability, team development), (5) curriculum leadership, (6) role definition and scope.

- Participants valued being part of a professional learning community.

- A quarter of the leaders have never taken sos beag, only 3 out of 10 take it regularly.

- Half of the leaders take their lunch rarely or never.

- 7 out of 10 participants take a break during the weekend.

- 8 out of 10 participants take a break during school closure.

Outcomes

- 8 out of 10 leaders experienced a lot of stress in the first term of the school year.

- Teaching leaders experienced less stress than administrative leaders.

- Leaders' stress was predicted by (1) time pressure they experience, (2) continuous interruptions, (3) sourcing resources, e.g., space, SNAs, teacher allocation.

- 6 out of 10 reported they do not have good work-life balance.

- Not one leader was flourishing psychologically.

- Not taking sos beag predicted lower levels of wellbeing.

- Teaching leaders reported lower levels of personal wellbeing compared to administrative leaders.

- The top 5 tools used to improve personal wellbeing were: (1) healthful food choices, (2) regular exercise, (3) daily dose of fresh air, (4) good sleep hygiene, (5) regular water intake.

- Qualitative data identified the following tools as helpful to maintain leaders' personal wellbeing (1) exercise, (2) social contact, (3) being proactive, (4) counselling and coaching, (5) professional development, (6) maintaining positive attitude.

- Work-related wellbeing of Primary school leaders was lower compared to Post Primary school leaders.

- Not taking sos beag and lunch predicted lower levels of work-related wellbeing.

- The three elements that contributed the most to leaders' work-related wellbeing was (1) finding their work meaningful, (2) being fully engaged at work, (3) having good relationships at work.

- Teaching leaders were more engaged, felt less lonely at work and considered themselves as less accomplished than administrative leaders.

- What leaders particularly like about their jobs is: (1) working with children (2) an ability to collaborate with others, (4) role variety, (4) autonomy.

- 2 out of 10 participants experience symptoms of severe stress.

- 2 out of 10 participants experience symptoms of severe anxiety.

- 1 out of 10 participants experience symptoms of depression.

- 2 out of 10 leaders show high levels of resilience, 3 out of 10 show low levels of resilience.

Post-Covid Future

- In order to enhance students' wellbeing 5 years from now what is needed is:
    - Tweaking curriculum and pedagogy to contribute to their wellbeing
    - Supports for special educational needs
    - Supports for mental health needs
    - Teacher wellbeing supports
    - Parenting supports so that their needs are met
    - Facilities to support PE.

- In order to enhance teachers' wellbeing 5 years from now what is needed is:
    - Reduce curriculum overload and new initiatives
    - Enhance communication between schools and agencies
    - Give equal pay and look at pupil teacher ratio
    - Value the work teachers do.

- In order to enhance leaders' wellbeing 5 years from now what is needed is:
    - Workload preventing action
    - Retirement
    - Counselling
    - Healthy living
    - Better planning and time management.

- Within the next 5 years, 13% of leaders intend to stay in their roles, 17% are thinking of leaving, 32% will be retiring, and 38% are unsure.

- The changes leaders are asking for in relation to their role are:

- Salary increases

- Additional support staff

- More time to lead learning

- Clear role definition

- Release time for middle management.

1.4 Recommendations

The following are recommendations following on from the research.

Table 2. Recommendations deriving from the research results.

Level	Recommendation
Supra level	• Review of the existing policies and procedures in the context of international research and practice
Macro level **Government level**	• Review and clarify leaders' role • Streamline leaders' role by centralising some of their duties • Provide leaders with more time for managing quality of teaching and learning • Streamline communication • Review the management of the SEN allocations • Review the curriculum to avoid overload • Provide general purpose rooms for all schools
Meso level **Organisations like IPPN, INTO, PDST, CPSMA**	• Agencies that support schools need to review how they can streamline communication and interaction • Provide focused CPD as requested by leaders • Support leaders in implementing wellbeing initiatives in schools • Involve practitioners in assisting DE in streamlining leaders' role • Carry out more research on focused supports and their effectiveness
Micro level **Schools and staff**	• Create community wellbeing initiative • Actively work on enhancing teachers' wellbeing • Teachers to share practice to enhance pedagogies for wellbeing • Review the management of the SEN allocations
Micro level **School leader**	• Ensure they take regular breaks • Ensure they keep their body healthy

	• Encourage leaders to engage in regular, intentional activities to enhance their wellbeing • Engage with professional learning community • Actively use the resources provided by DE and other professional organisations • Practice distributive leadership with a dedicated team where this is possible
Nano level **Pupil**	• Work with parents on enhancing wellbeing • Streamline the social and emotional support available for pupils • Introduce wellbeing tools to help pupils engage in regular intentional activities to enhance their wellbeing

1.5 How was the study conducted?

This was a once off online survey carried out half-way through the school year. The survey comprised of a mixture of alternate-choice, multiple-choice, rating scale and open-ended questions from which quantitative and qualitative data derived. Three psychological scales have been used to assess leaders' wellbeing (DASS-21, MHC-SF, and the Workplace PERMA Profiler). SPSS version 26 (2019) was used to analyse quantitative data. A series of Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to do it. MAXQDA (2020) was used to analyse qualitative data. Thematic analysis and content analyses were applied to do it.

Apart from questions relating to Descriptive data, a series of questions were asked regarding workplace pressures. They included such questions as how often school leaders took a break (sos beag, lunch) the response to which they rated on a scale from 1 (every day to never) and how often the school leaders took off-the-job breaks (over the weekend and during the school closure). Also, "*How much stress have you experienced during this school year?"* rated on a scale from 1 (a little) to 3 (a lot), or a statement such as, please identify how much you agree with the following statements: *"I have a good work-life balance"* which was rated on a 5-item Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Furthermore, inspired by the Daily Hassles Scale-Revised (DHS-R: DeLongis et al., 1982), a list of specific school leaders' responsibilities was listed and participants were asked to rate their impact as N/A, very little, moderate amount, a lot. Open-ended questions were also included such as "*What do you like about your job*?", "*Where do you look for support, both at work and at home*", or "*Where do you see yourself in 5 years*?".

Wellbeing in the current research was measured using three psychological scales DASS-21, MHC-SF (C.L.M. Keyes, 2009) and Workplace PERMA profiler (Kern, 2014). They identified three perspectives on wellbeing.

DASS-21 is a 21-item scale on a 4-point scale ranging between 1 (did not apply to me at all) and 4 (applied to me very much or most of the time). It measured personal illbeing by assessing three dimensions of negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. The difference between stress measured using this scale and the previously mentioned assessment of stress was that DASS-21 scale examined the clinical experiences of the symptoms of stress, rather than perceived stress, spanning over the last week. The symptoms of stresses

measured included such as being aware of heart-rate increase, or worried about situations in which participants may panic. In comparison, the previously mentioned stress assessment, was based on one self-reported question, i.e. "How much stress have you experienced during this school year?" and it identified participants' perceived stress experiences over the duration of the 1st school term.

Examples of questions assessing depression included such as "*I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things*", "*I felt I had nothing to look forward to*", or "*I felt down-hearted and blue*". Examples of questions assessing anxiety included such as "*I was aware of dryness in my mouth*", "*I experienced breathing difficulty (e.g. excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness, in the absence of physical exertion)*", or "*I felt scared without any good reason*". Past research indicated high levels of validity and reliability. The current research shows very good reliability at ⟨=.93.

MHC

The Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (Corey L. M. Keyes, 2002) was used to assess participants' wellbeing, which is based on a three-factor wellbeing model consisting of 14 questions, on a 6-item Likert scale, ranging from "never" to "every day". Participants were asked about the frequency of experiences over a two month-period, such as: feeling interested in life, feeling that life has a sense of direction or meaning to it. Example question included: "*During the past month, how often did you feel: satisfied with life, that you had something important to contribute to society, that you had warm and trusting relationships with others*". Past studies demonstrated high reliability of the scale (C.L.M. Keyes, 2009). The current research shows very good reliability at ⟨=.93.

Workplace PERMA Profiler

Workplace PERMA Profiler (Kern, 2014), a 23-item measure, on an 11-item Likert scale, ranging between "never" to "always", "not at all" to "completely", or "terrible" to "excellent". The scale assessed work-related wellbeing. The following are three examples of questions: *To what extent is your work purposeful and meaningful? To what extent do you feel excited and interested in your work? How satisfied are you with your professional relationships?* The final score comprised of the mean of five elements: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement, as well as a single-item question:

Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are with your work? Past researched showed high validity and reliability. The current research shows very good reliability at ⟨=.94.

1.6 The profile of participants

A total of 861 participants completed the survey. The majority of them (n=645, 76%) were female, aged over 50 (n=419, 49%), followed by 40-49 year old (n=269, 34%), with the smallest representation from leaders aged under 40 (n=146, 17%). Half of the participants held a position of administrative principals (n=427, 50%), followed by teaching principals (n=292, 34%), and deputy principals (n=142, 16%). Most of the leaders were in their role for over 10 years (n=337, 39%), followed by 4-9 years (n=271, 32%), 1-3 years (n=202, 23%), with the smallest representation among the novice leaders who have held their positions for less than a year (n=51, 6%).

The majority of participants were leaders of schools located in the Leinster province (n=454, 53%), followed by Munster (n=209, 24%), Connaught (n=116, 14%), and Ulster (n=82, 9%). All school types were represented in the current sample, i.e. mainstream (n=600, 70%), mainstream with special classes (n=226, 26%), and special schools (n=35, 4%), and the vast majority were non-DEIS schools 77% (n=665). Almost half of the schools had mostly 8-23 mainstream class teachers employed (n=417, 48%), followed by 1-4 teachers (n=221, 26%), 5-7 (n=170, 20%), and 24+ teachers (n=53, 6%). Therefore, all school sizes have been represented in the current study. Despite the challenging times, most of the schools' enrolment is stable (n=713, 83%), with the minority of 11% (n=90) of participants reporting that their enrolment has rapidly decreased, and 7% (n=58) reported it has increased.

2.LEADERS' PRESSURES
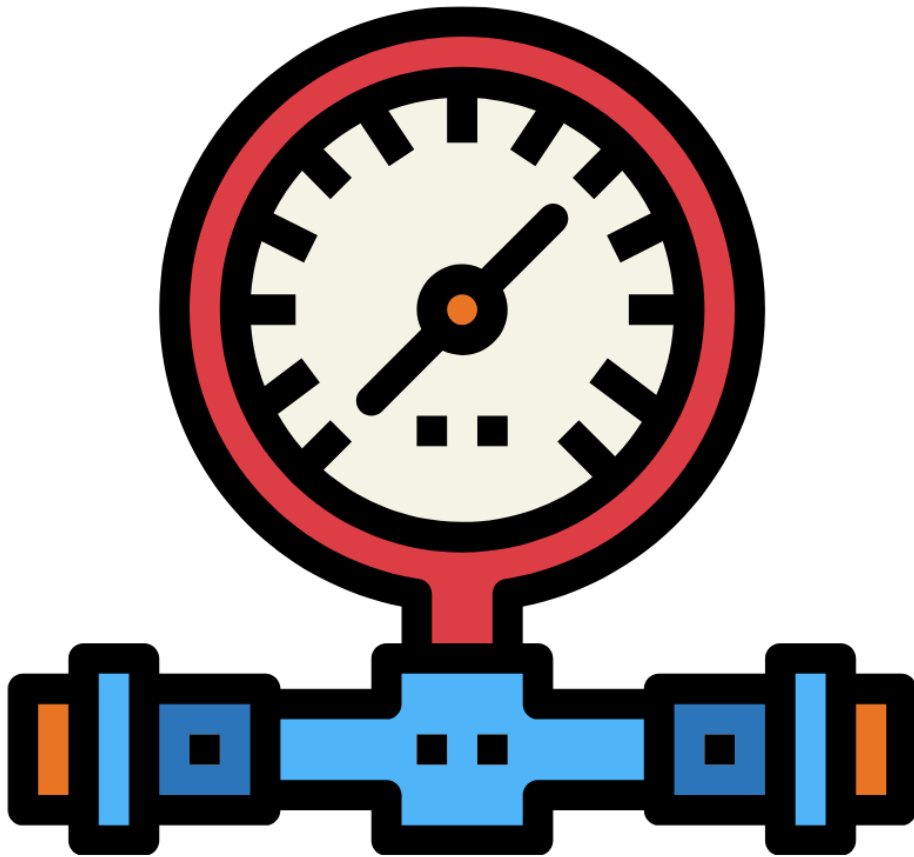
2.1 Role Complexity

In order to best understand what changes need to be made in Primary school leaders' role to ensure leadership sustainability and provide leaders with the necessary time to rebuild their school community post-Covid, we will first review how many hours a week leaders usually work and how much of that time they spend teaching. Then, we will delve deeper into the complexities of leaders' daily tasks.

2.1.1 Hours of work

A total of 96% of principals work usually over 36 hours. Specifically, 21% (n=182) work 36-40 hours, 44% (n=377) work 41-50 hours and 30% (n=255) work over 50 hours a week. The remainder work 35 hours and less. Figure 2 provides a pictorial representation of participants' working hours.

Figure 2. Percentage of participants' working hours.
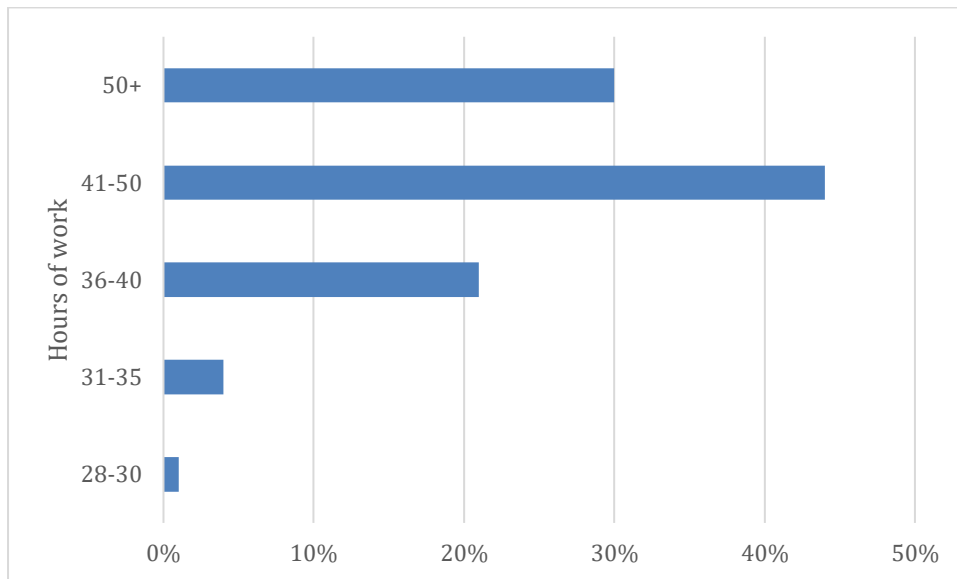
A larger number of administrative leaders work over 40 hours compared to the teaching leaders. Specifically, 48% of administrative leaders work 41-50 hours a week, compared with 40% of teaching leaders. Also, 33% of administrative leaders work over 50 hours a week, compared with 26% of teaching leaders. However, a larger group of teaching leaders (26%) work between 36-40 hours compared with the administrative leaders (17%). Further details can be found in Figure 3 and Table 3.

Figure 3. Differences in working hours between teaching and administrative leaders.
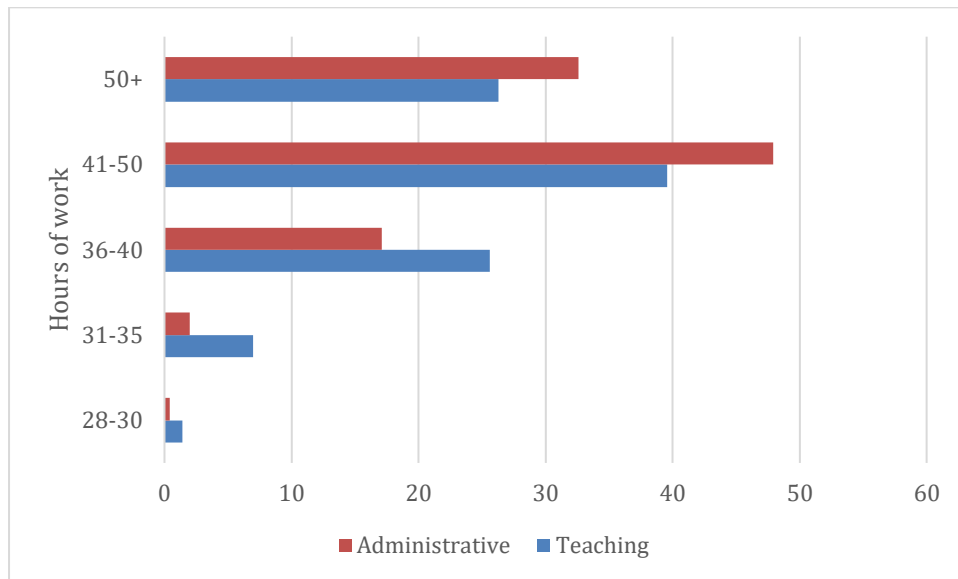
Table 3. Differences in working hours between teaching and administrative leaders.

Hours of work	Teaching n=414		Administrative n=445	
28-30	6	1%	2	0.4%
31-35	29	7%	9	2%
36-40	106	26%	76	17%
41-50	164	40%	213	48%
50+	109	26%	145	33%

2.1.2 Teaching

Of the entire sample, 20% (n=170) of participants teach between 1-4 hours, 17% (n=146) teach 5-20 hours, and 36% (n=309) teach over 21 hours per week. When the group is broken down into teaching and administrative leaders, there are differences in their weekly number of contact hours. Whilst the majority of administrative leaders (n=231, 52%) did not report any contact hours, almost 4 out of 10 teach 1-4 hours a week (n=164, 37%), 1 out of 10 teach 5-10 hours a week (n=45, 10%) and 1 % teach 11-20 hours. Of all the teaching leaders, 7 out of 10 teach 21+ hours (n=307, 74%), 2 out of 10 teach 11-20 hours (n=74, 18%), and the remainder teach less than 10 hours (n=33, 7%). Further information can be found in Figure 4 and Table 4.

Figure 4. Differences in the contact hours between administrative and teaching leaders.
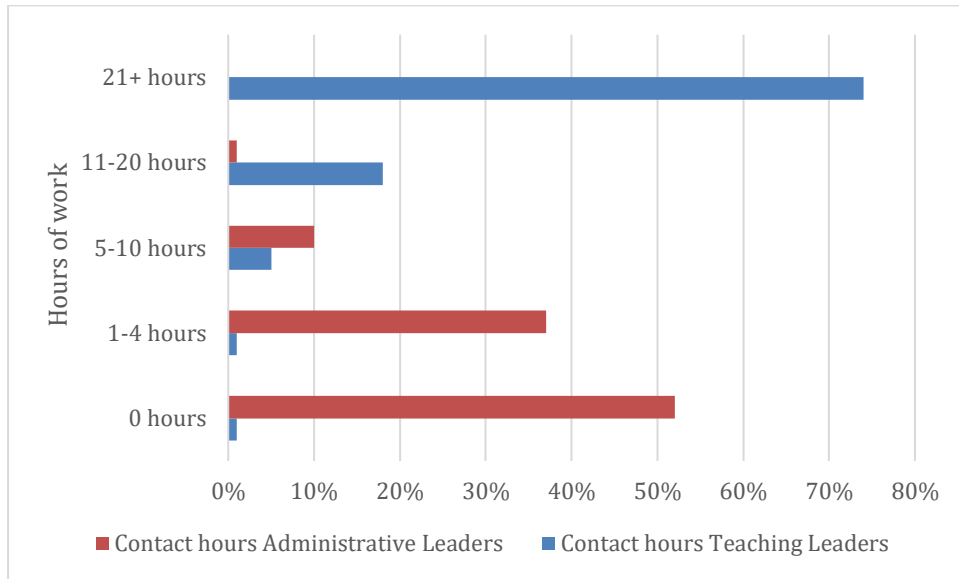
Table 4. Differences in the teaching hours between administrative and teaching leaders.

	Teaching Leaders		Administrative Leaders	
Contact hours	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
0 hours	5	1%	231	52%
1-4 hours	6	1%	164	37%
5-10 hours	22	5%	45	10%
11-20 hours	74	18%	5	1%
21+ hours	307	74%	0	0

2.1.3 Daily tasks

The impact that daily tasks have on leaders during the school year was assessed using a series of questions relating to the following categories:

1. Administration
2. System
3. Personal
4. Inter-personal
5. Covid-19

Participants were asked to rate each one of the tasks on a scale from 1 to 4 in relation to the impact they had on the leaders during the last school term; 1= not applicable, 2=very little, 3=moderate amount, 4=a lot.

2.1.3.1 Administrative Tasks

The three administrative tasks that had the highest impact on leaders during the school year were:

1. Ensuring all DE guidelines are followed (M=3.67, SD=.59)
2. Late night/Friday communication from DE (M=3.49, SD=.84)
3. Interpreting DE guidelines (M=3.44, SD=.68)

For more tasks impacting leaders see Figure 5, for more details of the impact reported see Table 5.

Figure 5. The mean value of the impact of administrative tasks on participants, in order of the most significant impact.
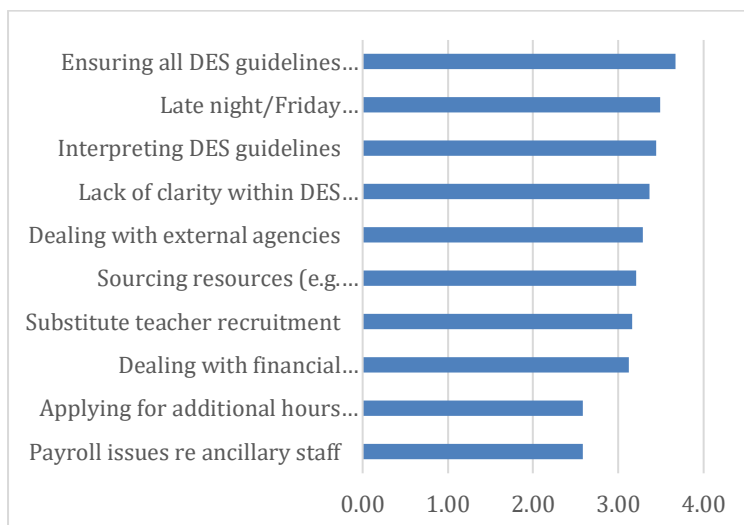
Table 5. Results of mean and standard deviation for the impact of administrative tasks.

Tasks	M	SD
Payroll issues re ancillary staff	2.58	0.95
Applying for additional hours and support	2.58	1.09
Dealing with financial resources	3.12	0.91
Substitute teacher recruitment	3.16	0.91
Sourcing resources (e.g. space, SNAs, teacher allocation)	3.21	0.89
Dealing with external agencies	3.29	0.74
Lack of clarity within DE guidelines	3.36	0.78
Interpreting DE guidelines	3.44	0.68
Late night/Friday communication from DE	3.49	0.84
Ensuring all DE guidelines are followed	3.67	0.59

2.1.3.2 System Tasks

Of the two system tasks, System Problems, such as Wi-Fi connectivity issues, phone (M=3.05, SD=.82) had a higher impact on leaders than noise/lack of suitable office space (M=2.5, SD1). See Table 6 and Figure 6 for details.

Figure 6. The mean value of the impact of system tasks.
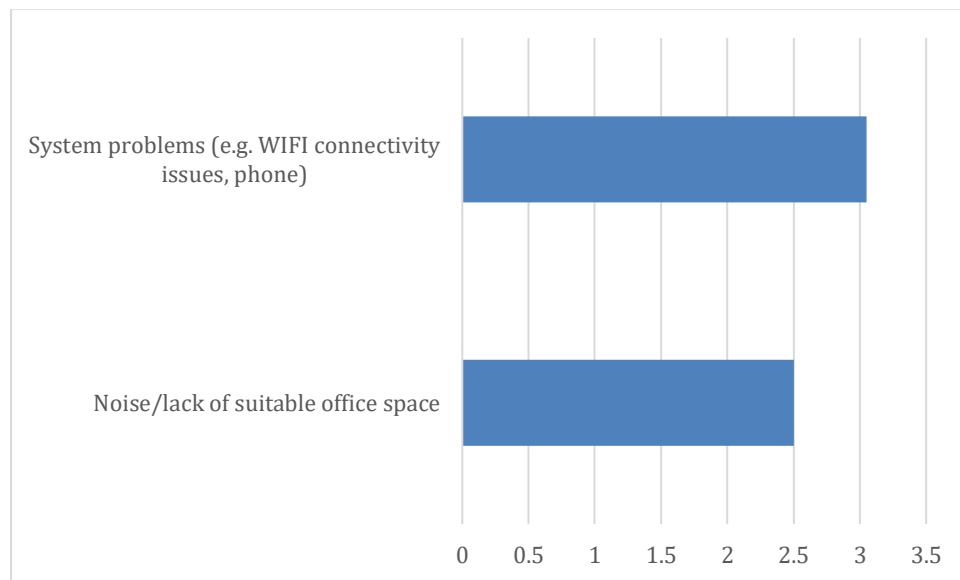
Table 6. Results of mean and standard deviation for the impact of administrative tasks.

Tasks	M	SD
Noise/lack of suitable office space	2.50	1.00
System problems (e.g. Wi-Fi connectivity issues, phone)	3.05	0.82

2.1.3.3 Personal Tasks

The two personal hassles that had the greatest impact on leaders were:

1. Time pressure (M=3.78, SD=.47)
2. Continuous interruptions (M=3.43, SD=.70)

See Figure 7 and Table 7 for details.

Figure 7. The mean value of the impact of personal tasks.
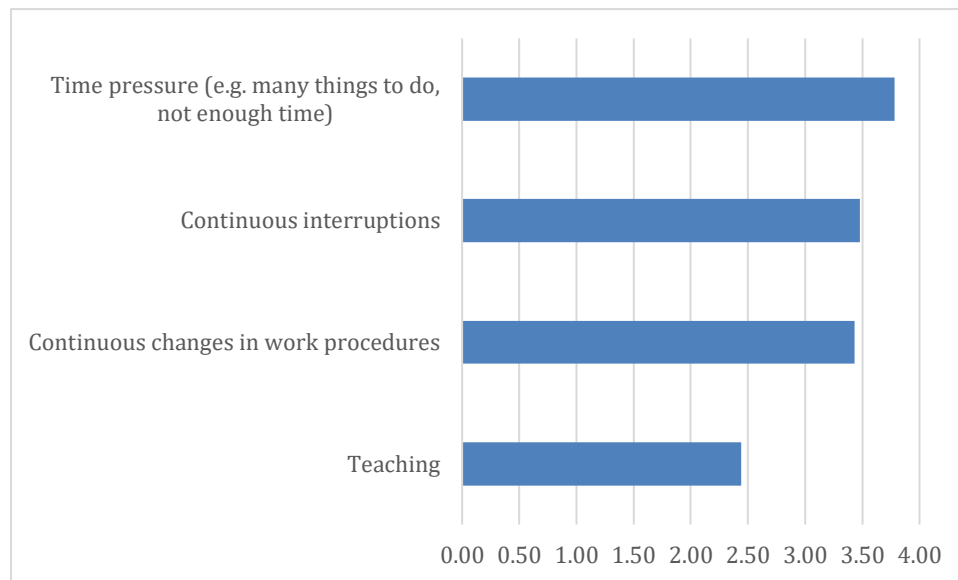
Table 7. Results of mean and standard deviation for the impact of personal hassles.

Tasks	M	SD
Teaching	2.44	1.19
Continuous changes in work procedures	3.43	0.67
Continuous interruptions	3.48	0.70
Time pressure (e.g. many things to do, not enough time)	3.78	0.47

2.1.3.4 Interpersonal Tasks

The three tasks that had the most significant impact on leaders during the school year are:

1. Ensuring team building in the midst of social distancing restrictions (M=3.25, SD.79)
2. Communicating with parents (M=3.22, SD=.72)
3. HR issues (M=2.97, SD=.87)

Figure 8 and Table 8 provide further information.

Figure 8. The mean value of the impact of interpersonal tasks.

Tasks	M	SD
Managing underperformance and conduct issues	2.24	0.90
Working with the Parents' Council	2.29	0.88
Completing the child protection forms	2.46	0.83
Staff grievance	2.51	0.90
Working with the BOM	2.80	0.84
HR issues	2.97	0.87
Communicating with parents	3.22	0.72
Team-building in the midst of social distancing restrictions (e.g. lunches, breaks)	3.25	0.79

Of all the 27 tasks (Figure 9) the five tasks that had the highest impact on leaders were:

1. Covid-related safety measures [discussed in section 2.3]

2. Time pressures

3. Ensuring all DE guidelines are followed

4. Late night/Friday communications from DE

5. Procurement

Figure 9. The mean value of the impact of all the tasks.
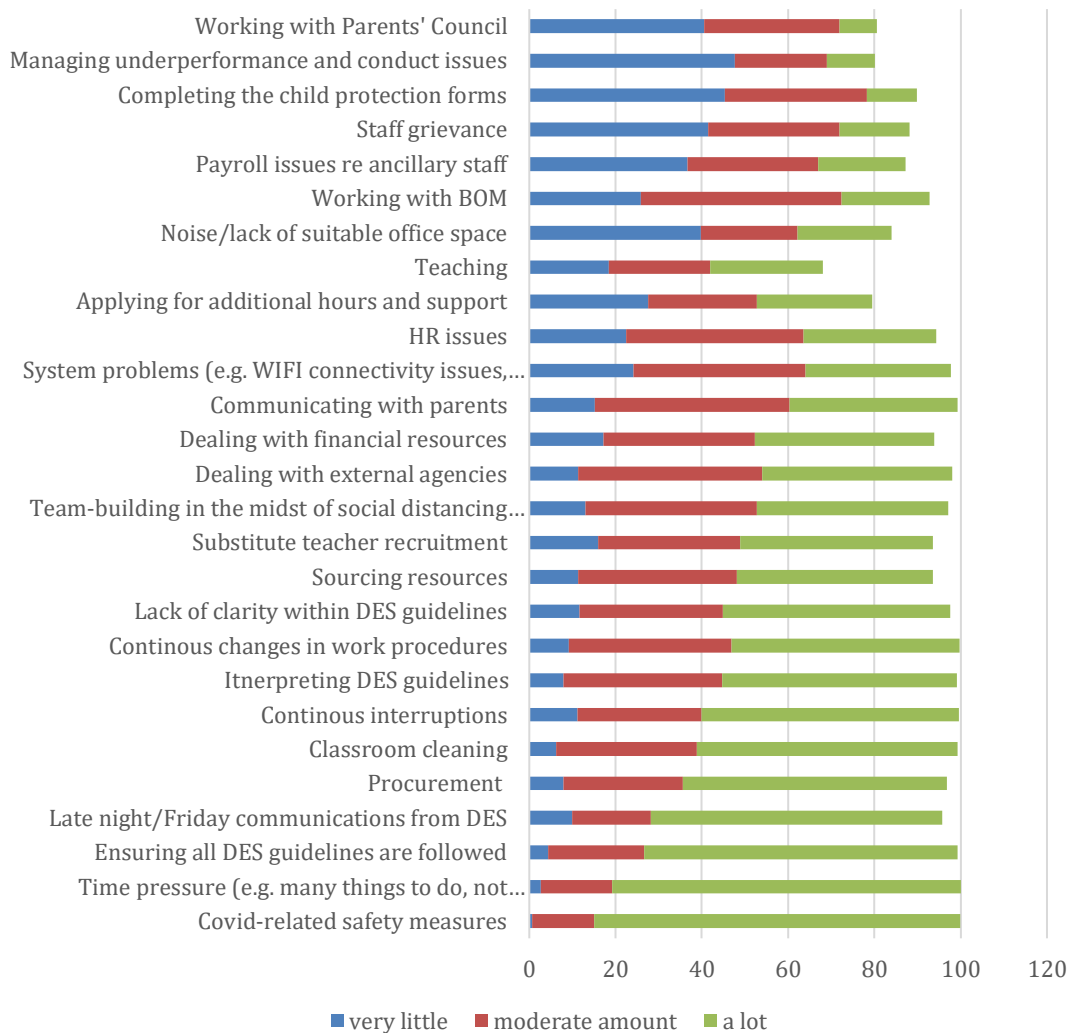
2.1.4 Other Daily Tasks

This section relates to all other daily tasks that impact on school leaders work-life balance and wellbeing. From over 12k words the following themes emerged under the headings of teaching and learning, administrative, structural, personal, inter-personal and Covid - related. As one leader put it "*Schools have become everything to everyone*" and by default this means the leader has become everything to everyone.

The following quotes put into perspective the long list of additional tasks leaders cited in response to this question.

1) Caretaker duties and secretarial duties due to no full-time staff in these areas. 2) Tendering for SEN equipment. 3) Leading a build project 4) Fundraising activities 5) many add ons and the constant wave of initiatives such as sacraments, concerts, flags, competitions etc 6) constant demands for information from different agencies 7) SSE[1] and SIP[2] administration , Droichead administration, Digital plan administration, Vetting administration , child protection administration, recruitment administration, SEN administration, lack of subs, lack of money, no sharing of workload with BOM in reality principal does it all. Drowning in a sea of paperwork and targets and ticking boxes 8) unrealistic demands from parents and clubs. Schools have become everything to everyone 9) one thing the pandemic has allowed us to do is to refocus on teaching and learning in a simple way as there is less busyness and noise and distraction. It has been wonderful. I and my staff are dreading it going back to the old way again.

Ensuring I speak to all parents, pupils and staff in a light-hearted manner to encourage positivity. Answering door and phone as have no secretary. Trying to teach groups in order to lessen SET[3] workload. Dealing with random paperwork e.g. esinet[4] data collection asking what type of boiler we have. Dealing with broken toilets as only having a part time caretaker. Waiting 9 weeks so far on our SNA exceptional review for 4 more SNA. Therefore, I spend a portion of day being an SNA.

I work with the Student Council- fortnightly meetings. Snag List- new school Juggling so many projects- Percent for Art/ Library Grants/ Applying for Bike and Scooter Shelters/ Admin for Cycle Training/ Accident during summer- teenager climbing over school fence lost a finger very stressful and concerning/ Alarm call outs/ Admin re on site Pre and After school service/ Summer deliveries of Fruit and Veg - school lunch provision/ Researching for best and liaising with Cleaning Company - staff changes/ monitoring supervision duties and changes/ Covid Leave/Bereavement leave/ parents asking for advice re Covid/ deliveries out of school hours- during summer PPE/ liaising with caretaker and others during summer in prep for return/ purchasing PPE/ leaning on staff but reluctant to do so in their time off.

Principals giving everything to their jobs (with negative repercussions to their personal and family lives and doubtlessly their health also) is all that keeps schools functioning in my opinion. There is little to no support available to school leaders and no acknowledgement of this by the DE - in my opinion their view is 'keep the head down' and let the principals get on with it as they always do. The principal supports everyone in the school community and is deemed to be 'bulletproof' - we can continue to support everyone but all the factors that affect everyone else somehow are not expected to affect us also. The DE needs to support us. Restoration of posts for large schools needs to be a priority. However, the inexcusable failure to implement principals' benchmarking at any point over the last 12 years tells you the level of commitment the DE has to large schools and their principals.

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[1] School Self Evaluation

[2] School Improvement Plan

[3] SET = Special Education Teaching Allocations

[4] Education Services Interactive (ESInet) is a secure web based portal through which on-line services are delivered to schools

Figure 10 presents an overview of the many hats a leader puts on in any one week. Each theme/ role is supported by the leaders comments on this question below. In addition to all the hats leaders wear in school, many also had home-schooling and care duties during the pandemic school closures.

Figure 10. Selected "hats" Primary school leaders wear in any one week at work.
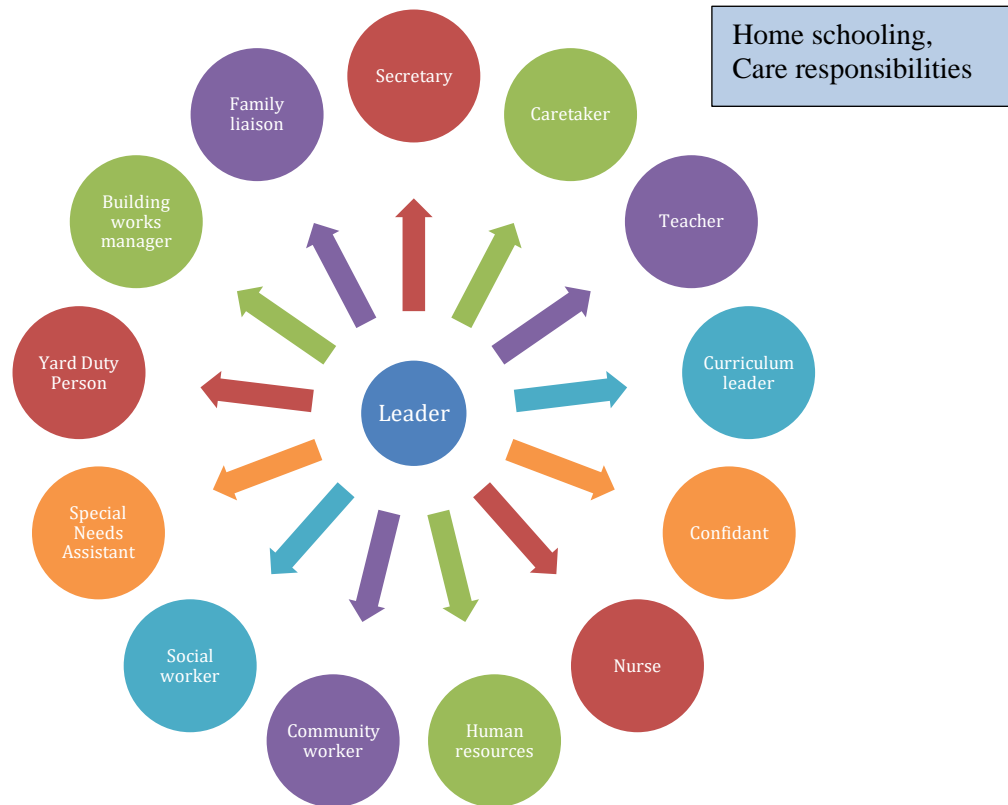
2.1.4.1 Teaching, learning and curriculum

Teaching, learning and the curriculum is one of the core responsibilities for leaders. They see it as central to what they do but feel the time they have to devote to it is being eroded by other tasks.

The curriculum, teaching and learning are central to the role of the leader.
Supporting teaching, learning and curriculum takes on many forms for the leader from dealing with external accountability from the inspectorate to supporting families to access educational supports for learning.

Team building and supporting teachers and staff to be able to do their work well.

Dealing with the inspectorate. Inspectors gently reminding us that the SSE process is still live and that while you don't need to do all of the subjects for term one-you actually do really if all is going to plan in your school.

Homeless families,   A constant stream of pupils enrolling throughout the year Social/emotional needs and behaviours of children who are presenting as very effected by school closure last year. Teachers feel very overwhelmed by the gaps in learning and the efforts to bridge those gaps when children are presenting with social and emotional needs. I spend a lot of my day supporting these teachers and the children/families. There is deep frustration at the lack of supports and also our class sizes.

Fallout from loss of school time. Children out of practice listening and working. Unrealistic expectations of parents, DE, inspectorate.

Managing staff and student well-being, communication at all levels and bringing everyone with you. Working with stressed and anxious parents. Working with Tusla in relation to students who had not returned to school or who had experienced significant trauma directly related to Covid-lockdown (mainly children already in care).

Discipline was mentioned by many respondents. While this is an administrative issue, it is also a teaching and learning issue.

Dealing with emotional and behavioural issues with pupils, wide range of needs in multiclass situation, trying to fit all the curriculum in.

Managing challenging behaviour. Dealing with injuries and assault leave.

Parents making spurious complaints. Sending sick children home.

Increase in behaviour issues due to classroom and yard Covid - 19 restrictions.

Supporting staff with Code of Behaviour i.e. dealing with concerning behaviour.

Extra supervision of children with significant behavioural difficulties and inadequate resources.

Behaviours of concern. Dealing with a lot of complex behaviours in the school which require a lot of input, time and energy.

Leading teaching, learning and curriculum for special education needs
Managing requirements around special educational needs. This was a feature of many comments and adds considerably to the stress of leading a school.

Management of 35 SNAs Dated SERC[5] report. Inclusion of SEN children, security, OLCS[6],

Lack of support from HSE speech therapists, OTs, physios etc.,

Managing placement students, being Health and Safety Officer and overseeing every first aid moderate to serious incident, completing incident forms and tracking behaviour forms for ASD pupils, IEP[7] writing took me 30 hours at home this year, managing SNAs, staff.

Figure 11 depicts the multiple tasks and interactions with agencies involved in leading for Special Educational Needs provision.

Selected comments:

Having to move quickly in updating planning in line with Primary Language Curriculum guidelines, organising training for SNAs in Croke Park Hours, preparing work for my own class team of SNAs to prepare in Croke park hours, phoning parents to collect unwell pupils and pupils with Covid-19 symptoms and supervising pupils in isolation rooms whilst trying to manage classroom supervision, making resources from scratch for maths and literacy due to lack of funding. Marking assessments out of work hours.

Irish exemption requests, requests for psychological assessment and we have no NEPS[8] psychologists for 5 years in a row, increased pupil anxiety issues.

Securing vetted SNA subs. Centralised vetting required. High risk health status, weighing on me. Not possible to teach and keep 2m distance.

Figure 11. The tasks involved in leading the SNA provision.

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[5] In 1991, the Special Education Review Committee (SERC) was established by the Minister for Education to report and make recommendations on educational provision for learners with special educational needs. The SERC Report was published in 1993 and continues to provide a basis for special education policy and practice. The SERC Report proposed seven principles, which affirm the right of all learners with special educational needs to an individualised and appropriate education, acknowledge the important role of parents, provide for the availability of a continuum of education provision, create a presumption in favour of affording learners access to their local mainstream schools and articulate the need for the provision of adequate services and resources to achieve these principles.

[6] On Line Claims System in Primary and Post Primary Schools

[7] An Individual Education Plan is a plan to support your child's learning and development. The IEP is led by the child's strengths and learning needs and is developed in collaboration with them, their parents, teachers, special needs assistant (if there is SNA support allocated to the child) and any other professionals who may be involved, such as a psychologist or speech and language therapist. In 2016, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) developed Guidelines on the Individual Education Plan Process.

[8] NEPS psychologists work with both primary and post-primary schools and are concerned with learning, behaviour, social and emotional development. Each psychologist is assigned to a group of schools.

Managing 44 SNAs - for this I don't get paid. Purchase of equipment for SEN pupils e.g., Plinths etc Securing a school nurse for medically complex pupils. Dealing with Medmark[9]. Updating plans and policies.

Supporting a very challenging special needs pupil while SNA takes quick breaks and also looks after toileting care needs for another pupil-1 plus hours daily and due to rise. Helping to manage traffic in car park to keep pupils safe coming and going from school-one hour daily.

As well as my 23 class teachers and ancillary staff I also have 6 SET[10] teachers and 9 SNAs to manage and support. Therefore, I am managing 15 additional staff members-

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[9] Medmark Occupational Healthcare are the current providers of the Occupational Health Service (OHS). The service provide professional occupational health advice and services on employee medical fitness as follows: pre-employment health assessments, sickness absence assessment, medical fitness to return to work assessments, ill health retirement assessments and Critical Illness Provisions (CIP).

[10] Special Education Teachers' approaches will include a combination of team-teaching initiatives, co- operative teaching, early intervention and small group or individual support.

a fact which never seems not to be acknowledged by DE. This significantly increases the daily volume of my work even though they are all dedicated hardworking staff members.

2.1.4.2 Administrative Tasks

Administrative tasks were exacerbated by the lack of administrative support with many respondents calling for more secretarial hours. As one respondent points out it is not so much the complexity of the tasks themselves as the lack of time to do them.

It's not so much the actual tasks, more so the multitude of them. For the most part they are doable but it's the time, the lack of time. On top of teaching duties, the admin stuff is just crazy.

Managing staff and HR issues

OLCS system not reflecting new measures requires a huge amount of extra work emailing to find out what to do when an entry can't be made. Lack of response or not responding in a timely manner from DE to calls or emails as they are 'working from home'. Only email address they seem to respond to is Covid alert one. Teachers and payroll are the worst offenders-so frustrating!! Recruitment is a daily headache-sourcing subs to cover short term leave and hiring staff for longer leave. Since July I have held interviews to recruit 9 temporary teachers and a DP. I have had 3 retirements and am currently recruiting for an SNA, AP1 and AP2.

Supporting the mental health of those in the school community - staff, parents and pupils. These present themselves as complaints, annoyances and picking on others in the school.

Dealing with staff absences takes a lot of my time.

Dealing with out of hours email correspondence adds to the administrative load.

Sorting junk email from PPE suppliers! Dealing with emails from external agencies.

Email workload, bombarded by spam etc from businesses.

Email communication at all hours of the day & night from DE etc!!

Never ending guidance, circulars, information notes etc that are long winded, confusing at times and energy sapping.

Answering surveys, checking communication from various bodies, often conflicting or confusing DE, IPPN, Diocese, CPSMA, INTO.

1. Managing challenging behaviours in ASD classes & dealing with fall out for staff. Possible expulsion of pupil injuring staff and other pupils (paperwork for same). 2. Underperforming senior postholder & paperwork for same. 3. Resignation of valuable postholder & responsibilities no longer being covered as a result. Moratorium pressures

on remaining staff. 4. Managing staff absences due to Covid arrangements & lack of replacements, daily juggling of personnel with GV arrangements etc.

Banking is another chore for the leader. Going to the bank and managing school finances was mentioned by many respondents.

Managing school finances. Managing summer works and emergency works programmes. Maintenance. Special education provision in the school, support plans etc., Juggling finances due to additional expenses around Covid 19.

Going to the bank to lodge money.

Trying to balance the books and keep the accounts in a somewhat healthy state.

Out of hours meetings and paperwork is causing stress.

Zoom meeting from diocese or DE that are expected of principals outside of school hours.

Increased email/communication from different sources that have to be dealt with. The fact that DE circulars are not circulated - you have to go and look for them. So if you don't miraculously know that a circular has come out how are you meant to know to go and look for it. This takes an un-reasonable effort as you have to check the C19 page and also the DE site to trawl through what's there to see if anything new has come.

Need for more support staff hours.

Lack of full-time ancillary staff leads to tasks such as locking up, answering phones, visitors etc.

Implementing new initiatives

New initiatives consistently landing in e.g. wellbeing policy, SSE, Digital Strategy, FSSU[11] requirements.

Administering school transport – it was surprising how often this was mentioned as an added task.

Dealing with bus related issues ,bus escorts, behaviour on the bus 23 school buses.

Managing transport and bus escorts.

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[11] The FSSU is a support mechanism for the school management in the Community & Comprehensive, Primary and Voluntary Secondary sectors which assists them in complying with the provisions of the Education Act 1998 in terms of transparency, accountability and financial responsibility for State and other funding. The FSSU is fully funded by the Department of Education and is hosted by the Joint Managerial Body.

Impact on pupils travelling on bus transport services; substitute availability for SNAs and bus escorts; guidance to bus escorts; pressure from staff to share pupil medical COVID 19 information about possible cases etc.; lack of staff interactions.

2.1.4.3 Structural Tasks

From data it is evident that managing the physical structure of a school is an onerous task. In addition, many respondents appear to be involved in building works. They are endeavouring to lead a school and a building project in tandem during a pandemic.

We currently have three emergency works projects going on and also our school has no car parking so we have received parking funding from CLÁR[12]. This week I have phoned and met with a tree surgeon, overseen his work. I have parent teacher meetings over two evenings until 5.30pm and I am trying to recruit a caretaker. I the meantime I am training up our newly appointed secretary. I am also trying to arrange a Covid Grant for Street lights at the road - where the parking spaces footpaths are to be constructed. I have liaised with the chairperson in person and by phone and text. I have also paid numerous bills / payroll. We have had a NCSE advisor to the school for the day in the past week. I have never been home before 5.30pm and I live 5 minutes from the school. I have spoken to our local councillor and TD by phone re lighting grants, met with an electrician and we have no caretaker so I have had to oil windows and move furniture / fix a lock. I have also spoken with a number of people in the patrons office on a number of school matters including CLÁR funding, school credit card and Sports Capital Funding. Today I spoke with Sligo Sports Partnership arranging a coach to come to our school. It never ever stops.

Dealing with issues relating to an aging school building....applications for grant aid and liaising with engineer.

Ongoing building work. Ventilation maintenance, water leaks, repairs, managing disposal of waste, plumbing and electrical issues.

Dealing with caretaker tasks when the Principal is gone home. Particularly the last 3 months as we are in the final stages of a new 2 room extension

We are in the midst of a major construction project, (onsite) now in its fourth year, noisy, dirty, no staff parking, limited yard space, no PE hall etc. End in sight now TG. Dealing with repairs in the school including builders, plumbers etc. in relation to Covid.

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[12] CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects in rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. The funding works in conjunction with local/Agency and other Departmental funding programmes and on the basis of locally identified priorities.

2.1.4.4 Personal impacts of the leadership role

From data there are many comments on the need to provide emotional support to children, teachers and parents and that this exerts a personal toll on leaders' own wellbeing. In addition, the need to teach while leading. This came up in the previous reports also (Burke and Dempsey, 2020; Dempsey and Burke 2020), however, in these data it is Described in more personal terms and linked to the leadership role. As one respondent put it:

> *Keeping the ship afloat and trying to maintain a calm demeanour - like the swan, trying to glide peacefully along but paddling furiously underwater !!*

> *As a teaching Principal operating a number of special classes is very very challenging. The extra workload and catering for a large staff is extremely difficult and places an inordinate amount of guilt on the principal when he/she is interrupted on a continuous basis. The children are the ones that ultimately lose out.*

This need to teach and lead is having a personal toll on leaders.

> *I have spent hundreds on PPE and antibacterial spray, cleaning products for my school because there wasn't enough money in the account. I won't be looking for money back because our secretary and cleaners need to be paid. Constant interruptions during teaching. Constant reading of new legislation and policy reviews, which have to be done after school and during the weekends. Planning for my own class is proving very difficult. I am the most ineffective teacher in the school at present. I started a Master's in education in September which I had to defer due to mounting pressure at work, Covid and admin related. I had to recruit 2 new teachers in October which was a huge undertaking and very time consuming. Another thing that has had a devastating effect on me is the negativity from parents, and lack of professional support from NCSE especially. So much is expected of me as teaching principal. They don't seem to understand that I can't get it all done with the limited resources at hand, that is teachers / SNA / ancillary / financial. I have had a lot of negative communication in the past few months since we came back, what has struck me is they just don't understand what I am working with... Every email is like a punch in the heart at this stage, after all we have been through preparing the school for return during the pandemic..... the negativity is relentless. I had a SENO give out to me on the phone a few weeks ago which absolutely crushed me. I have since registered with spectrum life counselling which is helping but I am absolutely devastated at how I was treated.*

> *Dealing with and getting emergency support from outside agencies for a student. Had to call the ambulance twice for pupil emergencies. Very stressful.*

Teaching and leading- there is so much that could be written about this dual role of teacher and leader. It is certainly an area that adds to the daily stress of the leaders. This applies to both the principal and the deputy principals who responded to this questionnaire.

Trying to teach and fulfil my role as DP of a large urban school is increasingly stressful. There's lots of talk about teaching principals but little or none about teaching DPs of large schools. The administration days this year are welcome (if we could get subs!). Lack of time to do everything.

Dealing with the residual effects of societal pressures, expectations and problems. Expectation that school is there to fix everything.

Dealing with challenging situations with a minority of parents.

Leaders are protecting their own health and that of the school community.

Encouraging myself and staff to ventilate classrooms while feeling cold in old, badly insulated school. Had neck surgery last March (arthritis related) trying to mind my own physical health in midst of mitigating risk of spreading Covid-19.

Managing DE expectations and communications that are not conducive to promoting a work life balance. For many respondents the "Friday feeling' is one of dread waiting for DE communication.

Last minute communication from the, Dept of Education (emails at 9pm+ on a Fri night) have impinge on my personal time yet again. Having to disclose my personal mobile to the Dept in case of a positive Covid case means I am on call 24/7. Is it any wonder there is a Mass exodus from Principalships?

Dealing with multiple agencies [See Appendix B for a full list (IPPN, 2014)]

Compliance and dealing with the myriad of agencies. The alarming increase in bureaucracy.

The burden of accountability measures introduced in recent years is adding to leaders' tasks.

I think that trying to find time for my personal daily tasks is extremely challenging in the present circumstances. Work life balance does not exist. I think the current situation has really highlighted the intolerable work pressure we are all under. We are expected to continue you with routine tasks as well as dealing with the ever changing situation we find ourselves. On the other hand this work pressure is not new. There has been a huge increase in the number of Agencies under the aegis of the Department of Education over the last 20 years and I think that this has added so much pressure to the workload of schools without necessarily improving Education for children particularly for those with SEN. Secondly, the whole emphasis on accountability which reveals a lack of trust within the system particularly of teachers is having a strangle hold on the development of education. There has to be a balance between trying to standardise and control education and professional autonomy. Excessive accountability holds the danger of breaking down good professional relationships essential for the education of children. I think the pandemic while highlighting the deficits in the system is oddly enough allowing teachers professional freedom and an opportunity to express themselves as teachers and

professionals. The system is finding it difficult to keep up. This I hope will begin a process of renewed respect for the Teaching Profession. While there will always a need for checks and balances I think a system which facilitates teacher autonomy will be less likely to burden and strangle creativity and professionalism.

In conclusion, the complexity of the leaders role, both principal and deputy principal, in primary school has resulted in many extra tasks that they deal with on a daily and weekly basis. Appendix B provide an overview of the different agencies that they deal with as mentioned by the respondents.

2.2 The impact of Covid-19 on leaders

2.2.1 Covid – 19 impact on wellbeing

It is challenging to objectively assess the impact of Covid-19 on wellbeing, as there are many factors that influenced individuals' outcomes during the pandemic. However, given that subjective experiences significantly impact people's health and performance (Crum & Langer, 2007; Davidson & Begley, 2012; McGonigal, 2016; Robertson, 2016), we asked participants to self-report to what extent was their wellbeing was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of 583 participants (68%) reported that the pandemic affected their wellbeing a lot; further 215 participants (25%) reported it affected them moderately; and 63 participants (7%) claimed it affected their wellbeing only a little (Figure 12). Therefore, the findings indicate that Covid-19 pandemic took a toll on many leaders' wellbeing.

Figure 12. The perceived impact of Covid-19 on leaders' wellbeing.
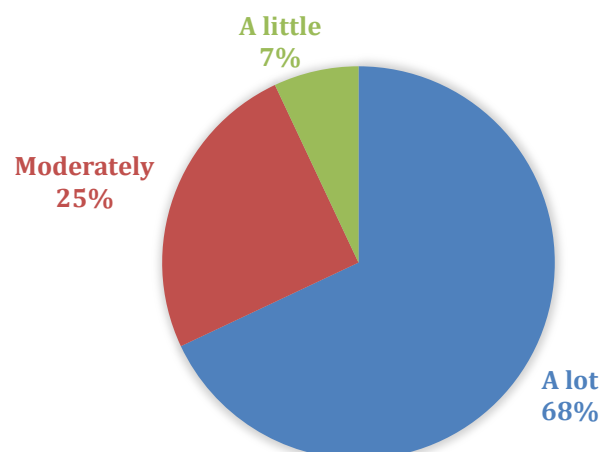
2.2.2 Covid-related Tasks

The two Covid-related tasks that had the greatest impact on leaders were:

1. Covid-related safety measures (M=3.84, SD=.39)

2. Classroom cleaning (M=3.53, SD=.64)

See Figure 13 and Table 9 for further detail.

Figure 13. The mean value of the impact of Covid-related tasks.
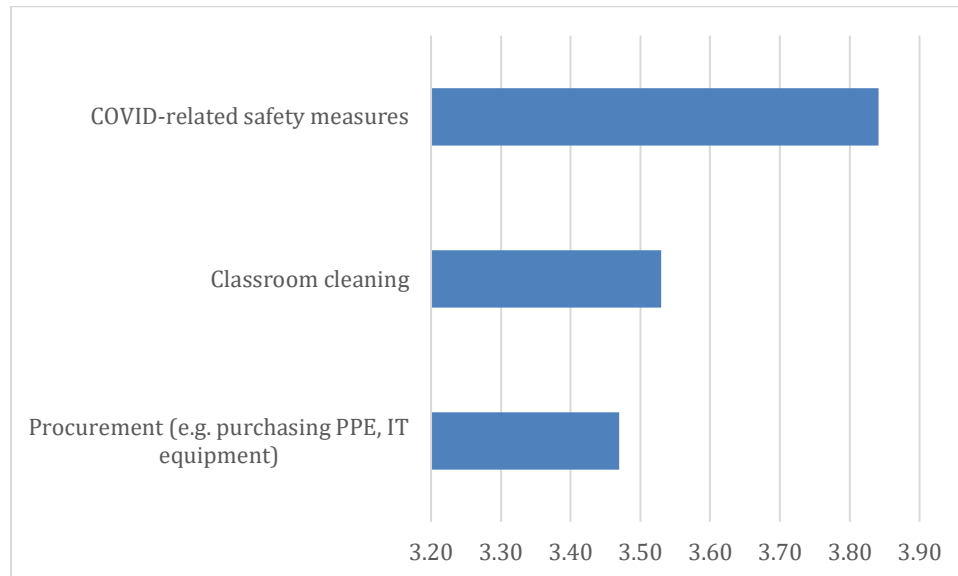
Table 9. Results of mean and standard deviation for the impact of Covid-related tasks.

Tasks	M	SD
COVID-related safety measures	3.84	0.39
Classroom cleaning	3.53	0.64
Procurement (e.g. purchasing PPE, IT equipment)	3.47	0.77

2.2.3 The impact of Covid-19 on work practices

As would be expected Covid-19 has brought a lot of additional tasks for the leaders to implement and ensure that all guidelines are being met. In qualitative responses the following main themes emerged.

There was an increase in staff absenteeism during Covid-19 pandemic due to the need to isolate if you were a close contact or if you suspected you had Covid-19. This added to leaders work in securing cover for classes and in many cases leaders reported that they had to step in a take classes. They also found themselves acting as interpreter for HSE and DE guidelines.

> *The extra pressure of contact tracing with the HSE is unbearable-it is so intense-day & night-when a Covid case occurs in the school. It is extremely lonely -there is no one you're allowed share this info with so no one can help populate each index case form. No one to help send out the HSE emails to contacts, no one to help make the phone calls to contacts. Staff are frightened and feeling left in the dark. To make everything worse, your school inspector now asks you the Covid compliance questions and is involved in the contact tracing. To me this is extra pressure-there is a conflict in these roles. Surely it would be easier on staff who have tested positive if they were answering questions on their practices to a different inspector! The other daily tasks are caring for my 4 children under 8 years old who I rarely see and when they are with me are bribed to within an inch of their lives to be good because mammy is on an important call or a webinar in the evening or a zoom meeting. Work life balance is perfect-it's bananas at work & bananas at home! This is not sustainable. I don't have time to look after my own wellbeing due to the workload.*

> *Level of staff absenteeism due to COVID-19 testing & dealing with HSE re confirmed COVID-19 cases.*

> *Staff stress due to fear of Covid in the school and the close contact definition in schools..... refusal to close the whole classroom if there is a case of COVID.*

> *We had to split or staffroom. Half of us are in the prefab. There is no running water and no facilities out there so every day I have to set up so people can have their break and that there is water there etc. We do not cross bubbles with the other classes but that means that one SNA who cannot be supported when a child who has extreme behavioural difficulties lashes out. I have to keep an eye to make sure they get back in from yard etc and support however possible. So many circulars-guidance notes and fast ones are being pulled at all times. The frontloading model was put on ice because of Covid-however that is effectively the system that we have currently. Cosán was postponed but that is coming in as we speak and nobody has the time or the appetite to attend webinars on these things because there are bigger fish to fry.*

These include cleaning, supervision, managing entry and egress of students and HR related issues due to teachers and SNAs being out sick or as close contacts.

> *Heightened levels of staff and parental concern regarding possible exposure to Covid-19. It takes a portion of EVERY day to deal with concerns presented by staff and / or parents. It has taken 5 hours to deal with each positive Covid case we have had in the school also (and this has always happened outside of school hours - EWTD*

anyone?!!!). This is on top of all usual responsibilities of running an extremely large primary school - a job that is nigh on impossible at the best of times given the decimation of the number of AP1 and AP2 posts that large schools now have access to. Interpretation of guidelines HSE; implementing Covid 19 safety measures.

Teacher stress due to isolation/ worry/ lack of break from class/ pupils unable to be sent on messages to relieve tension/ escalating pupil problems as a result of lack of variety in activities(halla is now staff room as staff room is used as isolation room).

Stress over staff complaining about being cold, pressure to curb spending on PPE, staff demanding masks (very expensive).

Additional tasks around entry and egress of children

This added task is making taking a break almost impossible for leaders.

Collecting children from classes and bringing to the gate where parents are withdrawing them and collecting items from parents at the gate and taking to children in classes.

Supervision, children going home with Covid symptoms, record keeping, drawing up policies.

Yard duty and its rostering. LWR[13] role .Gate duty keeping parents out of the building.
Having to be available 24/7 to the HSE/Public Health for contact tracing.

Gate duty every day rain or shine welcoming each child and ensuring parents do not enter at arrival and ensuring parents queue, wait , collect and leave appropriately each day.

Increased supervision for the leader

There is a need to look at how supervision rota are organised so that all staff get a break from

children during the day.

Supervision of staggered start and finish times.

Safe arrivals and dismissals consume at least 30 minutes daily.

Supervision time I do daily has increased significantly.

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[13] The Protocol for Return to Work COVID 19 provide for the appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR) in each workplace. The LWR will work in collaboration with the employer to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID -19 and monitor adherence to those measures and to be involved in communicating the health advice around COVID-19 in the workplace.

Increased stress among parents

The social supportive role needed at this time is taking its toll on leaders.

> *I seem to have spent the last 3 months helping parents and children deal and cope with the negative effects the Covid 19 Pandemic has had on their mental health. I'm finding it difficult as I feel overwhelmed at times due to the serious issues and problems people are sharing with me. I'm not sure sometimes whether I'm giving the correct advice.*
>
> *Dealing with stressed parents due to Covid. Parents taking out anger on staff Parents Association Committee overstepping their boundaries re: school/ education management and policies.*

In conclusion, the task that leaders had to take on during the last school year in order to keep schools open has taken a toll on their wellbeing and made a busy role even busier with many additional administrative, social and emotional demands on their time. The need for structured support for schools to ensure that all staff can take a break away from children at some point during the day is important.

2.3 Aspects of the role that could be centralised

In order to help leaders find more time so that they can focus on enhancing the wellbeing of their school community post-Covid, we asked leaders to identify tasks which according to them could be centralised. The main two four that emerged related to (1) centralising building works (2) hiring, paying and sourcing staff and (3) policy development and (4) managing special educational needs provision. Additional suggestions for centralisation can be found in Table 10.

Table 10. Leaders' suggestions for centralization.

Area for centralisation	Typical comment/s
Building and maintenance	
Building and maintenance	*Building works, planning permission, securing builders and project management of same.*
	Maintenance. Why can't we have a central agency that provide DIY to schools plumbing/carpentry/miscellaneous jobs. I can't get anyone to do anything for me and then I end up doing it myself at evening and weekends.
	Arranging capital works projects for school - all EWS[14], SWS[15] applications, dealing with Department officials to apply for upgrade in old buildings, then inevitably have to APPEAL the initial refusal to grant-fund any project to update toilets, yard surface, electrical, mechanical works in 40 year old building procurement! The procurement of consultants, and liaising with engineers/ contractors. This is extremely time consuming and frustrating work and causes HUGE STRESS.
	Building works. Caretaking and maintenance (should be like ETB where it is all centralised and principals just ring to get things sorted- they don't have to organise it all and source plumbers etc.,).
	Finances and purchasing although I have reservations about not being able to purchase locally.
Utilities	*Insurance, heating, lighting, gas, refuse collection.*
Staffing the school – HR issues	
Human Resources	*Dealing with staff contracts should be DE, NEPS need a more active role and SCP[16] need to fulfil their part.*

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[14] Emergency Works Scheme
[15] Summer Works Scheme
[16] School Completion Programme

	Locating substitute teacher. *Sub cover for all leaders.* *Automatic supports for SEN children. DE to resume responsibility for OLCS and dealing with all absences and organise sub cover.* *The whole area of redeployment of staff and appointments from the main Panel. This needs a radical overhaul and if you have an hour to spare I will outline my views as I have been on both side of the "Panel".* *Arranging subs; many finance items like payroll, audits etc; writing policies that can be tweaked at later date like IPPN wrote for Covid; interviewing - 3rd person to be paid by Patron.* *Locating subs. Advertising for teachers. Interviewing teachers.*
Payment for ancillary staff.	*Payment of ancillary staff. Wages for ancillary staff.*
Vetting for sub cover	*Garda vetting for all non-teaching staff and visiting 'teachers', coaches etc. - too much unnecessary duplication.* *If SNAs could be centrally Garda Vetted rather than each school having to vet them through the diocese(takes time and means same person getting vetted a number of times if subbing).*
Employing cleaning staff	*Employment of cleaning staff and contracts for same.*
Policy development	
Policy development	*There are so many plans and policies to be completed every year. Give us a decent template and we can adapt it to suit the needs of our school instead of starting from scratch each time, not knowing what we are supposed to be doing.* *Policy formulation, templates for policies.* *Policy development, curriculum plans - templates that could be developed by schools for other schools.* *Drawing up policies (often a one for all does fit!).* *Draft policies could be drawn up for all schools and then changes could be made on an individual level. An operating procedures manual for schools. McDonalds and Starbucks don't expect each franchise to make up their own policies and procedures!* *Each principal is 'reinventing the wheel' in their own context. Surely we could work in clusters/teams to share the administrative burdens?*

	School Policies; general policy scripts with compulsory areas to be created as templates for schools to edit.
Special Educational Needs provision	
School transport	*School transport (special school).*
SEN equipment procurement	*SEN equipment procurement, this takes so much time for me.* *Applying for SEN resources like Assistive Technology. Buying ICT devices etc.,* *Sourcing Assistive Technology for children who have been granted the funds. There should be a recommended type of A.T. granted by the department.*
NEPS psychologist	*Work with NEPS could be centralised.*
Other areas for centralisation	
BOM Policy	*Since appointed I have advocated to create Regional Educational Boards and get rid of the Boards of Management. Roles that could be centralised are appointments, procurement, buildings, maintenance.* *Board of Management roles could be centralised to ease pressure on principals working with volunteer board members.* *BOM structure is not fit for purpose. Way too powerful and too dependent on 'pot luck' getting the right people on board with appropriate skills and expertise. Would like to see how a more streamlined centralised governance would operate.* *Building Works and Finances. I think that the Board of Management structures could be altered so that there is a Bursar and Maintenance salaried position.*
Droichead	*Hand Droichead back to the inspectorate*
GDPR	*POD[17] has all details, why do I still need to collect permission from parents to send details to HSE, DE.... Give CLEAR detail on what we must do with GDPR, RCT[18], Data....all these things that are now my job but I never heard of in college.*
Technology support	*Where is the IT support we were once promised? I have to get my husband out (unpaid) to fix IT problems in our school.* *ICT infrastructure in terms of supply and technical service onsite (and not over a phone!!!) Meaningful IT support. Meaningful maintenance support.*

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[17] Primary Online Database
[18] Relevant Contracts Tax (RCT)

	Photocopy paper and other supplies.
School meals	Procuring and tendering for School Meals.
School accounts	We need to centralise school accounts and have help to do them when needed.
COVID – 19 procurement	All PPE etc should be centrally purchased.
External agencies	External agencies often send out a myriad of paperwork to fill in and often this paperwork can be reduced significantly.

The following comments were typical of the listed services.

> -Croke Park hours training; more funding and roll out of a selection of compulsory courses for SNAs and teachers to attend e.g. TEACCH[19], Lamh, C-ABA, Colourful Semantics, Sensory Integration, PECS so that more staff are trained in meeting pupils needs.

> -Central training system to monitor and offer training to all staff in; First Aid, Tusla children first, manual handling, fire safety and fire marshal, MAPA, defibrillator use, risk assessments and health and safety awareness in the workplace.

> Wages/ancillary. Heating and lighting. Insurance. Day to day maintenance (e.g. cluster for smaller schools to share caretaker roles for smaller jobs). Access like other departments to the skills and supports of the likes of OPW for works. Minor/emergency/summer works schemes. Digital maintenance and procurement. Day to day things such as contracts for cleaning, bins, pest control, alarm maintenance etc.

> Everything Finance, HR, IR, Administration, Procurement, Technology, Legal, Insurance, SEN training & resourcing, Service provisions - cleaning, maintenance, building issues, board of management, subbing shortages, parent WhatsApp groups to name but a few!

> Where does one begin HR Ancillary staff Payroll SNA applications Sub recruitment Works on school building The BOM should not be voluntary They should be paid SEAI energy reporting Parking lighting procurement E-tenders RCT Accounts Summer works Emergency works I could go on and on Sacraments.

> Policy formation and curriculum development. Primary schools have been hijacked by accountability....... less time on paper trails and more time on children please!!!! All planning and building issues should be dealt with by someone who is qualified in

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[19]A range of ASD-specific approaches has been developed and a selection of the most commonly used approaches is detailed here.
https://www.sess.ie/categories/autismautistic-spectrum-disorders/aspergers/teaching-approaches-appropriate-students-asds

that area. I am not an engineer, an accountant, a plumber etc. Let me do my job which is supposed to be leading teaching and learning 😳😳

Many people mentioned the need to put secretaries and caretakers on the DE payroll. In describing the different tasks that could be centralised the leaders give an insight into the complexity of their role and how it could be supported

2.4 Summary

In this section, we reviewed leaders' daily pressures. We identified that the vast majority of leaders work overtime, as they are unable to cope with the demands of their daily work. The daily tasks that have the highest impact on them are Covid-related safety measures, general time pressures, ensuring all DE guidelines are followed, late night/Friday communications from DE and procurement. Some of the tasks are not possible to eliminate, however there are a number of leaders' daily responsibilities that can centralised. The two main ones that leaders have mentioned are building works and arranging substitute teachers. Alleviating some of the pressures from leaders' daily work will provide them with extra time to focus on the priorities of ensuring quality teaching and learning and school community's wellbeing post-Covid.

3. LEADERS' SUPPORTS

3.1 External Agencies

The external agencies offer leaders great supports in many areas of their daily lives. Please see Appendices A and B for a list of external agencies. Despite their usefulness, sometimes they inadvertently cause them additional pressures. In order to help leaders, find extra time to focus on enhancing the wellbeing of their school communities, we asked leaders what actions could be taken to improve their interaction with external agencies in the future. The four themes that emerged related to: (1) improving communication, (2) improving collaboration, (4) schedule interaction, (4) offer more SEN supports. Figure 14 provide a pictorial representation of the emerging themes.

Figure 14. Actions to improve an interaction with external agencies.
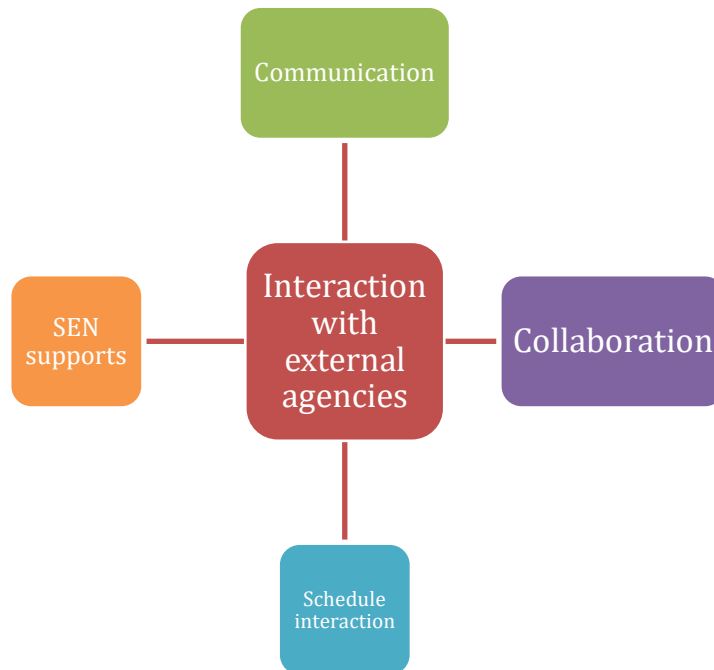
3.1.1 Working with external agencies

Many respondents commend the IPPN on their brokerage role in dealing with agencies. They provide a forum for the leaders to communicate. "*IPPN is fabulous and my go to place to see questions principals put into the group. I feel I have no knowledge of external agencies really only as I come across them*". This role is vital especially for leaders new to the role who need extra support at different times of the year. However, all respondents are calling for more streamlined communication between agencies and between the schools and agencies.

> *More streamlined - we tend to get multiple emails and as a teaching principal, I barely get time to read and act on them all. My main priority is my teaching role and admin is left to 1 day per week when I am in the office (or outside of teaching hours). It can be hard to keep on top of the huge flow of information and prioritise where actions are required.*

The Department of Education (DE) come on for the most criticism around communication and also NEPS. Some respondents, a minority say they have a good working relationship with external agencies such as the following: "*All the HSE Community School related departments have improved significantly in recent years - very professional, committed and genuinely eager to engage with schools in a meaningful way".* Many call for more focused funding for agencies that work with schools.

> *Interaction with external agencies would be improved if they were adequately resourced to meet the needs that are required of them. This is currently not the case. E.g. - No NEPS psychologist assigned to the school after Christmas. - Unable to find anyone willing to take on a SCPA assessment[20]. - No SENO assigned to the school for a number of months last year. - Practically non-existent external support for children with ASD in our special classes. - Very poor support for vulnerable children who require support from CAMHS[21]. - Chronic delay in completing AON[22]s.*

Another respondent made the following remark around resourcing: "*If agencies such as HSE, TUSLA, NEPS and CAMHS were better resourced they might provide a service. They do nothing for me or for my school".*

One respondent provides a possible way forward for the issues around communication such as the sharing of information and an awareness of the work of schools, as exemplified in the following quote:

> *Depends on agencies. Dept of Ed should have a school profile page that only Principal has access to and you could add info up onto it. A bit like the ROS system for tax payers. One could add in sub information, updates re pupils when applying for supports, and overall a whole school profile could be created. Clusters of schools could be managed then by certain DE employees. Also, I often wonder do DE employees ever set foot inside schools and do they know what schools are about…for*

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[20] The Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA) is provided by NEPS and DE to assist in the delivery of a psychological service to all schools. The scheme is not a substitute for a full educational psychological service of the sort provided by NEPS/DE. It is an interim measure intended to supplement the NEPS service and meet current urgent needs for psychological assessment of children and young people. All SCPA assessments must be sanctioned in advance by a NEPS psychologist or by the local NEPS Regional Director. Only psychologists listed in the current SCPA Panel are eligible to carry out work under the SCPA scheme. The operation of the scheme is reviewed on an ongoing basis by NEPS/DE.

[21] Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is a specialist service for people under the age of 18 with mental health difficulties.

[22] AON Assessment of Need

example we will build a new ASD unit over the next year. When applying for funding one hopes the architect will lead the project well but if personnel from DE went to schools they might see exactly what we are trying to do. And also save themselves a lot of money. Tusla the social workers could feed info back to us which is integral to pupils well-being and progress. We hand over info but it is not reciprocated and it's frustrating. Re speech and lang therapists, CAMHS psychology, occupational therapists these supports needs to be clustered between schools. The money invested would save millions down the line when pupils end up way behind in their development because the system is so flawed. Telling a family to wait 3 years for an assessment is criminal and the only reason why some kids are as good as they are and can access some sort of curriculum is because of the work that schools do. Schools were about learning and reading and maths. The other aspects such as social, emotional, psychological, physical, gross and fine motor are all steadily diminishing the time spent on the actual curriculum. Schools have been left to anchor pupils and they are often their only scaffolding because systems haven't changed in a long time.

Different leaders cited issues with a variety of agencies:

HSE are the most unstructured and difficult agency to deal with. Tusla comes next. There needs to be common understanding of the role of the school. Our purpose is not to serve these agencies. We facilitate them!

The department and the NCSE are a disgrace and do nothing but add to my workload and stress. I have a great relationship with all of the other agencies I deal with.

Many participants ask for a clear one stop place they can go to find a list of all the agencies that schools deal with. Each theme is now further elaborated with the voices of leaders.

3.1.2 Communication

Under this theme there are a number of sub themes, such as (1) time, (2) paperwork, and (3) communicating with the DE (Figure 15). Communication is vital for accessing services and responding to policy imperatives. There is evidence of strained communication at time between schools and the DE. This has been highlighted previously (Burke and Dempsey, 2020; Dempsey and Burke, 2020). NEPS also are mentioned many times by respondents.

Figure 15. Communication with external agencies
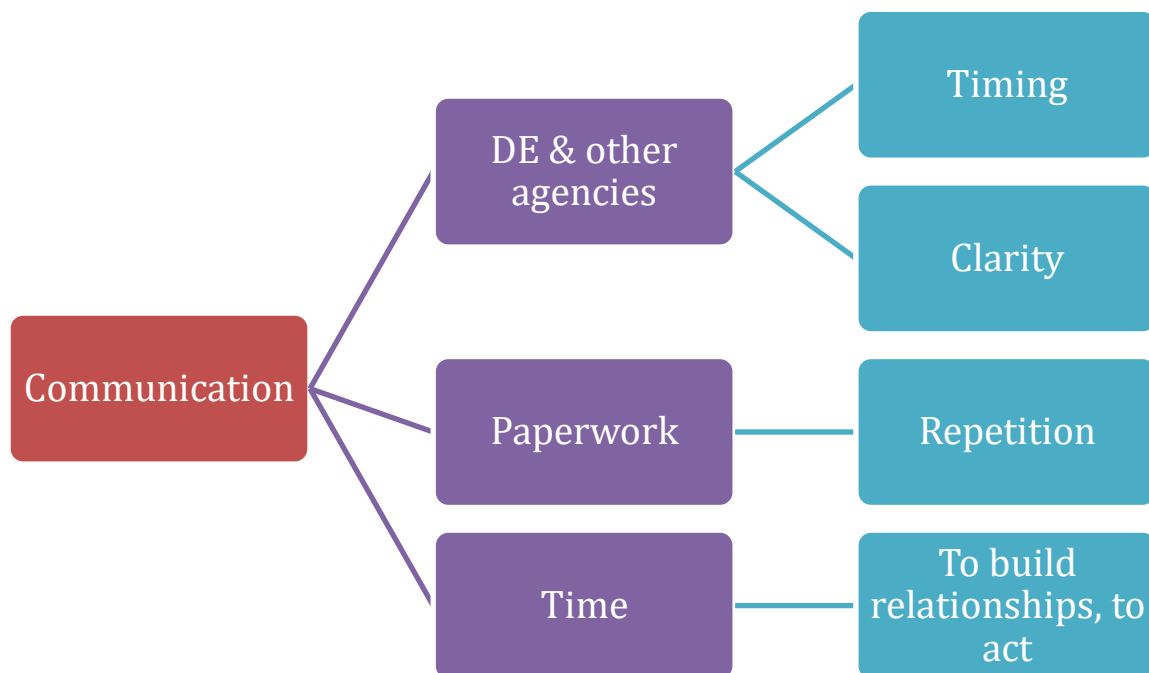
Many respondents mention the need for building relationships between the DE and schools.

> *DE need to establish, as a matter of urgency, effective and meaningful dialogue between school leaders and department.*

> *Correspondence during working hours only. Respect shown to Principals by the DE, information that directly pertains to school to be emailed directly.*

3.1.2.1 Timing of communication

Leaders are asking for timely communication that is responsive to their needs, comes during the working week, to them first ahead of media and that is informative with clear guidelines on how to implement requests being asked for.

> *I find the IPPN/CPSMA fantastic. Department is a disaster - no response at all to urgent queries.*

> *The single biggest stressor Agency this year has been DE closely followed by NCSE, neither of which are fit for purpose. The School Governance model is unworkable.*

> *We do not receive notification of new circulars/ notes/ direction. Information is in the public arena before schools are aware. Means constantly checking various sites to*

ensure don't miss anything and/or paying a subscription to IPPN to make sure to stay up to date.

With e.g. Department of Education it would help if phones were manned / answered. It's rare to actually get through to somebody. In general staff are very helpful though once you actually get to talk to them.

The DE could inform us about initiatives in a timely manner and before the media Other agencies need to understand that teaching principals are not available until 3.

3.1.2.2 Communication clarity and support

Leaders ask for clarity of what is expected of them in supporting their young people.

Agencies such as DE and NEPS appear to have little understanding of the day to day demands and needs within an average school. The reality of interactions / communications / instructions, from the DE in particular, is that, as a body, they are separate to schools, their role being reduced to laying down expectations/ requirements in often convoluted documents/ circulars (sometimes in the guise of 'guidelines' / 'support' frameworks). While they speak of wishing to support schools, in reality, they present themselves to schools as a bureaucratic external agency, with a hierarchical role.

Appeal to DE to provide clear, concise, timely advice DIRECTLY TO SCHOOLS DURING WEEKDAYS - not on Friday nights!!

I'm finding this increasingly difficult as many agencies will only answer phones at certain times of the day which don't always suit. Also, many agencies e.g. Community Psychology won't speak to teachers / Principals now as they will only speak to parents. This makes it difficult for schools to ensure that parents are accessing the resources which are necessary for their children.

If you could actually get through to them on the phone when needed, or have them ring you back

They could be more available .. no NEPS psychologist available in our area. Some agencies are very poor at returning calls and responding to emails. Also many redeployed.

I have no problem with external agencies but they need to improve on their communication skills.

More communication, more real support and not just platitude.

3.1.2.3 Paperwork

Paperwork comes in many guises for leaders, through form filling, vetting, online claims

system, reports, applications for SEN hours and even writing letters for planning permission

to certify people are past pupils of the school. There was a long list from the data and some of it is completed with zeal while others are just too much after a long week.

Could they get over the paperwork issue. I had to be vetted by the teaching council - again. Now I've been vetted by GAA, by my parish, by the TC twice. All in the last 5 years. Excessive and crazy.

The DE should be more available for queries on procedure and for OLCS[23] issues.

Be more supportive. There seems to be a fight for resources, for everything.....then there is the paperwork to present....could agencies not help with the paperwork ...be 'on our side'!

Greater co-ordination between the outside agencies in their relationship with schools. Greater IT use for communicating with schools - central hub for information for example. I write my school name roll number phone number staff list etc etc about 1500 times a year !! Prepopulate those forms folks in the DE !! :)

If they assessed the needs in a supportive manner rather than the paperwork having to be completed by schools (principals) all the time. This is growing all the time. There is very little time for teaching principal to be completing these and the consequences are too high.

3.1.2.4 Time to deal with communications

Thinking about the theme of communication it is clear that an issue is how leaders are trying to respond to and act on communication without sufficient time to devote to building relationships with agencies and acting as the knowledge brokers between agencies and the school communities. This theme also links with the need many mention that agencies had a more realistic idea of the work of schools and especially teaching principals and deputy principals.

More release time to engage with outside agencies.

More efficient use of time, e.g. case conferences should not take upwards of 3 hours. Being able to have a direct access to outside agencies instead of constantly looking for a contact person.

I find that external agencies don't appear to respect the working day of teachers. If agencies kept contact to working day / working time (holiday excluded from contact.

If I had more admin days per week and a full time secretary my work with outside agencies would be much improved.

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[23] Online Claims System in Primary and Post Primary Schools

I'd like to talk to them after 2:30pm. Along with everything else I still have to teach children fulltime, so seeing NEPS at 2:30am, or whoever else, doesn't suit me really at all, ethically or otherwise. This or substitution for deputy release days would be better.

I find I am always obliged to fit in with their agenda and time-frame and find I end up doing so in the best interest of the pupil but I don't find it works the other way around. They seem to be able to put up an out of office on their emails and take breaks which I find I get punished by if I try that (i.e. punished because I've missed something that is relevant to the children).

More time is needed for teaching principals . It is absolutely impossible to expect teaching principals to engage in a meaningful way with external agencies. I think it is difficult for people who not in the role to understand its complexities, including people from external agencies themselves, who it seems to be become frustrated when teaching principals have to skip meetings etc.

Everything could be improved with proper staffing and resources. Don't have time for anything.

3.1.3 Collaboration

Many respondents are calling for more collaboration between agencies. The main message here is "*So many outside agencies that do very similar jobs. Lots could be combined'.* From reading these data in this survey it is almost impossible to keep track of all the agencies that are mentioned. We have attempted to map the agencies in Appendix B based on the IPPN 2014 publication on the administration burden of primary school leaders (IPPN, 2014). See also Appendix A for a 2006 representation of the Leader's Communication Net (IPPN, 2006).

> *Would be great to see CSL, PDST and IPPN working closely together to provide coherent supports for school leaders.*
>
> *Better communication and team work among agencies would be helpful.*
>
> *Not having different agencies replicating the same thing.*
>
> *Information between school and them should flow in both directions. That is too often not the case.*
>
> *Any chance external agencies could coordinate and time policy/ press releases to avoid each other's?*
>
> *Put all the information needed in one document or database and let them access it, no calls or messages outside of work hours and do not contact us if it is not related to teaching and learning.*

So many outside agencies that do very similar jobs. Lots could be combined.

School principals are dealing with too many separate agencies. Impossible to find the time to deal with everyone effectively.

If there were less of them / if the system was streamlined and efficient to meet the needs of pupils and schools this would be a great help.

Having NCSE properly staffed & resourced to assist schools & children. Clarity as to what agencies & people are responsible for what...HSE, Enable Ireland, Public Health, SENO. We seem to have to run in circles & beg & cajole to get what our pupils are (or should be entitled to).

Formal structures for linking with Service providers. Easier contact with Tusla, NCSE, DE. One stop contact would be much better to link with agencies .. too many departments to deal with. Answerable to one only....not 57!

More in-depth conversation between CAMHS and school around meeting the needs of students.

Each agency pursues its own agenda, no holistic approach. Schools left to fill the gaps so a more co-ordinated, centralised approach would be better.

Too many external agencies - IPPN have suggested a calendar of change for many years but every organisation is interested in justifying themselves.

Finally a point made by one respondent on the language of collaboration is very illustrative of the issues they face.

The language and approach of the 'inspectorate' needs to change if they are genuinely invested in supporting schools' development. The title 'inspector' also mitigates against the possibility of this happening. It does not acknowledge the high level of knowledge and professionalism in school organisations, and indeed, creates a societal perception that schools in some way fall short of their responsibilities in needing external inspectors. Collaboration is at the core of what schools do, and what they need, in terms of continuing development.

3.1.3.1 Scheduling more focused interaction with schools

Many respondents suggest that there should be some way to have more focused interactions with external agencies. Time allocated for networking would also be welcome.

External agencies could schedule their initiatives - they are all very busy keeping me extremely busy!

Time to be allocated to network with them, impossible when teaching a class and the extra work.

DE to stop releasing important information via the media before they have informed schools. DE to properly support/ resource schools by funding an external accounts person and the end of year audit. DE and NCSE to put in place a timeline for Special classes so that school can seek training for staff in advance of enforced allocation of Special class.

That they take place as far as possible within school working hours. At present, with all the extra webinars they are in the evenings and after school hours which makes it even more difficult to relax.

Schedule weekly/monthly appointments. We are at their beck & call not vice-versa More notice with clearer school focused guidelines would be welcome.

Less dealings with external agencies who place excessive demands on principals would be ideal-DE, NCSE, HSE, Archbishops House to name a few.

Meetings at stat of year to outline services available, meet practice managers to get clear outline of referral pathways. Access for parents/teachers to where children are on waiting lists, estimated time of assessment etc, each school looking for this information and it should be more readily available.

This need for school specific support is evident throughout the data in this section.

If we had access to a speech therapist, OT etc per school instead of multiple different people it would be more efficient.

There needs to be less turnover of staff to foster proper relationships with external agencies.

They could listen to people on the ground in the classroom. No good making up policies through exercises on paper they need to see if it works in practice.

Having key person per agency to directly and consistently communicate with would be a great help.

Child protection and dealing with Tusla appear to be a cause of anxiety for many leaders.

Hugely concerned about impact of child protection issues. Mandatory reporting is a hugely blunt instrument and has colossal and damaging effects on those accused, rightly, or far more seriously wrongly.

Less of them. And that they reply and follow up on matters, Tusla are terrible at updating on cases.

Need better resources- e.g. Tusla, too much time spent chasing up support for vulnerable children.

3.1.4 External agencies dealing with Special Educational Needs

The amount of work involved in dealing with students will additional needs is mentioned most often in these data. These issues range from sourcing OTs for students to dealing with SEN allocation. This long quote encompasses many of the issues that appear in the data around dealing with agencies.

> Direct communication to schools rather than the media first when there is a new initiative, PPE crisis, circular etc. No communication demands during scheduled holiday time. The NCSE should not be allowed to ask for so much paperwork when considering a child's needs for SNA review of SEN hours review, it is ridiculous. Speech and language therapists etc. Should not expect me to deliver their programmes to pupils as well as teach. I am without a NEPS psychologist for the past 3 years...filling these roles is essential. The SENO needs to understand that I am a teaching principal - their demands are exhausting. The Inspectorate should adopt a supportive attitude - I'm doing my best but feel their motives for an unannounced inspection is more about 'catching me out' than seeing the realities of being a teaching Principal.

These leaders are constantly reminding us that they are working with these agencies to find the help needed for the children they teach and when they are not successful it is the children who suffer. This is a very difficult situation for leaders to be in.

> Perhaps they are over-worked but they are not responding to the needs of the children, HSE, NEPS etc. for example, the school was told there was no NEPS service for us this year. The school was told to use the SCPA system. Not one person on the list is available to work in our area. The work is to be completed by the end of January but still nobody to do it. In the meantime children suffer, this leads to stress on teachers that is hard for me to watch.

> For them to be more understanding of just how hard my job is. I dread calls from SENO as I fear job cuts and negative judgements on my work and how the school is run when in fact I know in my heart that we work so so hard for our SEN children. We have no autonomy as to what is best for our children. I have also felt really let down by NCSE when we had very aggressive children(5) in one ASD class. Teachers , SNAs and my health greatly suffered both physically and mentally. I felt hugely unsupported.

> No two way communication between HSE Early intervention teams and School Age Teams[24], no accountability it would appear for having little or no input into the children's progress, phone calls are not returned, answering machines only. DE, similarly, answering machines, emails not returned, all particularly bad since Covid, very poor at the best of times. Support agencies for schools have functioned well below par when schools are expected to function as normal, with particular

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[24] The School Age Team is for those aged 5-18 years and their families. The team comprises of a Clinical Psychologist, Occupational Therapist (OT) and Speech and Language Therapist (SLT).

reference to supports for our most vulnerable SEN pupils. NCSE, SENO, HSE Early Intervention Teams[25] and School Age Teams in particular.

Designate days that SENO could visit a school and try to coordinate all team members to be available to schools that week. Less paperwork for sanction of school transport.

SENO makes no contact. NEPS interaction is very good. NCSE and Department aren't getting the opinion of those working on the ground, nor are they listening to problems being experienced by principals and schools.

Easier access to supports for children especially NCSE which seems to put increasing obstacles for support in place each year i.e. SNA support.

Less paperwork and checklists. The difficulty in getting resources through ridiculous mountains of paperwork is a waste of time. Submitting PPP[26] each year for children with SNA access is a complete waste of time.

I have found working with the new SENO particularly challenging this year with new requirements for transfer of pupils to Special Classes in the Senior School but at least now I know what is required and am better prepared for next year! Clarity in roles. The referral forms are getting longer and longer and taking more time. Each agency seems to expect schools to supply the information and carry out the work. It would be great if the Speech & language teams / OT's/ NEPS/ could offer the schools more of their time. I don't need another course or manual. We need people to actually work with the children not leave it all up to the school to carry out their instructions (which we were already doing through programmes we had already put in place usually!) Trust. I'm involved in a number of building projects in the school and being treated very badly by the DE. They aren't interested, they don't care. I love my school and they rely on that dedication when they need me at 5pm on a Saturday evening but tell me nothing and don't respond when I need something. HSE and disability services are non-existent for our children and children with significant need who will be starting in mainstream which may not be the right placement for them and they won't have support. Parents need to know this and not just be told that their child is 'entitled' to a mainstream education. Their child, as with all children, is entitled to an appropriate education.

I find NCSE very frustrating. Telling parents that the Principal can give an SNA to any child, it's up to her. We need more support.

More psychologists!!! more SNA's, quicker waiting lists for OT, SLT, Psychology, CAMHS.

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[25] The Early Intervention Team is for children, aged 0-6 years, and their families who have complex developmental needs. The team comprises of an Occupational Therapist, Psychologist, and Speech and Language Therapist.

[26] Schools are required to put in place a Personal Pupil Plan (PPP) including a care plan for all pupils availing of SNA support. Schools who employ SNAs must have a clear policy in place, as part of the school planning process to manage and deploy SNAs: (Section 15: Personal Pupil Plan (PPP)

School Age Team needs to get their act together.. It is impossible to access services and this was before COVID hit. No support systems for children with ASD or there seems to be no communication between Early Intervention and SAT. EIT[27] sign off on children and there is no transfer of information to the SAT. It is very frustrating. NEPS have removed themselves from the frontline in primary school. It is impossible to access assessments for children. SAT team are telling parents to get principals to refer children to NEPS. It is a vicious cycle. Parents are under the illusion that NEPS cover all assessments and that their child should have automatic access to one. Improved support for the children in my care without having to fight every step of the way and beg for their needs to be met....

I feel agencies such as the NCSE have been very unhelpful and critical of us in the past 3 years, especially this term. My opinion as a school leader has not been respected. They should treat school leaders as professionals who have qualifications and experience working with children.

Agencies need to familiarise themselves with current SET model. They continue to recommend Resource hours, and recommend SNA access, without referring to the necessary criteria. The role of OT, SLT etc should be to work directly with children..... rather than devising School programmes, which SET teachers are expected to implement.

Tusla to be more proactive and HSE etc stop referring pupils back saying school will assess through NEPS.

Get rid of NCSE. Don't need a SENO just need supports. Enable Ireland and HSE need to take out the bureaucracy and give support to the children who need it, and their parents.

The frustration of leaders navigating the supports and agencies for children with any additional needs is very evident in these data.

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[27] A referral to the Early Intervention Team can be made by your public health nurse, pediatrician, GP, physiotherapist, speech therapist, public health nurse, occupational therapist, social worker or any other health care professional.

3.2 Past Professional Development

Another support that aims to alleviate leaders' pressure by providing them with additional knowledge, skills and peer support is leaders' professional development. In order to help leaders work more effectively and have more time to focus on looking after their school community's wellbeing, we asked leaders what professional development courses they had completed in the last four years which they found particularly useful.

Some participants left this section blank, others said "*None. There is very little, if any training for deputy principals*". One other contends that "*See above! Systems demands leave little time for professional or self-development*". The most mentioned courses were Misneach, CSL coaching and mentoring, various IPPN courses, INTO courses and PDST. A number of respondents spoke about completing post-graduate studies at their own expense. As one respondent said "*Any such training I obtained in my own time and paid for myself*". The value of coming together to do courses and mentoring is reflected in the following comment:

> *Various courses online over the past nine months. Presently three of us are taking part in Forbairt Programme (online) and it is so helpful as we have a newly appointed DP and AP2 postholder. I am a mentor with CSL and this is a two way learning process - I am blessed to have an enthusiastic mentee and we are 'exploring' the role of the principal together. IPPN Conferences have been a great meeting 'ground' to meet and attend various workshops. All interactions with other principals are very helpful - share problems, solutions etc.*

Many mention that accessing courses on-line has meant that they are doing more courses. "*So much this year. All necessary and good*". The message from one respondent is interesting "*A lot! Lack of CPD is not an issue - it's the misconception that principals are CEOs with the ability to just recruit personnel when needed*".

Coaching is mentioned many times by respondents and there are many that ask for it to be on-going or available at different points in their career. "*I did the coaching programme for principals which was great. I would love to have more of it. On-going would be the dream*". The amount of courses available is very evident in many responses such as the following:

> *Misneach- particularly useful. Pity was cut short due to pandemic PDST- child protection, GDPR, PLC, Plean scoile, Digital Framework, Sustained support for PLC, PE, IPPN conference seminars and networking INTO conference*". Another respondent cited the following courses: "*Currently engaged in Tanaiste with PDST. This is fantastic. I've done the summer course too and found it very useful. CP protection training. Droihead training NCSE leading an inclusive school (course) was very useful. Regular DP cluster meetings are invaluable*".

Professional development is valued by many of the leaders with responses such as the following:

> *CSL Mentor and Cara training has been really interesting and useful both for Mentor/Cara situations and for school situations around the need to really listen to others and respond the correct way. NIPT training for Droichead and presenting workshops and cluster meetings has been very insightful for supporting new staff. PDST digital support and summer courses have really improved my digital skills and this stood to me during closure for Covid. IPPN conference is always a great way to upskill between keynote speakers and workshops.*

The need for substitute cover to attend courses was highlighted by a few respondents such as the following*: "None. Many courses are not substitutable so I can't go on those. I have 2 small children so don't go on courses in the evenings as there is always way too much to do at school. If I do manage to leave school 'early' i.e. before 4pm, it is to go home to my family which is once in a blue moon. Subs are impossible to get so courses that I would like to go on, I can't when a sub isn't available. To be honest I have stopped even trying because trying to source a sub is more hassle than it's worth".* Access to courses in the on-line environment is better but lack of broadband can make attending challenging for some: *"Current Webinars are more accessible than face to face. I was always interested in voluntary CPD but am fed up with the bombardment of courses and too tired at end of day to volunteer any more. Our broadband at school is a joke at the moment and can't do any CPD with it as it is."*

Some courses were postponed due to COVID and will need to be provided in the coming year. This may lead to pressure on the system. *"Misneach was excellent but we didn't get to complete the process due to Covid, Mentoring groups were excellent but again Covid stopped that".*

Some course add to the paperwork:

> *Training during the last year has mainly been in the area of remote learning, school re-opening plans, risk assessments, and Board of management Training .It's the type of training that places more demands on your time and I think the amount of paperwork required a lot of the time is excessive.*

> *"Lots of DE courses and in-service. INTO courses, Ed centre courses. Some useful - most just adding more useless tasks to my job! I dread most of the DE courses. They just leave Principals feeling exhausted and even more stressed!*

Table 11 provides a list and quotes relating to the most effective professional leadership courses as reported by participants.

Table 11. The most effective professional leadership development courses over the last 4 years.

Professional development in the last 4 years	
Misneach	Most mentioned CPD course by leaders.
PDST Misneach course - very good and great for creating networks. *Misneach was fantastic- very upset not to have the chance to finish it. Mentor programme also excellent.* *Although more than three years ago, the training that I received on the Misneach course when I was first appointed as a principal was excellent.* *Misneach was by far the BEST thing I could have signed up for. It was invaluable in every way.*	
Professional learning communities	Develop from CPD courses and appear to be very important to leaders through their comments
Not so much training but meeting others in same position. *I am an active member of the Irish Primary Principals Network and their conferences and seminars are very helpful as is the local principal network.* *Coaching, INTO seminars, IPPN seminars - the coaching was probably the best - individual discussions and time for thought and reflection.* *Centre for school leadership are excellent and networking with fellow principals through IPPN.*	
CSL Coaching	Second most mentioned CPD course
CSL training was super. *CSL coaching - v useful. CSL mentoring.* *CSL personal and group coaching; both excellent.* *Coaching was the best development course I ever did. I draw on its benefits daily. I have also completed INTO training seminars on conflict resolution.*	
PDSL Course	*PDSL went very well. Have developed good positive relationships with other new principals as a result*
PDST Principal Support Meeting	Mentioned many times. *PDST courses can be very practical also therefore useful.*
Forbairt	Mentioned by many people
Droichead	Mentioned by a number of respondents
IPPN Mentoring course	*It was excellent*
IPPN Conferences	*Love IPPN conference, great place to meet people and talk and network*
IPPN Webinars	*IPPN Courses very practical and useful in preparing for the role.*
IPPN Principal Summer Course	*IPPN summer course was relevant and informative for me*

	The IPPN groups are the BEST DEtressors - logging in and chatting and laughing with others in the same boat has definitely been the best medicine for me!! Piew[28] model-excellent.
IPPN Ciall Ceannaithe	*IPPN Ciall Ceannaithe. I redid this after my career break after maternity leave.*
INTO seminars	

In-service - curricular and INTO training seminars for principals. Into seminars are excellent.
INTO webinars on Wednesdays very good at the moment.
INTO one-day principals' seminars have been excellent. IPPN Conferences have been excellent. I have also received CPD in child protection.

MBSR Teacher training	
Tánaiste course	*Am half way through this year's Tánaiste program and finding it excellent.*
Child protection [mentioned by many leaders]	*Very little CPD completed, Child Protection training was useful*
Trauma Informed Care	*Restorative Practices Trauma Informed Care - brilliant!*

Many Technology courses such as Google classroom, SeeSaw and so on mentioned

Many mentions of postgraduate study in all third level universities

Advanced Diploma in Educational Law CSL Mentor for Newly Appointed Principals - excellent CPD and networking opportunities CPD Digital Learning
Masters in Christian Leadership in Education from Mary Immaculate College.
Coaching with CSL I am a principal mentor and find the training really beneficial. Currently completing Entrepreneurial Educator course with UCD Innovation Academy.
PDSL postgrad diploma Masters in school leadership with UL They were both invaluable!
I have set myself a target each year and continuously up skill. I've completed a masters in educational management and a diploma in counselling and psychotherapy for young children and adults etc. I trained as a NIPT mentor also.
Research Masters in Science (Health education). Lots of leadership summer courses. CSL Mentor training.
EdD Maynooth University. It was excellent in terms of being able to bring focus to the teaching and learning in our school and learn how to research our own context.
Completed MEd in educational leadership from NUI Maynooth.
Coaching, Currently doing a PhD in well-being at Maynooth University.
Misneach for new principals, completing a diploma in Positive Health, only thing that is keeping me right at the minute.
Diploma in Education and Law and finding it really useful.

Working with support services is valuable CPD

Always involve myself with a new initiative or organisation each year to learn something new. Most recently work with PDST as an associate.

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[28] Piew = PIEW (Prioritise-Implement-Embed-Wait) – this is an IPPN-developed model to help leaders manage workload and support their School Improvement Plan (SIP)

Misneach NAMBSE Recent wellness session that I got through a network I'm involved in was very useful.
I deliver Misneach with PDST and have got training with them, I undertook mentoring g with CSL and private professional coaching on an ongoing basis.

Wellbeing
Wellbeing for school and self was most beneficial. It's still a challenge to implement it for self, but knowing what I should be doing consistently is a help.
The HSE one day course on wellbeing was good.

Other CPD mentioned
'Reframing Challenging Behaviour, Whose Challenge is it anyway'.
Ag Eisteacht Relational Based Training Online seminars held by Mason Hayes and Curran over the last 9 months.
Lots of online training from education centres during Covid, good courses from Middletown centre of Autism for SEN.
I have completed courses on PE, local history and integrated learning approach.
INTO Principal's conference Misneach Digital Roadmap training Child protection I actively participate in zoom meetings ran by Ed centres for small schools and for local principals I attended the PLC training during my maternity leave - this was not useful I also did CSL this was good but group was small and no longer active I also have completed a number of Middleton Centre for Autism Courses which are excellent
Employee Assistance Service was helpful in a very stressful situation. It did not resolve the situation, but it helped me to deal with stress.
Elklan training (Demonstration Project for In School support) SESS/NCSE courses.
Online webinars, learning support cluster group, workshops, summer courses. Teaching and the Law course was very useful.
Digital Learning - remote teaching and learning (loads of online courses during lockdown and in past 3 months). These courses provided by Education centres around the country were excellent on the most part. Help with teaching ASD in mainstream classes. Helping struggling readers.
Leadership in Education summer course through Hibernia- very useful.
I enjoyed the DP conference. I am constantly engaged in CPD, just finished a course on ABA. However it is expensive and I have never received a place on a DE funded course despite several applications.
Leadership Coaching Diocesan Training Local Principal Support Groups IPPN Conferences Summer Courses - Trauma informed approach to teaching. The most beneficial were the Diocesan meetings, I felt listened to and supported at these.
Chatting with a psychologist in Bristol via Zoom re DID and trauma support was excellent. Zoom has brought supports closer to hand.
 CPD courses mentioned a few times in data: New Language Curriculum, Anxiety in Children, Integrating ASD children, NCSE behavior management with children with SEN, Restorative practice, Comhár, Anti-bullying, NPLC, SPHE, ASD course , Meitheal and RSE.

3.3 Future Professional Development

To provide participants with an opportunity to develop their skills as leaders further, so that they have the time to focus on enhancing school community's wellbeing post-Covid, we asked them to identify their professional needs. A variety of issues emerged from data. The most mentioned needs are time management, conflict resolution, computer skills, In-School Management (IMS) team training, and distributive leadership skills development. There are many comments from leaders who are also teaching, talking about the need for more administrative time and other supports. Figure 16 outlines the main themes emerging from the data in this section. There were three themes that while emerging from data here did not fit with leadership development, rather they spoke to the on-going challenges leaders are facing in Irish schools. The data on taking a break speak to Section 3.4 of this report and provide some insight to why leaders are not taking breaks and replenishing their energy. The lack of role definition is speaking to the complexity of the work of leaders and finally the wish list is enlightening around the 'gaps' in supports to date for leaders.

Figure 16. Leadership development needs reported by respondents
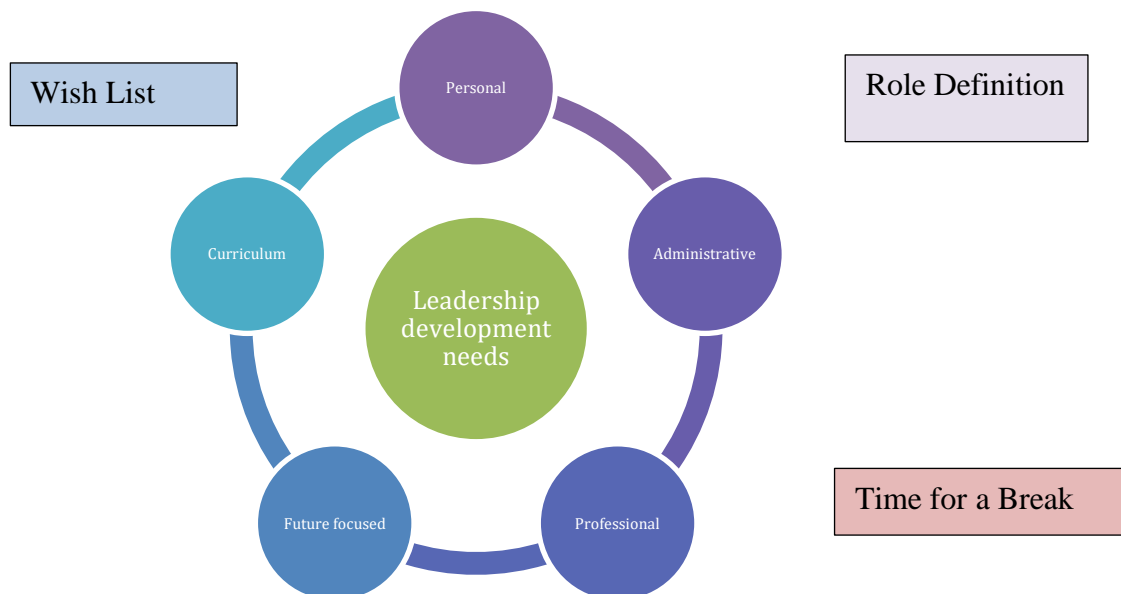
3.3.1 Personal Growth

Under this theme the leaders are looking for professional development that can help them manage their workload and take some time away from tasks, they are asking for mental health supports, coaching skills, assertiveness training, listening skills, and skills around negotiation.

Being able to switch off and remain objective.

Mental health strengthening.

Reenergising myself.

Ability to remain patient with negative colleagues, ability to ignore cliques in staff.

Deep listening skills for listening to colleagues.
Intrapersonal communication.

Assertiveness.

Not to be bullied - assertiveness training!

Coaching skills

To see past a situation when in the middle of it...to have perspective that the situation will pass.

I need to stop caring so much about other people's opinions of me, if I know I am doing my best and giving it my all, that should be all that counts. I need to learn that I can't please everyone.

Having someone to chat to or ask advice in tricky situations.

Mentoring.

I need a support group and I found Misneach very good. I miss the contact and connection during Covid. I sometimes call the director of our education centre - I trust her.

Renewing motivation-think I'm burning out.

I am losing interest in leading a school as I don't feel we have the support of the Department or government in our roles. There is a lack of consultation, top down approach to school leaders with communication that eats in to any family time we have and workload that extends into our vacations and weekends. I have given so much of myself to this job to try to sustain the school and I don't feel that I have very much left to give.

Work life balance.

I know that I am a very good leader. My 'development need' is time to relax and proper, trained support for me in the impossible job that of principalship is in today's schools. I will leave this job spun out and burnt out because the DE has made my job untenable.

I work extremely hard, running a mainstream school with special classes and managing an extensive building project. I was teaching full time until last year. There are many principals in same situation. DE must value and respect principal wellbeing, stop sending emails late into the night (I would never do this to my staff, nor would it be tolerated) and please acknowledge that being on call to assist HSE contract tracing is an unreasonable ask, there is officially no switch off in this job.

Courage-I'm heading to Section 2 on teacher disciplinary. It's tough going.

Ability to talk confidently in front of staff.

3.3.2 Administrative development

Time management came up many times in this theme. This is not surprising as many are struggling to meets the demands of the leadership role. The need for courses in using technology to streamline some of the administrative duties was also mentioned by many.

Time management and realistic goal setting.

Time management; developing our leadership team.

A reduction of the workload. I really feel it's never ending. We get told to mind our wellbeing then get constant circulars or guidance documents. I feel the role of a teaching principal is becoming untenable.

Financial management.

Trying to stay on top of policies.

There's not enough time to perform role adequately. Reduction in responsibilities or avenue to distribute duties is required.

Development of ICT skills.

Better ICT skills to improve speed and efficiency in completing tasks.

I find paperwork to be my biggest Achilles Heel.

Space to actually lead and not being constantly bogged down in paperwork. dealing with parents and school building issues.

Time management, ability to prioritise, to delegate, to say no.

We have no go-to person in the hierarchical chain. No one constant person to coach us. Coaching is brilliant but a limited service to us. Principals need a line manager. Centralised secretarial and administrative departments- the one secretary can fill all the forms for a cluster of schools, can upload data for all the secretarial packages for a number of schools, can screen emails etc...

3.3.3 Professional leadership development

The main theme here is the need for a leadership team that has the required training and supports to lead the many aspects of the school. Many leaders mention "*Delegation, Shared leadership, a proper resourced ISM team, someone I can ask to help me, someone I can delegate some of the jobs that land on my desk to',* and so on. One respondent talks about the burden of taking on all the responsibility:

All responsibility rests with me. Greatest need is to delegate but DP has returned from Job Sharing and now on blocked Study Leave and taking Parental Leave. In effect no DP I can offload to. Lean on other ISM members but conscious they are teaching too. Luckily I have an exceptional secretary.

Leading people and the HR and IR issues are mentioned by many as an area they need professional development, with comments such as "*People management*, *Managing conflict resolution Managing difficult conversations and underperformance in staff",* and so on. One respondent described the needs in this area as follows:

Developing positive staff relationships as there is so much stress in the workplace at present and yet we are all so isolated because of safety protocols around COVID-19. Dealing with a difficult staff member. Dealing with awkward agencies e.g. NCSE.

'Kick ass strategies' or at least the power to kick the asses of those not doing their jobs... (sorry for the bluntness but you get what I'm saying.)

Dealing with staff issues - having stepped up into the role within my own school, this is something that I know I need to work on.

Other professional needs mentioned include the following:

More time to explore management style.

Capacity building, distributing leadership, nurturing staff talents, productive delegation.

Leading change.

Tanáiste course.

Time... To reflect and develop strategy rather than manage. The increase in administration days helps but funding is limited so secretarial support is minimal. Often quicker to do things myself but that eats into Leadership.

I am not used to challenges and conflicts with staff (thankfully) and when the odd occasion of conflict arises with a parent or someone it does take a lot out of me. I always face the situation as one must have the Courage to Act but it does make me worried beforehand and tired after.

3.3.4 Future Focused Development

In this theme leaders are looking for some support for stepping down from the role in the future, they are looking for CPD in sustainability, additional administrative hours building on the extra hours allocated this year during the pandemic. Leaders are asking for more professional development for the middle management team in schools.

Sustainability.

Time, understanding from DE - we principals have been forgotten about.
Coping with workload, delegating. We need promoted posts to save unsustainable pressure on leaders.

I think that MANDATORY training for the entire ISM team is essential.

The one day a week for administration has been an enormous help this year and makes me realise how overworked I was in previous years without it. The threshold for admin Principal should be lowered. The job is so demanding even in a school of my size of 130 pupils. I never feel that I am on top of my admin work or my teaching and planning.

I need to see a dignified step down introduced for Principals. If I was to step back now after 22 years of working all hours, summer hols etc I would go on the panel!! Where's the decency or fairness in that? It's the ultimate insult.

I need to know there is scope to either step down from the role without losing seniority, to move into a career break secondment position for a break etc. I feel I am a great leader, but it's not sustainable to require Principals to hold the position for 25 years or more without options to re energise/refresh.

3.3.5 Curriculum leadership

Many leaders remind us that their role in Primary Schools is to lead learning and lead the curriculum. However, they also remind us that sometimes this focus is lost in administrative duties.

I have completely lost confidence in my ability to implement the new language curriculum. We are certainly trying to do so, but the implementation and training has been so long-winded, disjointed and unclear that we are just carrying on with doing our best.

To keep abreast of educational developments and to motivate staff to evaluate and embrace same if we feel they will enhance the teaching and learning in our school.

Would love more training on anxiety/behavioural issues with children.

The ability to be able to improve teaching and learning without it being seen as criticism.

Leading Teaching and Learning.

Role should be split into Curricular Principal and Admin Principal. It is impossible to do both well. I spend days with plumbers and electricians in our old prefabs and with architects and builders in my new school. How can I really develop teaching and learning... impossible conflict of roles. Then throw in employment law and finance! Time to breathe! Reduction of paperwork and a team to manage the maintenance of the building, that should not be left to the principal. I feel there should be a management body in place in areas to look after a certain amount of schools and let Principals get on with the important work of teaching and learning catering for the needs of both children and staff. We are expected to be everything to everyone and look after every inch of the premises, it's not feasible or viable and quite frankly turns me off the job. The children are what keep me sane in every relentless day!!

Time to network with other DPs, learn about how other schools deal with management issues, share ideas for teaching and learning in all curriculum areas.

I need a full time caretaker so that I can concentrate on teaching and learning.

3.3.6 Role definition and scope

This is a significant theme that speaks to the themes already described as it is the lack of role definition that is causing many to be 'pulled in all directions' and also links to the engagement with external agencies discussed in this report.

Role definition. More middle management roles to support work that is essential in schools.

Parents to understand a leadership role and that not everything is up for debate or negotiation. School rules are school rules regardless of one person's feelings on it!

I can do all/almost all of the tasks of Principal with relative ease. The problem is the tsunami of demands, both internal and external. That's what makes the job challenging and never ending.

It's hard to teach a very busy class with high needs and fit in the deputy principal work, it has be done at home. No time given at work at all.

I find I can cope when I prioritise teaching and learning over policies and paperwork. If the cigire lands looking for a lot of paperwork I'll be seriously in need.

I need a contract. I need to know what is expected of me and others need to know that this is my job.

Impossible to have everything in order . Far too much demanded by DE . I do what I'm able . Every school has most things in order but if any School has everything order it must be a 24 /7 job . As it is I do something for school almost every day of the year .

A clearly defined and realistic job description / contract.

The demands of government bureaucracy is crippling. I find that the demands of the system are sapping my energy not the children or staff. It is relentless and I would go so far as to say it amounts to systemic bullying! I don't know what I would have done without colleagues and the goodwill and support of the BOM members of which act in a voluntary capacity. The responsibility is ridiculous! The children are coping well I think because under less pressure. The system needs a good overhaul starting with a new management model !! If this happens my leadership role could commence!

Clarity of role and what's not included in the role. It is increasing difficult to define a way forward. Every economic and societal need becomes a priority for schools and therefore principals. Valuable time is spent doing applications/ appeals/ returns/ claims/ fund raisers/ reviews of attendance and admissions. It is a luxury to find time for thinking about teaching and learning.

As a newly appointed principal (6th Jan), I am completely in need of training for everything and really feel you are left to figure it all out for yourself. I've signed up for lots of webinars to try to upskill quickly but there is no additional support network to help me navigate at this difficult time and staff and parents don't make allowances for this.

The need for respect of the profession. Greater clarify of the job role and where the jobs starts and ends. Everyone else appears to be able to say "stop"......"this is not my role/area" and principals don't seem to have that clarity. As a result the 'book' does the rounds and inevitably stops with him/her.

3.3.7 Wish List

The wish list is long and compressive. Some things on it link to other themes such as less paperwork.

Less paperwork.

More time. Need fewer useless demands/tick box exercises.

An office! Hours for paperwork.

Time without the children I work with losing out.

Prompt Guidance from HSE when needed.

Extra admin days. The amount of work we are expected to do as teaching principals is outrageous.

I need more admin days 2/3 a week and less pressure from the school inspector and DE.

An understanding from the DE of the huge workload we carry- the 24/7/365 nature of the role that makes it impossible to ever escape from responsibility.

To be more confident and to have a deputy principal! Because of job share, career break and sharing staff with other schools I have not had a deputy principal for some years. School staff are supportive when they are asked to take on a role.

Time to get the work done. Getting appropriate resources in place to support the school.

Less continuous and mounting pressure.

Time!! Further reduction in overloaded curriculum. Realistic expectations regarding policy development in school. Better IT connections and greater financial grant support from DE.

More resources to help SEN children. NCSE should be abolished, awful difficult to access supports.

That all principals should be administrative. There should be no teaching principals. It is an impossible un-doable job.

AP1 and AP2 posts.

Realistic staffing levels. I have ten teachers but a total of SIXTY staff. The school needs an admin Deputy, or someone just to handle IR, HR and staffing generally.

We need more ISM members. Losing staff due to decrease in numbers means we are losing teachers but still have the most vulnerable children in huge need.

A crystal ball!

A new school build!

Get rid of volunteerism in BoMs. Need paid accountants, treasurers and DoES engineers. I am alone. One hour every 5 weeks with a BoM is a joke. It takes me hours and days before meetings, preparing reports and quotes. I leave every meeting with a list of ADMIN work. Their suggestions are fabulous. But they are unable to

take on a job 'fully' from beginning to end. They are unable to, or unwilling to. They believe their job is one of oversight and they do not believe that they should engage with admin, invoices, policies, management outside of our regular meetings. They are VOLUNTEERS, and many members in BoMs have agendas, but do not understand how much principals do.....unpaid BoM secretaries

The greatest leadership development need in the school is to expand the management team. Or at least restore it to 2003 levels. The current no. of allowable AP2 posts in the school is 50% below that of 2003 levels. The current no. of allowable AP1 posts in the school is 66% below that of 2003 levels. And this is whilst there has undoubtedly been a huge increase in the expectations and responsibilities assigned to school management in the intervening years. The trajectory of levels of leadership and management responsibility is ever increasing also.

Greater flexibility to work from home 1 day/ week to work on leading teaching and learning/ DEIS planning/ curricular planning I spend 90%+ of time on admin/ management/ discipline and Special Needs/ giving people time/ interacting with other agencies To be able to plan my day, not always being interrupted, drawn into every drama/ firefighting.

Being able to see real life examples of how to approach various issues, having only ever had experiences of poor leadership, I would like opportunities to see how a good leader would approach things.

3.3.8 Time to take a break

It is very important to acknowledge that leaders are telling us that they do not have time to take a break. This is unsustainable for many on a personal level.

To feel more involved to have more time to talk and share ideas with the principal, to feel I am valued and worthy of my role, to feel I matter even just a small bit to have my own office and chair to get a lunch break to get a toilet break.

An extra 24 hours in each day. The ability to manage priorities and all the interruptions each day. finding it very difficult to get anything finished and there is always another important thing to be done.

Time to do my work! A little appreciation would be great also - we do a great job but it leave us like 'a sucked orange' to quote my mother!!

I desperately need to switch off to recharge batteries, to be free from Friday night DE emails, being on call 24/7 for HSE in relation to Covid cases, weekend Sunday calls relating to staff absences on Monday, holiday interruptions relating to building works, summer works, emergency works, procurement of staff etc....there is no meaningful switch off...

To conclude, in this section on professional development needs it is clear that our leaders are asking for help on a personal, professional, administrative, curricular and future sustainability level and that it is imperative that policy look to see how some of these needs can be met. In addition, the role of principal needs to be clarified, time for breaks needs to be prioritised and other supports on the wish list could be sought at a local level such as leaders not having an office, not having secretarial support and feeling valued for all they do above and beyond their role.

3.4 Breaks

Breaks are self-selected supports that leaders take in order to recover from their job demands. In the previous section, leaders spontaneously mentioned how they cannot find the time to take a break, which may have negative consequences on their wellbeing. Stress is detrimental to health only when it is relentless and no breaks are taken to replenish resources (McGonigal, 2016; Robertson, 2016). There are two types of breaks, (1) on-the-job breaks (e.g. sos beag, lunch), which occur during a working day; and (2) off-the-job breaks (e.g. weekend, school holidays), which take place outside of the working day (Kühnel, Zacher, de Bloom, & Bledow, 2017). The main objective of both types of break is to provide cognitive, emotional and physical recovery (Pencavel, 2016).

Sos-beag are short, informal breaks, lasting less than 10 minutes and including either relaxation, socialisation and cognitive rest, or a brief nutrition-intake (e.g. snacks and drinks) (S. Kim, Park, & Headrick, 2018). They are usually taken as a reward for the job well-done (Bosch & Sonnentag, 2019), which may explain why employees who are overwhelmed with never-ending tasks may be less likely to take it.

The benefits of micro-breaks are vast and include replenishing mental resources, an increased energy and vitality for at least an hour after the break, decline in fatigue, more active engagement with work (Kühnel et al., 2017; Zacher, Brailsford, & Parker, 2014). Most importantly, however, taking regular sos beag is associated with more effective coping with work-demands, faster off-job recovery, and the end-of-day enhancement of wellbeing (de Bloom, Kinnunen, & Korpela, 2015; S. Kim, Park, & Niu, 2017), which ultimately results in better work-life balance. This is why it is crucial for primary school leaders to engage regularly in sos beag.

As it stands, there is little clarity about the best time during the day for taking sos beag. According to some researchers, having them in the afternoon is associated with higher levels of employee engagement, whereas the same effect is not seen in the morning (Kühnel et al., 2017). Other researchers, however, claim that the best way to recover depleted resources is by taking sos beag in the morning (Hunter & Wu, 2016). More research is required to

identify the beneficial effects of micro-breaks at different times during the day, especially in relation to the school leader's role, as this is the first study to assess this.

A similar, restoration effect is noted among those who take their lunch breaks. Specifically, activities that are most effective in helping employees recover from work are those that promote their relaxation, social interaction and a sense of control over their environment (Bosch, Sonnentag, & Pinck, 2018). Most importantly however, the lunch activities must match employees' needs to be effective (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015), in that one day a leader may wish to have a lunch with a colleague, the next day, they prefer to eat solo. Having a lunch break prevents or reduces physical, cognitive and emotional depletion in the afternoon, which is related to the job demands (Bosch et al., 2018). Therefore, in order to cope with the highly demanding school leadership role, it is crucial that leaders take their on-the-job-breaks.

Similarly, taking time out over the weekend, or holidays moderates the negative impact of work-related stress and is important for maintaining wellbeing over time (Gu, Wang, & You, 2020). Taking time out during the weekend to recover from job demands is associated with much higher level of engagement and lower likelihood of work-related burnout the following week (Ragsdale & Beehr, 2016). Therefore, adequate respite is required for school leaders not only during the day, but also over the weekend and school holidays. The current study examined all types of breaks and the role they play in supporting leaders' wellbeing.

In this section, we aimed to establish how often leaders take their breaks and whether they have adequate time to restore their resources. We started by identifying the frequency of taking on-the-job breaks and followed with the off-the-job breaks.

3.4.1 On-the-job breaks

The majority of participants in the current study do not take their 'sos beag' regularly. A total of 25% (n=218) reported they had never taken a 'sos beag' during the day, 42% (n=357) take it some days. Only 33% (n=286) take it every day or most days. Similarly, the majority of participants do not take their lunch regularly. One in ten participants (n=218, 11%) reported they had never taken their lunch, 42% (n=364) take it some days, 34% (n=291) take it most days and only 13% (n=109) take it daily. Figure 17 and Table 12 provide further detail.

Figure 17. The percentage of participants taking on-the-job breaks.
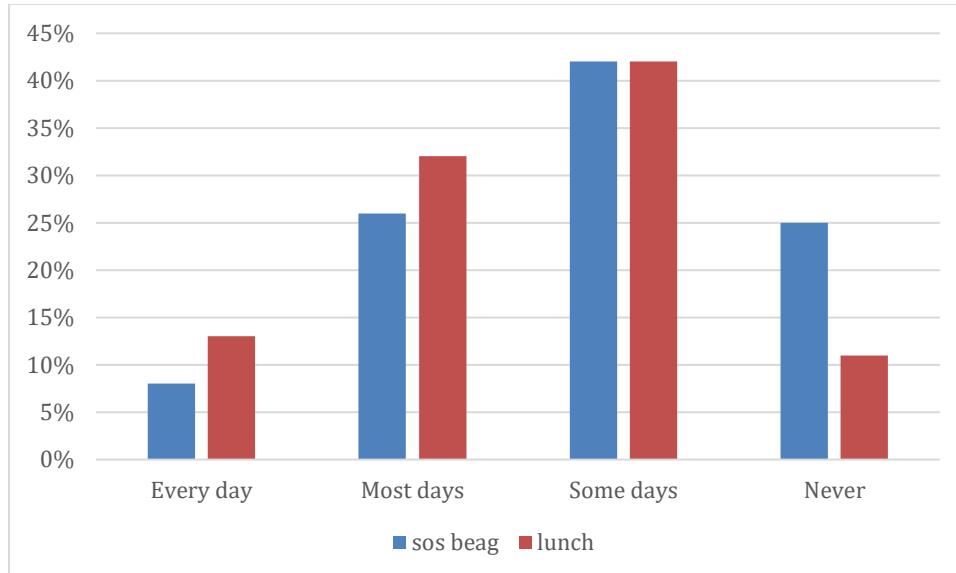
Table 12. The number and percentage of participants taking on-the-job breaks.

	Sos beag		Lunch	
	n	%	n	%
Every day	65	8%	109	13%
Most days	221	26%	291	32%
Some days	357	42%	364	42%
Never	218	25%	97	11%

3.4.2 Off-the-job breaks

In the current sample, the vast majority of participants took time out during the weekend (n=627, 73%). However, a quarter took a weekend off only sometimes (n=213, 25%), whereas 21 participants (2%) never took a weekend off. Similarly, the majority of participants (n=699, 81%) took the time out during the school closure (e.g. midterm break, Christmas break), 17% (n=144) took the time off sometimes, whereas a small cohort of leaders (n=18, 2%) did not take the time off during the school closure. Figure 18 and Table 13 provide further detail.

Figure 18. The percentage of leaders taking their off-the-job breaks.

Table 13. The number and percentage of leaders taking their off-the-job breaks.

	Weekend		School holidays	
	n	%	n	%
Always	316	37	427	50
Often	311	36	272	32
Sometimes	213	25	144	17
Never	21	2	18	2

3.5 Summary

In this section we reviewed leaders' supports, ways in which they utilise them and gathered suggestions from participants on how to improve their supports. Firstly, we identified that while overall, participants find external agencies very useful, they acknowledge a challenge they have with the number of agencies they need to deal with and request that DE streamlines the agencies engagement. Furthermore, they requested more clarity and less paperwork in their dealings with the agencies. Many participants found professional development, especially Misneach and CSL coaching very useful. However, there were some leaders who did not engage with professional development due to the time restraints. Finally, while it is helpful for leaders to take a break to restore their resources, 7 out of 10 leaders do not take regular on-the-job breaks, and a quarter work sometimes over their weekends and school holidays. Going forward, changes are required in the supports that are offered to leaders, so that they can carve more time in their daily work to improve their community's wellbeing post-Covid.

4.LEADERS' OUTCOMES

In this section we look at what leaders like about their job. We then look at what aspects of the role may be causing them stress. The outcomes in the current research were measured in the context of Perceived Stress and Work-life Balance, Personal Wellbeing, Work-related Wellbeing, Illbeing, and Resilience. In addition to the assessment, we have also further analysed how daily tasks affect leaders' perceived stress; the impact of breaks or lack thereof has on leaders' personal and work-related wellbeing, resilience. Finally, we reviewed the differences in wellbeing between teaching and administrative leaders. Understanding the impact of pressures on school leaders wellness can help us identify what further supports should be offered to leaders in order to help them focus more time on their school community's wellbeing.

4.1 What leaders like about their jobs

The word cloud below illustrates the main words used by leaders to describe what they like about their job.

The overarching message from data is the relational aspect of leading in a Primary School. The majority of respondents mentioned the relationship with the children as key to enjoying the role. Second to this was the collaborative nature of the role, the variety it offers and the autonomy of the role. In all areas leaders talked about the fact that they make a difference in

the lives of people including children, teachers, school community, parents and society. The spirit of this section of the data could be summed up by the following quotes:

I love the daily interactions with the children around the school. They are always so enthusiastic to tell me their news. They brighten my day. The staff in my school are brilliant. They always pull their weight. We all work together for the benefit of the children.

I love almost everything about it. I love the variety, working with children, be able to affect change as a school leader and I love working with a team.

I love seeing the smiling children walk in the gate every morning. They are so happy coming to school.

Making a difference to the children in front of me.

I like that I am helping young people reach their potential by knowing them as individuals and supporting them to build self-esteem and resilience. I like that I can be supportive to my staff and help them if they are experiencing difficulty.

So much - the children, my colleagues, the parents. Our school is a really interesting and enjoyable place to work - plenty of new projects.

Figure 19 presents a pictorial description of the key themes in this section of the data. The inter and intra-personal aspects of the role are evident in these data.

Figure 19. What leaders like about their job.
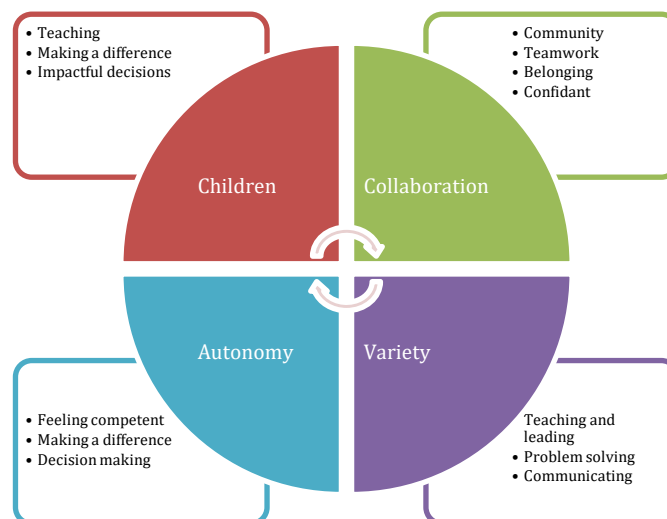
4.1.1 Relationship through teaching and interacting with the children.

Teaching is all about relationships, relationship with the children we teach, the people we teach with, the community we teach in and with the disciplines we teach. All these relationships are mentioned by the leaders who responded to this survey.

This part of the role is about teaching and interacting with children.

> *Working with Children. I adore the children. Children, their innocence. Their joy in learning.*
>
> *The kids, playing, seeing them grow and change.*
>
> *Predominantly the joyous reaction of children and the ability to lead good learning in the school.*
>
> *I like when I have opportunities to interact with the children as an administrative principal.*
>
> *I love the interaction with the children. I also enjoy being able to help my colleagues in supporting children with SEN, even if it's just to listen.*
>
> *The children and creating the best educational experience for them.*
>
> *I like the DEIS school community within which I work and I work with a team that are hardworking and caring towards the children.*
>
> *Helping the children achieve their potential*
>
> *Interaction with the pupils, seeing them enjoy learning new skills watching them enjoying the sense of accomplishment.*
>
> *The children & getting a kick out of them enjoying the school life and their day. The sense of humour of the children & staff especially when I "play" with them on corridors with words or actions, the daily interactions with them.*
>
> *I love teaching and love when a class goes well, when I get a good response from the class.*
>
> *I work with decent; kind people and our kids are wonderful.*
>
> *Teaching, the moment the penny drops and the joy of reading the class novel.*

Leaders talk about the ability to make a difference in the children's lives.

> *Making a difference in the lives of children with autism.*

Autonomy to make decisions which positively affect pupils' educational experience.

I like being a principal as I feel I can make a positive impact on children's lives.

Interaction with the children; Making decision to better their experience in school; supporting parents and staff; learning each day.

Making positive changes to children's learning and wellbeing.

They also mention how making impactful decisions is a key part of their job. The decisions they make can have deeply impactful outcomes for people.

The positive interactions with children, staff, parents Achieving various targets Câmeraderie. Getting things done Seeing people happy Turning things around when they have gone wrong.

I make a difference for our children. I enable others to achieve.

As principal I get to make positive decisions for the betterment of the school and staff.

Teaching the children and making sure they get the best education they can get from the best educators I can find.

I like teaching the children, starting new initiatives such as the active schools, a sense of accomplishment when the big to-do list is getting smaller.

I like the challenge of helping children with special needs to learn .I like being able to build their confidence to show them that they are able to learn even if it is in a different way. I love seeing little junior infants grow into these little people with personalities and making connections with them and their families which grows over the years.

Love the pupils, my colleagues and the teaching aspect 😊

4.1.2 The collaborative nature of the role

Relationships with the children was the top response while relationships with others in the schools community also featured in this section. Schools are deeply embedded in their communities and therefore the leader has to develop and maintain relationships with many external bodies including their own school community, parents and wider community.

I love the response from children and the camaraderie among staff working towards common goal.

I love the variety, the interaction with kids and other adults. I like working with my principal. I consider we have a very good working relationship. I enjoy the craic with colleagues.

Working with children. With special needs. Work colleagues who are open and helpful.

I like being with the children and teaching. I like interacting with parents on. Daily basis. I like making a difference to different stakeholders.

The opportunity to help and support young people and staff, creating a safe and welcoming environment for them to thrive in and helping them to achieve to the best of their potential. Hardworking staff in general.

Working with the children. Working with the families and the local community. Love seeing the progress the children are making and seeing that they feel safe and happy on school.

Really enjoy working with the staff on the school and supporting them in their career development. Giving them a space to discuss their ideas and looking after their well-being.

I love to teach. The staff I work with are dedicated and help with the workload. I enjoy meeting children every day and as I work in SET in really enjoy trying to drill down to identify the issues and finding programmes or systems that will help them.

Part of this collaboration is the sense of being part of a community and working to make lives better. This community is part of leader's lives and their positive contribution makes their work meaningful.

I like the sense of community and belonging that is embodied in a caring child centred school.

I like the DEIS school community within which I work and I work with a team that are hardworking and caring towards the children.

Working with staff, pupils and the school community to positively effect improvements and growth.

I love the interaction with staff , parents but especially the students. I love bringing my personality and values to my school.

Meeting like-minded people. Working with children & adults. Problem-solving.

Working with the kids and the staff can be good craic at times. I also get a good personal buzz from putting things right for people.

Working with the children, leading teaching and learning, working with a great staff, great community. Variety.

I am making a direct impact on the educational, social and wellbeing aspects of my pupils' lives.   I enjoy being able to introduce new initiatives that I feel will positively impact pupils.   I feel my role is a great benefit to the local community although it is

not always appreciated by the parent body who cannot see beyond their own child and/ or their own wants and desires even if achievement of these would be at the expense of the wider and collective good.

Interaction with the children. Knowing I am making a difference to the lives of vulnerable children. Leading a team of strong, dynamic, dedicated professionals.

I love seeing pupils every day and seeing them make progress. I enjoy working with a wonderful enthusiastic bunch of staff. I enjoy starting new initiatives and organising events for the school. I enjoy leading the school and I feel I can make a difference. I enjoy working with the most challenging of pupils and coming up with solutions with my staff. I enjoy being part of the whole school community.

Dealing with people - big ones, little ones, ones set in their ways & others finding their way. Feeling that we're doing something important, providing an environment for people to develop & flourish. Feeling that we're making a difference.

It is an incredibly important job and I am confident that I do it well. I believe I am positively impacting on an entire school community - pupils, parents and staff. I feel that it is a very difficult job and very few people could manage the sustained personal and professional pressures associated with the job and carry it out successfully over an extended period of time. I believe I am doing that, although it comes at great personal cost - to personal relationships and to physical and mental health.

Sense of belonging and achieving a successful and engaging school environment for more vulnerable students. Gives a sense of purpose and fulfilment in what I do every day and makes it all worthwhile. Have lovely colleagues, who are a big part of my life.

4.1.3 The variety of work within the role

As the old saying goes "variety is the spice of life", and variety is a positive for many respondents. Taking these responses in light of the myriad of tasks listed in Section 2.1 it is a role that offers great variety.

The variety each day, every day is different

Working with the children, leading teaching and learning, working with a great staff, great community. Variety.

Opportunity to be creative. I like problem solving. Good variety of tasks. It gives me a great sense of purpose. I believe in the transformational power of education.

I love the relationships I build with pupils and staff; I feel confident in my teaching and classroom management skills; I love Christmas in school; I love the mix of practical classroom work and admin in work. Lots of variety punctuated by the terms in school.

I am a practical person. I have good interpersonal skills. I enjoy seeing children and staff happy and learning around me. I enjoy the job as no one day is the same. I enjoy the variety within it. I enjoy the successes I see all around me.

4.1.4 The role offers many opportunities for autonomy

Research links autonomy with transformational leadership (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012), for our respondents autonomy is a very important aspect of their work. Coupled with this is the feeling of being competent to do the job and that they make a difference. As one respondent put it: "*My job matters - a lot to a lot of people. People depend on me*". Other comments describe autonomy in different ways:

I have always enjoyed the autonomy and sense of purpose. I am good at my job.

Autonomy to make decisions which positively affect pupils' educational experience. The power to make decisions and steer the school forward.

My autonomy. I used to like holiday time but they rarely apply to me anymore I have so much work to always do. I have good colleagues but no one works as hard as I do even though they think they do.

Freedom to choose when to work hard and when to take it easy. I work hard most of the time. It is now 18.54 and I am still at work, but I met my partner for coffee for half an hour after a webinar I attended, which was after school.

I like being able to make decisions and in making these decisions my school community have thrived and sometimes come back to me with this feedback. I like when I get a job done properly.

Making a difference in the children's lives , relationships , friends and feeling that I'm good at what I do.

Sense of making a valuable contribution to children's lives and the community. I also enjoy the organisational aspects of running a school- sense of achievement most of the time.

I love teaching. I get a great sense of satisfaction from watching the progress my pupils make academically, socially, emotionally and behaviourally. I enjoy having extra responsibilities at work and that I get to shape policy in the school.

I like the feeling that I make a difference. I like working collaborative with others to improve outcomes for the children we work with. I like that I can be creative in approaches to work and that work stimulates me to learn and improve myself. When the workload is balanced, and I can relax at home in the evenings. When guidelines are well thought through and shared in a timely manner. When we receive no late emails or weekend emails. When the pupils are happy, confident and achieve

their learning goals. When I feel confident from training, and have good high quality resources to support teaching and learning.

I really enjoy the children. I am pleased that we have been able to reopen as running a school from home was even more challenging. It is good for everyone's mental health. I like helping people and encouraging children while providing them with opportunity.
I like that at some point in the future I will look back on my time as a principal and say I endured and left the school in a much better position than I found it.

There were a few respondents that said there was nothing to like about the role.

No job satisfaction at all now, only stress

I still love working with pupils and I do enjoy parts of the job, but it just seems to be becoming more and more unsustainable, the workload, the expectations, the lack of a real middle management structure, the complete lack of respect and communication from the DE, the constant double and triple jobbing - I need to be a jack of all trades.

At the moment very little. I find myself in a very lonely place as a teaching principal. I spend lots of time having to keep an eye on whether teachers are following COVIF regulations. They seem to look to me for ideas about everything, e.g. Christmas celebrations. They rarely do anything on their own initiative.

At the moment very little - the children are the best thing

The longer that I am in the position of principal the less I enjoy. Teaching Principal is a redundant and impossible task in the current climate - I am considering stepping away from the role of principal due to the hours required for a mere 10-15 euro per day. Also considering leaving teaching profession such is the lack of respect for the position.

At the moment very little. There was enough happening without Covid - job shares, career breaks, a member on TRR[29], two miscarriages, 1 IVF, 3 staff members have lost parents during the pandemic, two dealing with a cancer diagnosis. Late Friday night phone calls and texts from a staff member who should know better. This job is crazy when staff members have problems as they have nowhere else to turn.

In conclusion, the majority of respondents mentioned their love of working with young people as the most likable aspect of their role. Linked to this was the sense of belonging to a community, having variety in their work and being able to make decisions that had an impact

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[29] Temporary Rehabilitation Remuneration (TRR) refers to the rate of pay an individual may be awarded if he or she has exhausted benefits from all other paid sick leave. Temporary Rehabilitation Remuneration (TRR) was formerly referred to as 'Pension Rate of Pay' (PRP) and will be calculated and granted in the same way.

on people. developing meaningful relationships as a school leader is challenging. School leader relationships with their school communities are made more challenging by having to deal with diverse stakeholder groups, varied contexts such as COVID, building works, staff illness and so on, and difficult situations such as HR and industrial relations, communications from DE and so on. Lasater (2016) contends that the complex nature of school leader relationships necessitates explicit training for leaders on relational skills such as rapport, thrust and communication.

4.2 Perceived Stress and Work-life Balance

Stress is defined as physiological response to challenges that activates hormones and the nervous system (HSE, 2018). It results in an increased heart-rate, blood pressure and metabolism, all of which assist individuals in coping more effectively with a challenge, improving their concentration and performance (McGonigal, 2016; Robertson, 2016). As such, stress is a useful mechanism for helping leaders cope with personal and work-related challenges. At the same time, an increased level of stress that lasts over a prolonged period of time can be detrimental to individuals' health. Pre-pandemic, primary school leaders' stress (M=46.92, SD=26.81) was higher than the general population (M=26.7, SD17.7) stress levels (Reily, 2015). Given that the Covid-19 pandemic has exasperated school leaders' stress, which was already high due to the overload, long working hours and difficulties associated with employee relations (Ahmed, Farooq, Hussain, & Ahmed, 2011; J. Burke, Kinnarney, & Salokangas, forthcoming; DeMatthews, Carrola, Reyes, & Knight, 2021), it is important to monitor its levels and take action to alleviate relentless stress exposure at higher than moderate levels.

The perceived stress measure related to the participants subjective experienced of stress, regardless of how many symptoms leaders may have had. Participants were asked to assess it since the beginning of the school year, therefore it included the post-Covid school reopening months leading to Christmas.

The majority of participants experienced a lot of stress (n=661, 77%), 1 in 5 reported moderate stress (n=164, 19%), and only a small cohort reported experiencing a little bit of stress (n=36, 4%). See Figure 20.
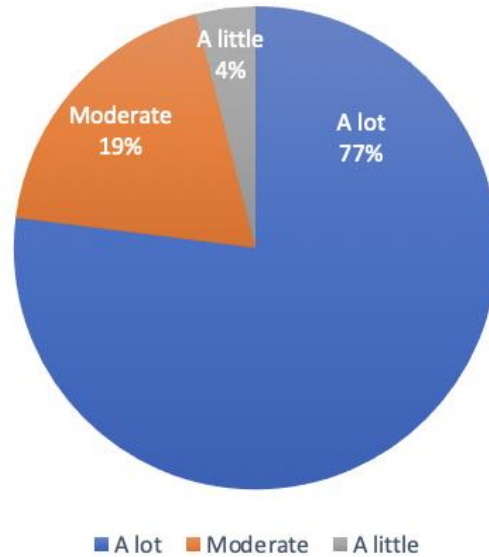
Figure 20. Percentage of participants experiencing stress.

Work-life balance was measured by asking participants to assess how much they agree or disagree with a statement that they have a good work-life balance.
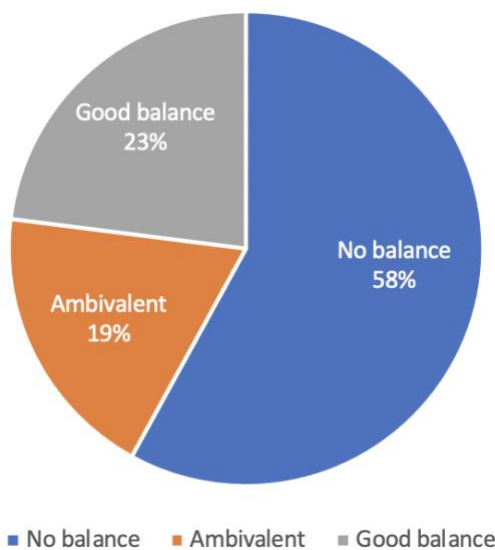
Less than a quarter of participants reported to experience good work-life balance (n=198, 23%), with the majority reporting their work-life balance being out of sync. See Figure 21 for more detail.

Figure 21. Percentage of participants experiencing work-life balance.

Pre-Covid research with almost 30,000 participants indicated that approximately 20% experience a lot of stress (Keller et al., 2012). Similar research with Irish participants showed 19% of employees experiencing a lot of stress (J. Burke, 2018). Therefore, participants of the current study reported particularly high levels of stress.

4.2.1 Stress and Daily Responsibilities

We compared how much of the variance in leaders' stress during the school year was predicted by the impact of various tasks related to their role. We divided these tasks into: (1) administrative, (2) structural, (3) personal, (4) inter-personal, (5) Covid-related.

(1) Administrative tasks

Managing administrative tasks explained 12% of the variance in leaders' stress with the following tasks contributing to their stress the most (in the order of the impact):

1. Late night/Friday communication from DE (beta=.13, p<.05)
2. Sourcing resources (e.g., space, SNAs, teacher allocation) (beta=.13, p<.05)
3. Dealing with external agencies (beta=.08, p<.05)

All other administrative tasks showed no statistically significant contributions.

(2) Structural tasks

Managing structuring tasks explained 4% of the variance in leaders' stress, with the biggest contribution relating to the system problems and a smaller, but statistically significant contribution relating to the noise or lack of suitable office space:

1. System problems (e.g., WI-FI connectivity issues, phone) (beta=.15, p<.001)
2. Noise/lack of suitable space (beta=.08, p<.05)

(3) Personal tasks

Four personal tasks were considered in this group. They included: teaching, continuous changes in work procedures, time pressures, continuous interruptions. Personal tasks explained 17% of the variance in leaders' stress during the school year. The biggest contributors to their stress were (in the order of impact):

1. Time pressure (e.g., having too many things to do, not enough time) (beta=.23, p<.001)
2. Continuous changes in work procedures (beta=.17, p<.001)
3. Continuous interruptions (beta=.14, p<.001)

Teaching showed no statistically significant contributions.

(4) Inter-personal tasks

Eight inter-personal tasks were included in this analysis. They were, HR issues, staff grievance, managing underperformance and conduct issues, communicating with parents, completing the child protection forms, team-building in the midst of social distancing restrictions (e.g. lunches, breaks), working with the Board of Management, and working with the Parents' Council. Inter-personal tasks explained 8% of the variance in leaders' stress during the school year. The greatest contributors to their stress were:

1. HR issues (beta=.12, p<.05)
2. Working with the Board of Management (beta=.10, p<.05)
3. Communicating with parents (beta=.08, p<.05)

All other inter-personal tasks showed no statistically significant contributions.

(5) Covid-19 related tasks

Three tasks were examined in this group: Covid-19 related safety measures, classroom cleaning, procurement. Covid-19 related tasks explained 11% of the variance in leaders' stress. Two tasks, in particular, contributed to their stress:

1. Managing Covid-related safety measures (beta=.27, p<.001)
2. Procurement (beta=.12, p<.05)

Classroom cleaning showed no statistically significant contribution.

When all of the 13 statistically significant tasks were entered together to identify which ones contributed to the variance in the leaders' stress the most, five tasks had the greatest impact:

1. Time pressure (beta=.18, p<.001)
2. Covid-related safety measures (beta=.16, p<.001)
3. Late night/Friday communication from DE (beta=.09, p<.05)
4. Continuous changes in work procedures (beta=.08, p<.05)
5. Sourcing resources (e.g., space, SNAs, teacher allocation) (beta=.08, p<.05)

All other tasks showed no statistically significant contribution.

These results highlight the impact that daily tasks have on the stress levels of school leaders during the second school year of Covid-19. The constant feeling of the time pressure was the highest contributor to leaders' stress, and is associated with a role overload, which occurs when the role responsibilities exceed the time and energy (Gordon, 1991). These findings are consistent with the Eurobarometer Survey on Working Conditions, according to which employees who experience role overload report the highest levels of stress; yet granting them

with more autonomy buffered the negative effects of stress (Shultz, Wang, & Olson, 2010). Therefore, making leaders' role less bureaucratic and more autonomous may alleviate their stress levels.

4.2.2 Stress and Tasks after controlling for Covid-19

Covid-19 had an impact on leaders' outcomes (see Section 2.2). In this Section we will review the non-Covid-related tasks and control for how much participants believed that Covid-19 affected their wellbeing.

(1) Administrative Tasks

In the previous analysis, 12% of administrative tasks explained the variance in leaders' perceived stress. However, after controlling for Covid-19, 31% of leaders' stress was predicted by performing administrative tasks [$F(11, 849)=35.35$, $p<.001$], with Covid-19 contributing 29%, thus the difference being 2%. There were two most significant contributors to leaders' stress, which did not happen by chance:

1. Late night/Friday communication from DE (beta=.09, $p<.05$)
2. Sourcing resources (beta=.08, $p<.05$)

(2) Structural Tasks

In the previous analysis, 4% of structural tasks explained the variance in leaders' perceived stress. However, after controlling for Covid-19, 30% of the leaders' stress was predicted by performing administrative tasks [$F(3, 857)=120.09$, $p<.001$], with Covid-19 contributing 29%, thus the difference being 1%. Only one variable showed statistically significant contribution to this model, i.e. Noise and the lack of suitable space predicted leaders' stress (beta=.07, $p<.05$).

(3) Personal tasks

In the previous analysis, 17% of personal tasks explained the variance in leaders' perceived stress. However, after controlling for Covid-19, 34% of leaders' stress was predicted by their personal tasks [$F(5, 855)=88.17$, $p<.001$] with Covid-19 contributing 29%, thus the difference being 5%. There were two most significant contributors to leaders' stress, which did not happen by chance:

1. Time pressure, e.g., too many things to do and not enough time (beta=.17, $p<.001$)

2. Continuous interruptions (beta=.09, p<.05)

(4) Interpersonal tasks

In the previous analysis, 8% of interpersonal tasks explained the variance in leaders' perceived stress. However, after controlling for Covid-19, 30% of leaders' stress was predicted by engaging with the interpersonal tasks [F(9, 851)=40.72, p<.001] with Covid-19 contributing 29%, thus the difference being 1%. None of the tasks showed statistically significant contribution.

After entering all the statistically significant tasks (i.e. late night/Friday communication, sourcing resources, noise and lack of suitable space, time pressures and continuous interruptions), and controlling for Covid-19 impact, 35% of leaders' stress was predicted by engaging with the all these tasks [F(6,854)=75.54, p<.001] with Covid-19 contributing 29%, the difference being 6%. There were three most significant contributors to leaders' stress, which did not happen by chance:

1. Time pressure, e.g., too many things to do, not enough time (beta=.17, p<.001)
2. Continuous interruptions (beta=.07, p<.05)
3. Sourcing resources, e.g., space, SNAs, teacher allocation (beta=.06, p<.001)

In summary, even when the significant Covid-19 pressure is accounted for, leaders require help with managing their resources and a relief from the extent of tasks they are expected to complete. Section 2.3 provides suggestions as to which aspects of leaders' role can be centralised to help them manage their stress better. Furthermore, given that research with primary school principals in 2014 identified that the three most important stressors were quantity of work, lack of time to focus on teaching and learning and resourcing needs (Reily, 2015), two out of the three stressors reported in the current research are the same as they were seven years ago.

4.3 Personal Wellbeing

Not one participant in the current study experienced psychological flourishing. The vast majority (n=826, 96%) reported moderate wellbeing, whereas 4% (n=35) reported languishing, meaning that their emotional, psychological and social wellbeing were all at low levels. A recent longitudinal study showed that when participants' wellbeing drops from the experiences of flourishing down to moderate levels, it increases their risk of developing depression two years later (Corey L. M. Keyes, Yao, Hybels, Milstein, & Proeschold-Bell, 2020). Whilst the pre-pandemic levels of primary school leaders is unknown, given that the general population reports some levels of flourishing (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2018), it is possible that the Covid-19 crisis has led to a decline in leaders' wellbeing, which is why no flourishing levels were reported. This finding is worrying and requires addressing to avoid further decline in wellbeing.

4.3.3 Tools and Techniques Used to Improve Personal Wellbeing

Participants were presented with 14 various options as to the actions they take to improve their personal wellbeing. The five most frequent actions leaders took were:

1. Healthful food choices most of the time
2. Regular exercise
3. Daily dose of fresh air
4. Ensure good sleep hygiene
5. Regular water intake

Figure 22 and Table 14 provide further details.

Figure 22. Intentional actions leaders take to enhance their wellbeing.
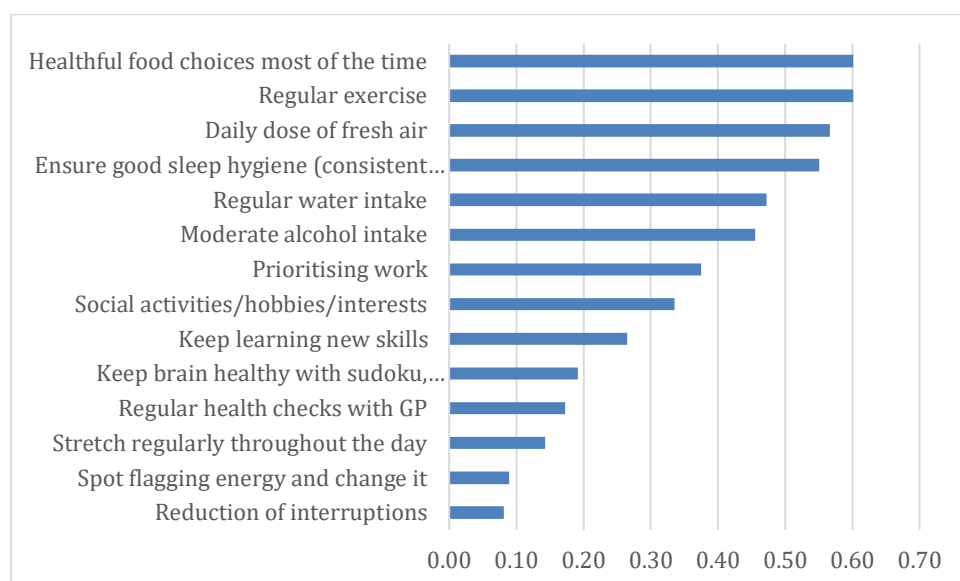
Table 14. The results of mean and standard deviation for the actions leaders take to enhance their wellbeing.

Intentional Actions for Wellbeing	M	SD
Reduction of interruptions	0.08	0.27
Spot flagging energy and change it	0.09	0.29
Stretch regularly throughout the day	0.14	0.35
Regular health checks with GP	0.17	0.38
Keep brain healthy with sudoku, crosswords, and other brain-friendly activities	0.19	0.39
Keep learning new skills	0.26	0.44
Social activities/hobbies/interests	0.34	0.47
Prioritising work	0.38	0.48
Moderate alcohol intake	0.46	0.50
Regular water intake	0.47	0.50
Ensure good sleep hygiene (consistent bedtime, sufficient duration, comfort, darkness, avoid devices emitting blue light etc.)	0.55	0.50
Daily dose of fresh air	0.57	0.50
Regular exercise	0.60	0.49
Healthful food choices most of the time	0.60	0.49

The findings corroborate both Irish and international research showing that looking after physical health is associated with improvement in mental health (Jacob et al., 2020; Lades, Laffan, Daly, & Delaney, 2020; Yıldırım & Arslan, 2020). These results provide suggestions to leaders whose wellbeing suffered during the pandemic, as to what they can do to enhance it further. After all, it is useful to learn from individuals who are doing well (Waters et al., 2021).

4.3.4 Other actions leaders take to enhance health and wellbeing

In this section leaders talk about the tools and techniques they have put in place to help them enhance their wellbeing. Despite being very busy many have taken proactive steps towards enhancing their wellbeing. The main themes are illustrated in Figure 23

Figure 23. Tools and techniques to help with wellbeing

Despite many talking about tools and techniques that help there are also many who Describe a workload that is mitigating against them devoting any time to self-care.

> *I have little time for me, the children in school have to come first, there is so much pressure on me from students to staff to parents to BOM ... they're all looking to me for leadership and the 'plan' and support to keep Covid out...but who is there for me?....we've split breaks so I don't get a break or lunch break, I'm past exhausted and feel so undervalued as a principal....*

4.3.4.1 Exercise
Of all the tools available to leaders the one most mentioned is exercise and the need to make time for it. Research tells us that exercise has many positive impacts on our metal health including improved sleep, stress relief, improvement in mood, increased energy and stamina

and many others (Bowe, Owens, Codd, Lawlor, & Glynn, 2019; Sharma, Madaan, & Petty, 2006).

> *I try to do meditation every morning for 10mins before I go to work. I do a yoga class online once a week. I make a 'to-do' list and try to get through it on a given day. I have set an alarm on my phone for 4pm to tell me to go home!*

> *Leaving the building on time. Not bringing work home too often. Nurturing my relationship with colleagues. Exercise with my partner after work. Spending time with family.*

> *Take a deep breath and smile, leave the laptop in work! Park further away from work and enjoy the few minutes' walk to absorb the outdoor world to switch off.*

> *Exercise, walking with friends, talking to my partner*

> *Routine exercise & time out times each day.*

> *Regular fresh air and walks. Eat well. Smile regularly.*

> *A game of hurling*

> *Leaving school work at school Exercise – walking.*

> *I attend weekly classes in yoga and Pilates (online at moment). I go for a walk with my husband and dog 5-6 times a week- and a cycle once a week.*

> *I bought an exercise bike. I take a lot of deep breaths. Watching comedies to take my mind off work. Walking on the beach helps me feel grounded. Making sure I keep laughing - sounds strange but it really makes me feel great!*

> *Try to turn off notifications on my phone. Physically putting laptop into its case and into the bag at night so it is harder to get out again! Exercise when gyms were open.*

> *Daily gym PT sessions every morning before school, healthy eating, turning off all work notifications on my phone at 3pm on Friday until 8am on Monday morning- best thing I ever did.*

4.3.4.2 Social contact and support

Many leaders mention how having a good social network helps them put things in perspective, seek help and share worries. Social networks help to buffer stress and enhance wellbeing (ESRC, 2013; Greenblatt, Becerra, & Serafetinides, 1982).

> *Talking to good and trusted friends. Knowing when to park it, stop fuelling the annoying elements or stressful parts through constant talk. Having boundaries with communication and not having any work related emails on my phone, work starts when the laptop comes out. Exercise. Playing music. Reading about psychology and understanding my thoughts and reactions.*

I try to step away from my phone for a few hours at the weekend. I try to remember that I am only one person. I try to breathe when I get anxious. I call a family member when I get overwhelmed, which happens much more often lately.

I give myself time by myself when I get home to process and come to terms with my day. I have a good management team who are good to discuss issues with. I have a very supportive family.

I talk about things that frustrate me but I try not to do school work during the weekend.

Exercise, walking with friends, talking to my partner, talk to people share worries.

Great supportive husband and family. Exercise (not as often as I should), good friends, consciously limiting time on technology/social media, etc.

Separating work from home life where possible. Having a pet and going for walks to relax. Connecting with family and friends.

I read a huge amount - my kindle is my favourite accessory. I value my time off and enjoy planning holidays. I use ASMR recordings to help me sleep. I work closely with another school principal regularly & we always take calls from each other to offer words of wisdom or a different perspective. I have very good relationships with school staff: we care for one another and always do our best to listen to one another.

My wife and children are a great source of joy for me. I play football which helps my physical health.

Talking with family and fellow principals. Walking/running on weekends. Watch sport. Meet with friends for a coffee. No time for other things due to family commitments at home & work commitments.

Exercise, reading, writing, stimulating conversations, avoiding negative people, ranting against the DE with one or two confidential buddies on staff, happy times at home with my partner.

I joined meitheal group and IPPN cluster group last year. I meet a good friend. I've started going for a massage regularly.

Talking to good and trusted friends. Knowing when to park it, stop fuelling the annoying elements or stressful parts through constant talk. Having boundaries with communication and not having any work related emails on my phone, work starts when the laptop comes out. Exercise. Playing music. Reading about psychology and understanding my thoughts and reactions.

4.3.4.3 Being proactive around my wellbeing

Many talk about the need to put structures in place to manage their time and workload. This is important aspect of self-care for them.

> *I stay on in school to complete work rather than take it home where possible. A lot of self-talk when thinking about issues. Putting things into perspective. Seeking out positive people and limiting time with negative people. Factoring in something to look forward to every day no matter how small. Daily walks. Uplifting quotes and decluttering.*

> *Very little. Had some Cognitive Behaviour Therapy over last year due to stress in work, this helped me to "zap" unwanted thoughts, other than that I like candles and aromatherapy to help me relax. I was swimming in the sea all summer but very little exercise recently.*

> *Time limits on how much time I spend on DE work that does not directly benefit pupils.*

> *Being organised, realistic targets, realising my "to do list" will never be completed, prioritise the most important tasks which will reap the most benefit for my school community.*

> *I try and ensure that I take the time out when kids go to bed to read, chat or watch TV with my wife. Perhaps have a cup of tea or a beer. I also try and ensure that I take at least one day off during the weekend. But it doesn't bother me if a crisis or a one off event needs to be dealt with e.g.: a Covid case.*

> *Gym twice a week with a neighbouring principal. I always have a night out to look forward to. I always have something to look forward to, if only a cup of coffee on my own in the evening time. I walk with my children at the weekend. I read to them at night time. If anything is bothering me I talk it out with someone and I move on from things. I keep moving forwards.*

> *No work done on Saturdays or Sundays, no attendance at PA meetings after school hours, no attendance at school events at the weekend, no attendance at CPD after school hours, go home within 30 minutes of the school day being over.*

> *I realised about 10 years ago that my family & I should always be the priority. It took me 20 years to realise that. Ironically when you don't give your all to school or deplete your personal resources you are more appreciated.*

> *I attended wellbeing courses and learnt breathing techniques. I listen to psychology podcasts. I read books relating to 'people management' - this is the most exhausting part of the job, managing the needs, wants, demands and Desires of so many people - parents, teachers, pupils, BOM, wider community - no one seems to remember that I am only one person dealing with 200 or more of them.*

> *Anxiety medication, relaxation & yoga exercises daily with my class, organising my admin to be completed on my new weekly admin day (this day has literally saved my sanity).*

I was a teaching Principal but when my school opened two ASD classes it has made such a difference in my life. It means my work life balance is good. I also get fresh air in a walk or run three times per week. My family and I eat well. I have enjoyed family time over Covid. I also like to play and listen to music and I also enjoy learning new things. My project during Covid was to learn Italian!

I relax with my pets, walking my dogs and riding our family pony. I have had 2 bouts of severe anxiety and depression and will be on a low dose of medication for life. This does help me to relax as I have an endless amount of energy!

I attend acupuncture once a week since this term began. I became very unwell after returning to school, due to the additional stress of reopening with Covid and having worked through the summer on planning logistics for the safe return of everyone. I also had a personal bereavement and just had to keep going. We got a dog! Because of him, I have to walk in the fresh air every day and I have to leave work promptly on certain days.

Have started to prioritise self-care as have just had a small heart attack which the cardiologist believes was brought on by unrelenting stress since July.
Try to get my break at correct time before become over hungry or thirsty Try to drink water more and leave earlier without work.

Leave the phone and emails to one side in the evenings and weekends. Blocking out time on calendar for emotional and physical health.

4.3.4.4 Counselling and coaching
Many respondents are being proactive and are seeking help through counselling.

CSL coaching. Counselling (paid for privately). Prayer.

I took up the opportunity of coaching. I am more able to put things aside now and not let it take over my life.

Counselling, 4th set of sessions in 2 years.

I have availed of the counselling service offered by Spectrum life. I have deleted all social media from my phone. I have tried to get out in the fresh air more.

Signed up to life coaching and went to counselling at the start of the year when overwhelmed got advice from solicitor.

I have been seeing a counsellor for a year and also started professional coaching 6 months ago. I walk regularly.

Took sick leave when I was at the point of burnout in October. Got counselling through the EAP. Confided in trusted colleagues. Mindful exercise-not thinking about work when exercising-consciously switching off.

I have spoken to a counsellor once a week I have tried to stop working at home at weekends or late at night unless absolutely necessary I try to commit to some outdoor exercise once a day at least.

Others recognise the need for help, but have not sought help at the time of the research.

None, my mental health is currently very fragile, which affects motivation to improve physical health

4.3.4.5 Professional Development and Learning

Linked to being proactive around wellbeing is the support some find in professional development.

Continuous education and professional development.

New Diploma - new learning, new exercise class and Yoga.

Autumn walk challenge October 4 miles every day INTO 4 week course on wellbeing in October MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) October to December 2020 Making a clear break between work and home life. I lost this during the first lockdown.

Trying to build awareness of both areas through reading, CPD and involvement with external organisations.

Between professional conversations during networking and work with NIPT and CSL I feel I can keep my attitude fresh and interested.

I am doing a coaching course with CSL and I have a personal trainer to keep my physical fitness improving

4.3.4.6 Positive attitude

The importance of a positive attitude is very evident in these data. Sample quotes to illustrate this positive attitude are provided below.

Keep the attitude positive, laugh with my family, exercise, doing things for myself (me time!)

I think I am very resilient and I don't tend to take things personally. I am grateful for all the good in my life and I try and remind myself it's just a job and I don't allow it to define me.

I am happy in my teaching role and in my school for the most part. I think your job can have a massive impact whether negatively or positively on a person's emotional and physical health.

I sporadically do a gratitude journal, I do my best to get out walking/taking photos, I get plenty sleep, I read, I chat with friends.

Smiling, gratitude for what I have Appreciation of the wonder and innocence of the young children we work with.

Trying to foster and maintain a positive mindset. Coming from a point of grounded optimism. Feeling grateful every day. Finding joy in simple things. Looking at the distance travelled rather than the end place. Talking to friends and colleagues. Getting out to walk and exercise, and enjoy being outside.

4.3.4.7 Workload issues and wellbeing

Many respondents cite workload issues that are preventing them implementing tools and techniques to help them in enhancing their wellbeing.

Tools!!! I know what I should do but when you come home every evening feeling absolutely exhausted, stressed and anxious because you could not do all the tasks which have been placed on your plate - no one person could do what is being asked of a teaching principal - I just don't have the energy or inclination to do any of these 'wonderful' things.

No time to do all the things we are supposed to do to keep well. We are always on now.

What use are the tools I put in place when all I get is more and more work - I worked through all my annual leave to open school, now we have Droichead despite being voted against, Cosán is rolling in, PLC is here, I am the new SENO deciding who gets our measly SNA allocation, student placement requests are up 500% on other years, staff morale is impacted by COVID and restriction, etc.

We have to work through all holidays while being told to mind the wellbeing of others.

There is no time to put anything in place. Just look at the documents sent out by the DE since MARCH. One of the documents , the wellbeing document is 106 pages long with at least 2 links in every page to other relevant information.... it's impossible to get around to reading them let alone implement them.

Regardless of what I put in place, it is undone by the Dept constantly impinging on my personal time& during my holidays.

None. This is an area that causes me great concern and an area that I need to work on. Yet I have been unable to find the time to devote to myself given the time that I give to my work and family. I am completing this questionnaire on a Monday morning and as examples to illustrate the all-encompassing nature of the job I was contacted by a staff member with a serious Covid-related queries at 10.10pm on Friday night and by another staff member at 11.30pm on Sunday night. It is quite easy to tell

school leaders to find the time to look after themselves, as a school leader it is quite another thing altogether to find that time given the expectations of the job and the time needed to meet them.

Very few, I am considering leaving the job to manage my stress levels, work life balance and health.

This lack of work life balance is mitigating against some respondents taking breaks.

In current school year I have found that I don't have the time to be involved in my usual activities outside of school hours. I find there is no work life balance this year.

4.4 Work-related Wellbeing

Work-related wellbeing is an extent to which workplace attitude, behaviours and practices impact on individuals' wellbeing (J. Burke, 2020). They include such elements as leaders' experience of balanced emotions, feeling fully engaged at work, relationships, finding their work meaningful and a source of accomplishment (Kern, 2014). Primary School principals in Ireland rely heavily on collegiality when performing their tasks (Ummanel, McNamara, & Stynes, 2016). Therefore, the relational aspect of their job cannot be overestimated. Given that collegial support and relationships are important components of wellbeing, the Covid-19 crisis has caused a disruption in the natural way in which these relationships develop. For some, their relationship improved, whereas others felt more lonely in their jobs (Dempsey & Burke, 2020, 2021).

Furthermore, leaders' emotional lives, and their complexity caused by their role have a significant impact on their wellbeing (Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2011). Leaders engage with children's and school community's lives, which subsequently makes their lives more meaningful and allows them to connect with the emotional aspects of their practice (Brennan & Mac Ruairc, 2019). Even though life challenges can act as accelerators for meaningful lives (Joseph, 2011), too much challenge can lead to inaction and may impact negatively on wellbeing (J. Burke, 2021). This is why, it is crucial to assess Primary school leaders' work-related wellbeing in the context of their role, which is what the current study aimed to do.

The work-related wellbeing was measured using Workplace Perma Profiler (Kern, 2014), which identifies how work contributes to wellbeing (Table 15).

Table 15. Results of mean and standard deviation for participants' work-related wellbeing.

Wellbeing factors	M	SD
Overall work-related wellbeing	7.39	1.74
Experiencing positive emotions at work	6.97	2.06
Experiencing negative emotions at work	5.33	1.99
Being engaged at work	7.55	1.95
Having good relationships at work	7.41	2.20
Finding work meaningful	8.19	1.96
Feeling accomplished at work	7.13	1.82
Loneliness at work	6.11	3.24

Happiness at work	7.09	2.46
Physical Health	6.74	2.44

Compared with post-primary school leaders, Primary school leaders experienced lower levels of loneliness and negative emotions at work, however their average score for all other elements of work-related wellbeing was lower (Burke & Dempsey, forthcoming). This suggests that changes need to be made to their role so that they can derive more wellbeing from it. It may also be due to the supports that are put in place to fulfill their role. Further research is required to identify the reason for this difference.

4.5 Personal Illbeing

We assessed Personal Illbeing with DAAS-21, which is a measure of stress, anxiety, and depression, which assesses the objective symptoms, i.e. behaviours and attitude relating to it. In contrast, the previously mentioned measure of stress related to participants' perceived stress levels, without delving into their symptoms. In relation to depression, according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2016), an individual needs to experience at least 5 symptoms of depression over the same period of 2 weeks to be diagnosed with depression. These symptoms include depressed mood, loss of interest, fatigue, or diminished ability to concentrate. The same manual considers a general anxiety disorder as experiencing excessive anxiety for at least six months, along with three other physical or cognitive symptoms such as tiring easily, irritability, or difficulty sleeping. In the current study, we measured school leaders' mental strain by assessing their symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression over the previous week.

The results showed that 17% of participants were experiencing severe stress, which is not sustainable over a prolonged period of time. Furthermore, 20% of participants reported severe anxiety, which can sometimes lead to depression. In the current sample, 11% of participants experienced depression, which is in line with the national average (Table 16). Worryingly, however, approximately a quarter of the primary school principals began to experience an increased number of symptoms of depression, even though the number of symptoms do not yet reach the threshold of depression. If they are not addressed over the coming months, and action is not taken to alleviate their symptoms, school leaders' metal strain may persist and lead to diagnosable mental illness.

Table 16. Results from DAAS-12.

Scores	Stress	Anxiety	Depression
Normal	51% (n=436)	58% (n=497)	56% (n=482)
Mild	14% (n=121)	12% (n=102)	15% (n=130)
Moderate	19% (n=160)	10% (n=86)	18% (n=152)
Severe	12% (n=100)	7% (n=59)	5% (n=47)
Extremely severe	5% (n=44)	13% (n=114)	6% (n=50)

The findings from the current study suggest that participants experiences of mental health issues is not associated with their role or whether they take on-the-job or off-the-job breaks. At the same time previous results of the current study showed that personal wellbeing is associated with a leadership role (teaching vs administrative) as well as taking sos beag. While the measures of illbeing demonstrate symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress, personal wellbeing indicates the enjoyment and contentment with life (J. Burke, 2021). This may explain why they predicted sos beag. The reduction of energy and engagement in the afternoon may lead to a reduction of life enjoyment and contentment. Therefore, it is recommended that leaders take sos beag not necessarily to avoid mental health issues but to engage more effectively with life.

4.6 Resilience

Resilience is an ability to bounce back from negative experiences (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), which is also associated with resistance to challenge, whereby in the face of adversity, resilient individuals do not demonstrate distress (Davidson & Begley, 2012; Lepore & Revenson, 2006). Resilience is a natural way in which the majority (65%-95%) of individuals respond to traumatic events (Boniwell & Tunariu, 2019). Past research with teachers in Ireland indicated that 8 out of 10 of them began to make a new meaning out of the Covid-19 adversity within 8 months from the beginning of the pandemic (Dempsey & Burke, 2021). Meaning-making is one aspect of resilience, along with an ability to reframe negative/pessimistic thoughts, manage emotions and engage in intentional activities such as exercise (Lepore & Revenson, 2006; O' Brien, Lawlor, Chambers, Breslin, & O' Brien, 2020).

In the current research, half of the participants reported moderate levels of resilience, 20% showed high levels and 30% low levels of resilience (Table 17).

Table 17. Participants' level of resilience.

	Frequency	Percentage
Low	254	30%
Moderate	432	50%
High	175	20%

Furthermore, 17% of leaders' resilience can be explained by their wellbeing [$F(5, 855)=33.84$, $p<.001$]. Specifically, higher levels of personal wellbeing demonstrate the most significant contribution to leaders' resilience (beta=.25, $p<.001$), followed by work-related wellbeing (beta=.18, $p<.001$).

Whilst personal characteristics, socio-economic status and genetic markers are associated with resilience, it can also be learnt (Belsky & Pluess, 2009; Brunwasser, Giliham, & Kim, 2009; Davidson & Begley, 2012; Ma, Zhang, Huang, & Cui, 2020; O' Brien et al., 2020; Emmy E. Werner, 1993; E. E. Werner, 1996). Furthermore, given that leaders' resilience can be predicted by their wellbeing, external organisations, such as IPPN, PDST, CSL or INTO can offer participants supports that can help leaders develop their resilience post-Covid.

4.7 Impact of breaks on outcomes

4.7.1 Stress in term one

To assess how much breaks contributed to participants' perceived stress levels during the first term after controlling for the impact of the pandemic, we carried out hierarchical multiple regression. It showed that 2% of participants' stress was associated with breaks, with two types of break impacting stress the most, i.e., sos beag (beta=.12) and break during the school closure (beta=-.12). This means that even though the magnitude of the breaks impacting on stress levels was not considerable, school leaders who did not take their regular sos beag had a higher level of perceived stress. At the same time, those who frequently took their holiday breaks had higher levels of stress, which may have been due to their need to catch up when they get back to work. The findings indicate that (1) Covid-19 has raised leaders' stress levels significantly; (2) it is important for leaders to take frequent sos beag; and (3) systemic changes need to occur to ensure that leaders' work can be carried out during working days and they do not need to take work home during school holidays.

4.7.2 Personal Wellbeing

After controlling for the impact of Covid-19, 11% of leaders' personal wellbeing can be explained by breaks (lunch, sos beag, weekend, school closure) [F(5, 855)=20.36, p<.001] with Covid-19 contributing 9%. In particular, not taking sos beag (beta=-.10, p<.05) predicted lower levels of wellbeing. This finding contributes to the existing research about the importance of respite to regenerate energy, which ultimately contributes to higher levels of wellbeing (de Bloom et al., 2015; S. Kim et al., 2017). This is the first study that measured the impact of sos beag on school leaders' wellbeing.

4.7.3 Work-related Wellbeing

After controlling for Covid-19, 12% of leaders' Work-related Wellbeing was predicted by their breaks [F(5,855)=23.70, p<.001), with Covid-19 explaining 9%. Both on-the-job breaks showed the highest statistically significant contribution to leaders' wellbeing. Specifically, not taking sos beag (beta=-.11, p<.05) and lunch (beta=-.10, p<.05) predicted lower levels of Work-related Wellbeing. This is the first study that assessed the impact of not taking breaks on work-related wellbeing, therefore there is no comparative data about this.

4.7.4 Illbeing and Breaks

After controlling for Covid-19, 15% of leaders' symptoms of stress was predicted by their breaks [F(5, 855)=30.43, p<.001], with Covid-19 contributing 11%. Two types of breaks predicted leaders' stress, i.e. taking sos beag during the day was associated with increased symptoms of stress (beta=.09, p<.05), and working over the weekend predicted leaders' higher levels of stress (beta=-.05, p<.05). At the same time not taking sos beag impacted negatively on leaders' perceived stress levels. These apparent conflicting findings can be explained by the nature of the stress measure. Taking a break increases leaders' symptoms of stress, such as feeling agitated, having difficulty to wind down, or having nervous energy. It may be because they are anticipating the amount of work that is waiting for them to do. However, when they manage to take regular breaks, their evaluation of how stressful the days were decreased, leaving them feeling like they are more in control of the situation. Further research needs to be carried out to identify what leaders do during their breaks and what effect it has on their perceived stress and symptoms of stress, as this may be yet another explanation of these apparent conflicting findings.

After controlling for Covid-19, 10% of leaders' symptoms of anxiety was predicted by their breaks [F(5,855)=20.65, p<.001] with Covid-19 contributing 8% (difference of 2%). Specifically, taking lunch breaks predicted higher levels of anxiety (beta=.11%, p<.05). The reason for it may be due to the fact that having lunch means that there are many tasks being left undone, which may be adding pressure to leaders. However, as in the previous example, further research needs to explain leaders' perceived consequences of taking lunch breaks.

Finally, after controlling for Covid-19, 8% of leaders' symptoms of depression [F(5, 855)=15.99, p<.001], with Covid-19 contributing 7% (difference 2%). However, none of the breaks showed statistically significant contribution to the model.

4.7.5 Resilience and Breaks
Resilience was not predicted by breaks

Taking all into consideration, taking breaks, especially sos beag is associated with higher levels of leaders' wellbeing (personal and work-related), however, it is also connected with feeling more symptoms of anxiety and stress, which may be due to their apprehension in

relation to the tasks that need to be addressed afterwards. Further research is required to understand this phenomenon in the school environment.

4.8 Teaching vs Administrative Leaders

4.8.1 Stress and Work-Life Balance

Differences were found between teaching and administrative leaders in relation to their perceived stress. The teaching leaders (M=2.68, SD=.56) reported lower levels of stress than the administrative leaders (M=2.76, SD=.50; t(824)=-2.27, p<.05). No differences were found in relation to their work-life balance.

4.8.2 Personal Wellbeing among Teaching and Administrative Leaders

Differences were found in leaders' overall levels of wellbeing. Specifically, teaching leaders (M=3.14, SD=.85) reported lower levels of personal wellbeing compared to administrative leaders (M=3.01, SD=.89; t(857)=-2.08, p<.05).

The research findings in relation to leaders personal wellbeing offer additional contributes to the existing debate about the impact of being a teaching leaders on wellbeing. However, it is impossible to identify whether it is the leadership role that causes decline in wellbeing, or whether participants who hold a teaching role have lower levels of personal wellbeing compared to their administrative counterparts. Further research is required to assess this.

4.8.3 Work-related Wellbeing among Teaching and Administrative Leaders

No statistically significant differences were found between teaching and administrative leaders in relation to their overall work-related wellbeing. However, some differences were found in three components of work-related wellbeing:

1. Teaching leaders (M=7.72, SD=1.98) were more engaged at work than administrative leaders (M=7.39, SD=1.89; t(857)=2.51, p<.05.
2. Teaching leaders (M=6.93, SD=1.96) felt they accomplished less at work than administrative leaders (M=7.32, SD=1.64; t(807)=-3.19, p<.05)
3. Teaching leaders (M=5.72, SD=3.33) felt less lonely at work than administrative leaders (M=6.48, SD=3.10; t(839)=-3.40, p<.05)

No differences were found between teaching and administrative leaders in relation to their experiences of positive and negative emotions, quality of work-related relationships, physical health or their levels of happiness.

4.8.4 Illbeing among Teaching and Administrative Leaders

No differences were found in the symptoms of stress, anxiety, or depression experienced by teaching and administrative leaders.

4.8.5 Resilience among Teaching and Administrative Leaders

Differences were found in relation to resilience between the two groups. Teaching leaders (M=14.48, SD2.56) reported to be less resilient than administrative leaders (M=14.94, SD2.49; t(857)=-2.64, p<.05).

Overall, teaching principals reported lower levels of personal wellbeing and resilience compared with administrative principals. Due to the study design, it is not possible to identify whether their role contributed to lower wellbeing. Further research is required to establish this. At the same time, teaching principals also experienced less perceived stress, less loneliness at work, and felt more engaged than their administrative counterparts. Considering that leaders' most joyous part of the job is working with children and the teaching principals continue to work with children whilst managing their school, it may explain why they find their work more engaging. More research is required into the differences between these two groups of school leaders and the supports they require to alleviate the negative effects of their roles.

4.9 School Leaders vs Others

Perceived stress

When the average perceived stress of primary school leaders was compared with an equivalent of the post-primary school leaders, primary school leaders (M=2.73, SD=.53) experienced more stress than their post-primary (M=2.56, SD=.61) counterparts.

Personal wellbeing

Mental Health Continuum Short-Form was applied to assess the wellbeing of participants across 78 countries worldwide during the pandemic (Gloster et al., 2020). Compared with 414 participants from the general population in Ireland, school leaders' personal wellbeing was lower. Also, when compared with their post-primary colleagues, primary school leaders' wellbeing (M=3.07, SD=.87) than post-primary school leaders' (M=3.35, SD.67). Therefore, primary school leaders' reported lower personal wellbeing than other groups assessed during the pandemic.

Work-related wellbeing

Overall, work-related wellbeing of primary school leaders (M=7.39, SD=1.74) was lower than post-primary school leaders' wellbeing (M=7.89, SD=1.4). Primary school leaders' mean score was lower than post primary school leaders' in relation to their experiences of positive emotions (M=7.31 vs M=6.97), meaningful work (M=8.69 vs M=8.19), physical health (M=7.09 vs M=6.74), relationships at work (M=7.72 vs M=7.41), accomplishment (M=7.73 vs M=7.13), engagement (M=8.14 vs M=7.55) and overall happiness with work (M=7.77 vs M=7.09). However, primary school leaders have also experienced less loneliness at work (M=6.11 vs M=6.44) and less negative emotions (M=5.33 vs M=5.49). No other comparative research using Workplace PERMA-profiler was carried out internationally.

Illbeing

When primary school leaders' illbeing was compared with medical doctors, nurses and non-medical staff's illbeing across 8 European countries (excl. Ireland) during Covid-19 (Hummel et al., 2021), primary school leaders experienced less symptoms of depression (M=9.68, SD=8.96 vs M=11.34, SD=9.9); less anxiety (M=8.44, SD=8.85 vs M=8.61,

SD=9), and less symptoms of stress (M=15.97, SD=9.12 vs M=17.40, SD=10.71). Please note that in the above study, non-medical professionals experienced higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress than medical professionals.

However, when primary school leaders' illbeing was compared with the general population in Ireland during the Covid-19 pandemic (T. Burke et al., 2020), school leaders showed less symptoms of depression (M=9.68 vs M=10.54), more anxiety (M=8.44 vs M=6.02) and more stress (M=15.97 vs M= 12.86).

Taking all into consideration, while primary school leaders' do not experience heightened levels of depression, their personal and work-related wellbeing is lower than other groups assessed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Wellbeing acts like a protective padding against life challenges (J. Burke, 2021). When its depleted, it will no longer protect leaders against mental health issues. Lower levels of wellbeing may impact leaders' resilience long term and if persist may contribute to their development of depression 1-2 years from now (Corey L. M. Keyes et al., 2020). Furthermore, participants experience considerably more stress than other cohorts whose wellbeing was assessed before and during the pandemic. Therefore, urgent action is required to help leaders improve their wellbeing.

4.10 Summary

In this chapter we looked at leaders' perceived stress, work-life balance, personal wellbeing, work-related wellbeing, illbeing and resilience. Leaders talked about what they like in their role and four clear themes emerged that of working with children, in a collaborative environment with lots of variety and autonomy. Building on these positive aspects of the role is imperative for leaders' wellbeing. The erosion of time for leading and planning teaching, learning and curriculum was cited earlier, the external accountability structures that can erode ones' autonomy and lead to dull administrative tasks all impact on leaders' wellbeing. The majority of participants experienced stress and many reported having poor work life balance. Stress was related to daily responsibilities and the complexity of the role. Many leaders are being proactive in looking after their health buy taking exercise and seeking help.

Overall, teaching principals reported lower levels of personal wellbeing and resilience compared with administrative principals. However, they have also experienced less perceived stress, less loneliness at work, and felt more engaged than their administrative counterparts. More research is required into the differences between these two groups of school leaders and the supports they require to alleviate the negative effects of their roles.

Finally, principals participating in the current research reported experiencing lower levels of wellbeing compared with other cohorts assessed before and during the pandemic. This may be due to the heightened levels of stress and associated with it symptoms. Urgent action is required to address this issue.

5 -The Future of School Leadership

In this section we assessed leaders' plans for the school-life post-Covid. This related to changes, resources, and supports that leaders require to ensure (1) leadership sustainability and (2) they can help their community enhance their wellbeing. We will start with where leaders see themselves in five years, followed with the role changes that leaders propose to help them stay and do well in their leadership role post-Covid. Then, we will review school leaders' perspective as to what provisions required over the next 5 years to improve pupils and teachers wellbeing, as well as personal actions that they commit to taking to help them mind their own wellbeing.

5.1 Where will you be in five years?

In the open-ended question that asked where do you see yourself in 5 years 113 (13%) said they expected to be in the same school and role, 276 (32%) respondents reported that they planned to retire, 150 participants (n=17%, 8%) planned to step down, take a career break, changing career, or saw themselves in a different position. Of this number, 66 mentioned they wanted to go back to teaching. The remaining 38% did not provide any definite answers (Figure 24).

Figure 24. Participants' intention to stay, leave or retire.
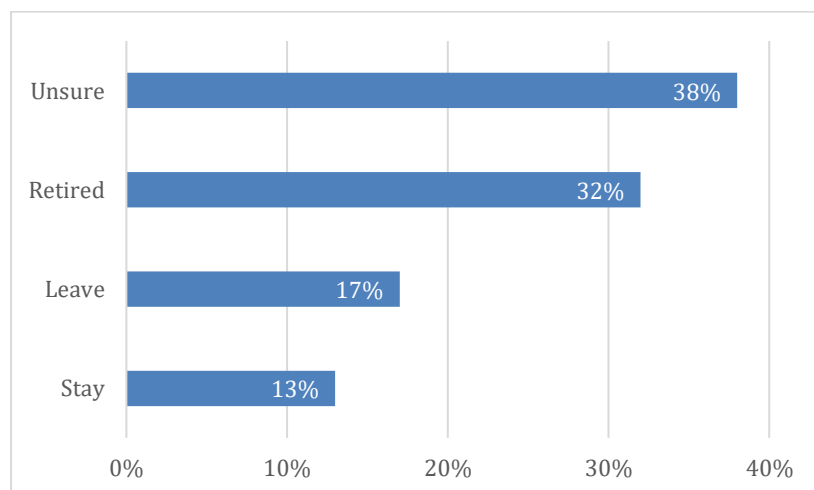
Many participants also mentioned health issues. For example, 7 leaders reported that they expected to be burnt out five years from now, while 19 foresaw dealing with health problems due to their role.

Some leaders were more hopeful and planning new curriculum projects in their school and planning for school change.

I think I will still be leading my current school as my own girls just started in our school. I will have our ASD unit up and running in the next 1 to 1.5 years. I also have a plan to develop a domestic science curriculum for our school with local sponsorship to pay for food and someone to do demos and classes. It is part of my 5 year plan as I believe diet and nutrition is at the core of learning. We hope to extend our kitchen in our school to allow a class per week to learn cooking, cleaning , how to set a table, dress a bed etc.

Same role, but I expect cultural change, which has started will have gathered pace and effect and a more student centred school is evolving.

Others were feeling very burned out by the work-load. Sample comments:

In a different sector , a job that actually finishes at 5pm and not always 'on call' I hope still in the role. , But to be honest I was so burned out in October that I did think of resigning.

At this rate I can't see myself having the energy to stick this much longer. Everyone is having it tough but there is no let up for leaders at all. Holidays will only be catch up time, no chance for body to heal.

Some were looking forward to having administrative roles where they did not have to juggle teaching and leading.

Hopefully an admin principal but reluctantly as I love teaching. The role I feel is just exhausting and I feel in not giving my all to the teaching or the managing because it's impossible to do both.

Admin principal or doing something in the education sector outside of teaching / principalship.

As Deputy principal. I feel I would need at least 5 years as DP to build confidence and complete a Master's in Education.

Others just wanted life to get back to normal and not be so busy all the time.

Still as an teaching principal, but I'll be gone in 10, when my children are though primary school. Frankly. I love my job, I love teaching. I took a career break and when I returned I was silenced by the sheer volume of work now involved in the job. We have no contract, we're responsible for everything but have the power to do very little, without a level five leadership model...that takes time. I also have had consistent poor health since I returned from career break and it's getting series. I used to be very fit and healthy. Now I'm not.

I hope my health holds up and that I can step down from Principalship in a dignified fashion. I'd like to enjoy school life again before I retire. I'd like to taste life when I just have to worry about myself and my own problems. I'd love to be carefree again and enjoy my hols once more.

Looking forward to a time when the profession is valued and supported.

> *Hopefully with children of my own but current stress levels are too high for that... I hope to still be in my school as principal and that benchmarking would have been honoured...I'd like to feel valued as a professional and not be lambasted by the media constantly with inaccurate stories and 'scandals'... I'd like to have higher morale... Probably in the same role ... still dreaming of retirement everyday (not a joke unfortunately). I would hope to take on a secondment role at some time to benefit myself and the school - it may help me to avoid 'burnout' and would also hopefully benefit the school if another style of leadership and management was in operation in the school for a period of time.*

> *Not in this role. Feel very devalued for all I bring and not worth it financially. I see secondary principals paid much more than us and yet they have more management support, not good at all. Not for all the hours given and the way treated over COVID. DP gets days for LWR and Principal does not, I didn't get a summer, other school staff did, disrespectful and not valued.*

Some look forward to coaching new entrants to the profession.

> *I would like to be further along the path of Leadership Coaching IN schools, I would love to be able to support schools in creating a coaching culture.*

> *Not here. Hopefully I can mentor/help new principals and find my voice. I am restricted, as I am aware that any negativity impacts on my school's profile. Hence the resounding silence from all the principals nationally. Many are suffering in miserable silence.*

Many spoke of worrying about their health with work related stress having a negative impact on them.

> *Dead. Not joking. I genuinely have never felt so unwell or so useless at minding myself up. All my energy is invested in my school and people. I am noth8ng like what I was 4 years ago. Big mistake. No one to blame but myself.*

> *Still doing the same job as long as my health holds up (steadily declining since becoming principal 11 years ago - anxiety issues, sleep problems, migraines, Vertigo, back problems with several procedures in hospital, constant infections)*

Some are looking forward to retirement or resigning their position.

> *Hopefully enjoying a healthy retirement from my present position but channelling my energy into some other equally enjoyable project.*

> *Possibly as a mainstream teacher as I am seriously considering resigning my post. It's just not worth how much of my own personal time is taken away from me. I know I need to manage my own time better but there are expectations from the Dept, parent body, communities that are not sustainable. I have no quality of life.*

Probably in the same job and same chair! I will have finished my thesis in Special Ed. and I will be fluent in Irish having paid for my NUIG course myself. Moreover, I would like to do a law degree online, so who knows I could be training towards becoming a barrister!

Retired and happy to see my successor doing bringing the school to the next level.

5.2 Suggested Changes to the Leaders' Role

Leaders were asked what way they think the role should change in the coming years. The following were the main themes that emerged (Figure 25). Typical comments in this section were as follows:

Linked to other sections of the research many leaders find managing building projects takes up a lot of their time so should be supported by other personnel.

> *Managing a devolved project for refurbishment while located in a sports facility during Covid 19 and still teaching and leading learning has me questioning my role. I was asked recently by a friend should they become a leader and I said No. DE devolves project... Get on with it. We managed teaching and learning in a pandemic and now the Inspectorate is 'checking' our Covid compliance. NEPS rang to support but won't visit or assess and are surprised that teachers are getting abuse and attitude and being perceived as moaners when compared to the health service. With a voluntary BOM and no effective administration support it is just too much. Pay for a school secretary to support a cluster of small schools, and don't annoy me by telling me what to do by circular on a Friday night when I and other principals have it figured out and then demand inspection for compliance when people are doing the best and for God's sake if managing a Devolved Project give more release time for that period.*

There were many comments about the role of the Board of Management. This is an area that will need further exploration in research.

> *Remove the inefficient system of volunteer boards of management. Allow principals to step down without losing seniority. I would like an office to complete my work in.*

Deputy Principals are calling for more administrative days.
> *More admin days for deputy principals. We play a big role in the running of schools but don't get any recognition.*

Pay and conditions were also discussed by many.
> *More respect- I feel as leaders of schools, we don't hear get an email from dept. of ed. about circulars or educational initiatives- they get published on a Friday evening and we are expected to find them at some point. For the job we do better financial reward- people say we have a great job and long holidays, but a big majority still have to work through the holidays. All the time spent over the summer break interviewing staff, preparing the school for a safe re-opening.*

> *Increase the in-school management team in the hope it would reduce the responsibility on the principal or give increased support in the role to him/her. The role is not attractive at all. I would not recommend anyone to take on the role of principal in the current climate. In addition to the personal and health impact of taking on the role, the level of financial remuneration is clearly not commensurate to the level of responsibility of the role.*

It was also surprising how many leaders said they did not have their own office.

An office of my own. As a teaching Principal, my secretary has an office but I don't! Help in sub search- hours a day.. 45 people in one building calling in all leaves to one person- after hours. It goes on 7 days a week from 6:30am weekdays to bedtime- constantly trying to staff the school- constantly 7 days a week , 24 hours a day working on staffing. Enough support for children with special needs.

Figure 25. Suggested changes to leaders' role

Payment for managing extra staff staff

Additional support staff

More time to lead learning

Teaching principals/DPs need more time to lead

Defined role for leaders

Release time for middle management

Pay and conditions
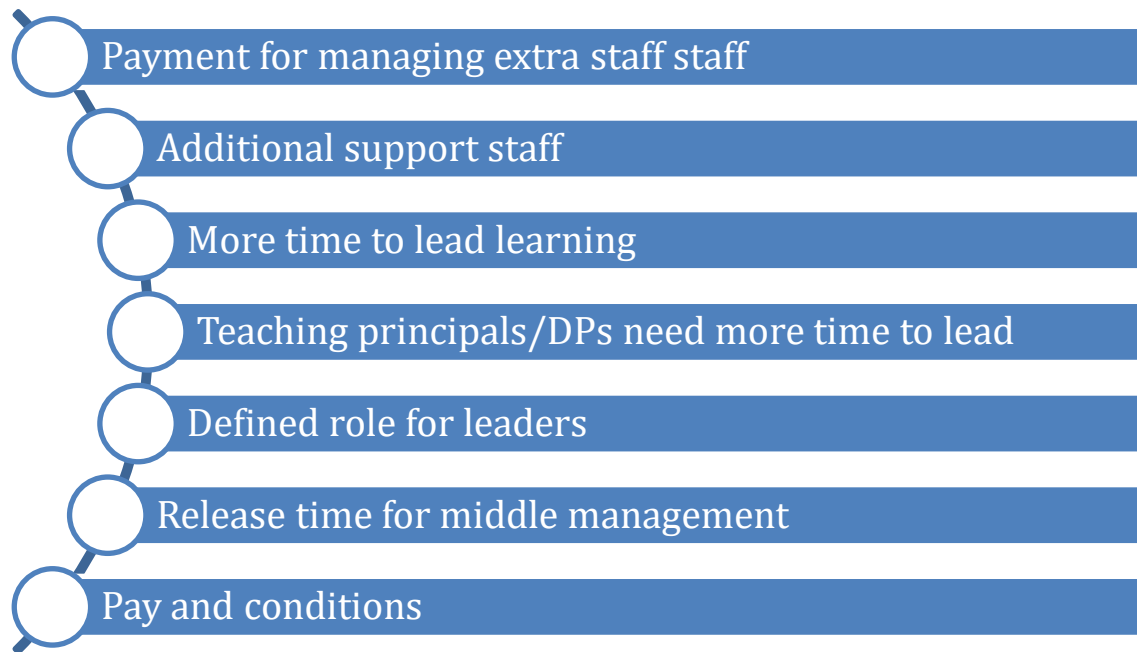
5.2.1 Payment for managing all staff

This was the biggest issue for leaders. Many are managing up 30 extra staff and they get no payment for this.

More support and recognition of having to manage a large staff of SNAs (23) and bus escorts (11), ancillary staff (2), Behaviour Analyst (1) along with 8 teachers.
A guarantee that one day a week admin will continue in to the future. Improved salary & payment of benchmarking award.

As a special school principal I spend an inordinate amount of time dealing with issues relating to SNAs I should be rewarded financially for this. We should have floating staff this year to help cope with absences and maintain consistency and routine. We should have a HR dept in place for regular queries. More than one secretary for busy schools. A building that is fit for purpose. Transparency. Better regulations in relation to BOMs - i.e., terms of office so that one person doesn't remain on the BOM indefinitely. Patron bodies scrapped and answer to DE.

Increase Principal's allowance. Pay outstanding Benchmarking award. Include all employees-SNAs, Bus Escorts, Ancillary Staff-I manage all staff but only get paid to manage teachers.

Better administrative support- e.g. I may have 14 teachers, but I have 32 SNAs on staff (and 12 bus escorts). There is no allowance whatsoever for the additional work involved - My greatest frustrations and challenges come from managing SNAs, not teachers or even students with additional and often complex needs, and all the parents and professionals that come with them.

Deputy Principal to be admin as well. When you need to plan or discuss things with anyone they are in class. Work could be much more streamlined and the load could be shared much more if the DP were administrative

5.2.2 Need for additional support staff

Leaders are calling for more funding for support staff. Many talk about the need for a full-time secretary. With so many dealings with external agencies a secretary could help with this workload.

Full time secretary, cleaner and caretaker. Better ancillary support.

Additional staffing - especially in SNA allocation. Deputy released maybe one day a week. More funding for a secretary.

More admin days. Policies up online for schools to adapt. Less paperwork and support staff to keep the school running smoothly.

Better communication from DE and clear, concise guidelines written in SMART English - not "legal speak"! Enhanced ancillary grant to provide adequate pay to overworked, under resourced school secretaries and greater funding to small schools to pay for caretakers to ensure premises are maintained properly.

Significantly improved ancillary support who are adequately and regularly trained in relation to their ever expanding roles e.g. financial, administrative packages, health & safety.... A period of leave (e.g. 6 month sabbatical after 8/10 yrs. service as principal) to re-charge at a personal and professional level.

5.2.3 More time to lead learning and curriculum

When one reads the reason leaders say they like the job the majority cite working with children so it is not surprising that they are calling for more time to devote to teaching and learning.

More assistance admin deputy renumeration time to teach and lead teaching and learning.

The focus needs to return to the children. Too much administration. Boards of Management don't work and principals are left with work that is not part of their role. More of the job should be educationally focused rather than admin for outside parties!!!

A proper definition of the role of the Principal. The role/ tasks is too vast. Principal should be involved in teaching and learning not finance, not ancillary contracts, not emergency repairs.

Less initiatives from DE and concentrate more on teaching and learning.

Less admin   More time to teach and focus on the children's learning.

For there to be a step down facility for principals which protects their pension contributions and prior seniority in the school. Should be allowed to truly be a leader of teaching and learning.

More emphasis on leading teaching & learning. Financial/ building issues etc to be dealt with by governing boards.

Much more focus on children and their learning and more trust in the teaching profession. The image of Principal as leader of children's learning and mentor to teaching colleagues. A move away from seeing Principal purely in management terms!

5.2.4 Role definition

Leaders and asking for their role to be defined and to have an option to stepdown when they feel the role has become too onerous.

A defined role.

There are too many aspects to be knowledgeable in and familiar with - the role needs to be more defined with some of the tasks expected removed to outside agencies not even to internal leadership positions.

Higher pay commensurate are reflective of the 'always on the clock' nature of the role. A specific contract of duties would be nice too so people could recognise that no contract can be written to adequately reflect what we do. I would love to have actual holidays where I know I will not be contacted.

A salary ! Not a teacher pay plus allowance or overtime payments   A proper definition of the role and who you can offload the extras too!   More middle management would help.

Get rid of the manager roles like above-more emphasis on leading learning. It's not that at moment it's all about running the ship ensuring it stays afloat but the captain has to do all the jobs as there are no maintenance crew and the teachers are dealing with passengers.

Additional teachers for the pupils, reduce the Pupil Teacher Ration. Ensure substitution is available for all staff leave, this is a big improvement and should stay. To be able to interact with all the class more, Covid-19 has really hit this, I am a teacher as I love working with children, now I see them only at lunchtimes, yard duty

and the small groups I take. This has made the role far less rewarding. SEN - The responsibilities placed on Principals for deciding and managing our stretched SEN resources are particularly onerous and damaging.

A defined list of responsibilities, we are constantly getting additional duties the chance to step back from the role of Principal after a certain number of years without having to move school.

Please please allow us step down with dignity. A contract! We should be paid same as Post Primary. We should get same grants. BOM who actually do something as opposed to attend 5 meetings a year and that's all we get from them. This job is 24/7.

5.2.5 Release time for middle management

There is a call for release time for middle management to meet and to support the leader in their role.

Release time for deputy and ISM team - difficult to expect too much in meetings straight after a day teaching.

More days allocated for administration of Deputy Principal Role.

More training for ISM teams. This is a neglected area. So much more admin needs in school now.

More distributed leadership - more middle leadership posts. Admin time for deputy and middle leaders to work together during the school day. More admin support from fully qualified, skilled administrator.

One day a week admin for a deputy principal in a school of 550 plus students . My role as Deputy has a large number of duties under each domain, making it impossible for me to feel I am ever getting anywhere with my role as Deputy. An allowance for the equivalent of year head meetings during school time so that meetings of the ISM team become part of the working day/week.

5.2.6 Pay and conditions

Many leaders are asking for pay parity with their second level colleagues in the same role.
Benchmarking award... replacement of lost PORs.

More pay for teaching principals, it doesn't make sense that a teaching principal with 1 DP and 1 post holder and a staff of 10 is not paid accordingly considering the hours we work weekly.

Assignment of in school management roles directly by the department of education, new management system so that boards of management no longer exist and 2 principal release days per week plus payment of monies due to principals.

Pay, conditions & benefits commensurate with the scope of the role. Proper admin systems and more robust secretarial service. Fairer litigation process in courts (staff

claims) and complete revamp of Section 29 Appeals process. Proper representation for Principals at Union level.

Salary   I lost an allowance in transferring to principal role - if I had stayed in my previous school senior management role with my SEN allowance I would be on the same salary as I'm now as principal of 6 teachers 12 SNAs and 3 bus escorts   As I moved jobs I lost my SEN allowance qualification yet I'm responsible for all this staff and students   Also principals manage SNAs bus escorts and teachers and are only paid for number of teachers. Feel very devalued and used and exploited.

5.2.7 Happy in the role

A small number of the leaders are happy in the role.

I am overall, quite happy with the running of and provision of care and teaching we provide. Personally, I am overall happy in my job.

I think my job is very attractive. Ability to lead people and make changes. Ability to work with young kids. Ability to develop initiatives in a school community. Ability to look back over time and see the good you did. Also good holidays and well paid by all standards. But unfortunately too many people go into it and complain. Have no time for the moaners.

the position is very attractive as it is. i see myself as a manager of a school with 350 pupils and 40 staff. It's like running a small business and it is not taxing. the was principals continuously moan about their positions and the difficult jobs they have is annoying. God love them in the private sector. Imagine them running a small factory they would not survive with the negative vibes they give off all the time and are finished at 3pm each day and have long holidays.

In conclusion, many of the changes requested by leaders are linked to ways to make their work load more manageable apart from comments on pay. The call by many asking to spend more time on leading learning should be noted by policy makers.

5.3 Student wellbeing

The majority of the comments in this section pertain to the curriculum and pedagogy. The message from our leaders is that when we provide a rich engaging curriculum for children we enhance their wellbeing. However, they also point out that to do this we need enhanced supports for pupils with extra educational needs and emotional needs. They contend that teachers are not social workers so they need to mind their wellbeing in order to look after their pupils' wellbeing. Parenting courses could be provided to help parents link more with the school in meeting their child's wellbeing. Finally, it was surprising how many comments asked for a PE hall for their school. At a minimum it is imperative that the facilities are provided to enhance physical movement during the school day. Typical comments in this section highlight the following themes illustrated in Figure 26 below.

Figure 26. Suggested changes that can be made over the next 5 years to enhance pupils' wellbeing.
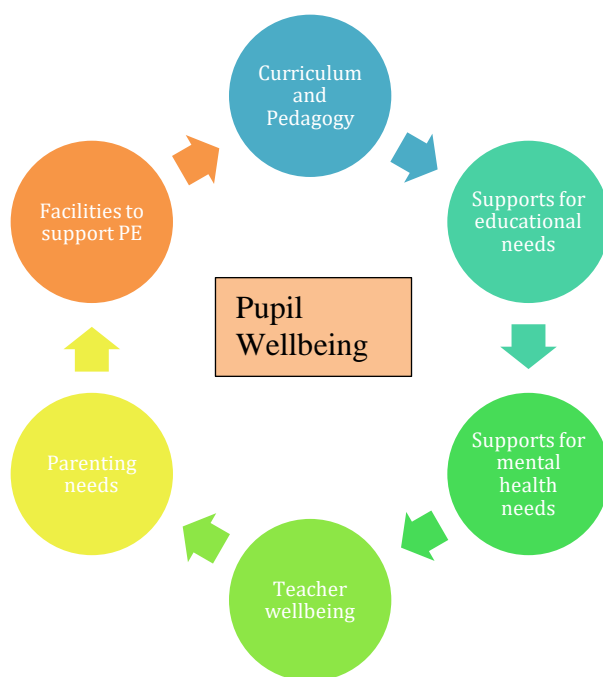
5.3.1 Curriculum and Pedagogy

It is no surprise that curriculum and pedagogy are the most mentioned theme in this section. This is where the relationships between the teacher, leader, learner, discipline and home are most relevant and all contribute to pupil wellbeing.

It also highlighted the need for space to facilitate curriculum experiences that open up learning to creativity and giving children opportunities to be fully engaged in different kinds of experiences.

> *Outdoor play, less emphasis on testing and more on socialisation.*

> *More emphasise on the arts, mindfulness.*

> *Meaningful support of physical education at all levels - Staff professional development / facilities / time allocation.*

> *Emphasis should be placed on building resilience. Developing a more growth mindset in pupils will enhance their wellbeing. More work needs to go into PE and the Arts. We are placing too much emphasis on measuring the measurable such as STEM subjects (which I adore teaching) instead of looking at how we teach art, drama and music. We have a polytunnel and we try to get the children rooted to their environment through this resource.*

> *Lots of emphasis on self-care (exercise, healthy diet, feeling their bucket etc).More educational awareness of the disadvantages of screens on their wellbeing. Perhaps some kind of mindfulness/meditation. I feel that at the moment, parents are focussed on the gaps in curriculum, rather than seeing the impact of the Covid crisis on the children's emotional wellbeing.*

> *Very difficult with overcrowded Curriculum , we have introduced Mind Up. A specific scheme is required. More Support Teachers to give specific attention to it.*

> *More exercise, variety of choice in this area, more opportunities to be involved in events that allow students to socialise.*

> *I believe each school should have an indoor facility for exercise to be used on wet days for lunch and PE. Educate parents on the importance of exercise and diet, it shouldn't be left to the schools to be up all social responsibilities.*

> *I think pupils wellbeing is adequately met in my school. I'd add more physical exercise and continue with our wellbeing programmes.*

> *Reduce curriculum. Return to basics in the classroom. Greater emphasis to be placed on the Arts - visual, drama and Music. CPD for teachers in simple mindfulness lessons and visualisations which pupils love to do.*

Some point out the need for one-to-one tuition for some pupils.

> *A reduction in teacher pupil ratio so that children can get the one to one support they need for their overall development. I think children suffer from the lack of attention of adults who have less and less time to be present to them.*

Testing the pupils is causing undue anxiety and the time could be used in more meaningful encounters for children.

Get rid of standardised tests and the nonsense they bring. A decreased curriculum with lots of practical resources around emotional health and wellbeing.

Smaller classes   External agencies fit for purpose   Reduced curriculum   Reduced standardised testing   Reduced classes under 20 across the board   Schools given increased staff resources immediately none of this carrying numbers.   Emphasis on the Arts, PE.   Did I mention reduced classes.

Again, leaders point out that supports for the children would enable them to put focus on leading the curriculum rather than being a social support for families. They are calling for a reduction in curriculum overload.

A reduced curriculum so they feel successful. Visiting teachers in specific areas where they can enjoy the other subject areas. No or limited homework. Reduced class size, increased play spaces and resources. Health care at school- a visiting nurse for clusters so I don't have to be Mammy for everyone in my school! I love them all, but I'm growing weary! Not just well-being rhetoric (I've read Finn Tynan's work etc), resilience work. We will survive this etc.

More time for depth in the Curriculum, more PE and better facilities for play. Proper ICT facilities for learning in schools.

Reduce curriculum overload and put a greater emphasis on emotional wellbeing and mental health. Ensure children receive proper supports from e.g. play therapists, psychologists, OTs, SLPs etc Build this capacity into schools.

Improved outdoor / all-weather facilities for play in all schools, make play in primary schools a priority, playgrounds, etc. Encourage more outdoor and active learning Reduced pupil teacher ratio - to ensure that all children get the attention they need and deserve   Improved EI training, improving self-regulation for staff; can't teach what we don't know   Support parents and teachers - stressed adults make stressed children.

Reduce the overloaded curriculum when will the department ever listen to the people on the ground . Too many subjects too much to Cover do you end up chasing your tail trying to do it all to the best if your ability and end up feeling guilty when it's not done properly but often rushed. If teacher is rushing so too are the children Z not enough time for arts and bring back ability to teach handcrafts how relaxing for children and teachers who want to teach them Before they for out altogether Extra money to schools for trips outside of school so that children can have a broader range of experiences. Parents cannot afford to pay money for buses.   Training for staff in wellbeing & how to increase wellbeing in 9 months.   Increase support for SEN pupils.

Reduce the amount of work to be completed in the curriculum as it puts teachers under pressure and therefore children; change standardised assessment procedures so that children are not being "measured" by one test; give teachers freedom to enable self-directed learning so children are choosing how they learn and what they learn about.

Broaden the curriculum and have more project based learning across all the disciplines. More time for talking and listening to the children. Smaller class sizes and slow the pace of change.

A massive investment is required in counselling and wellbeing at primary and secondary levels. every child should have access to an outdoor classroom. every child should be able to cycle to school. every child should be taught to swim. every child should have access to a variety of musical instruments. children should be taught in smaller groups. special educational needs should be catered for without qualification or obfuscation.

The Arts - creative movement, drumming workshops, process drama.... and other similar initiatives. When well lead (not performance and 'solo star' oriented), I have seen every child engage with these activities. They become absorbed and it gives them the space to slow down and process things.

More flexibility in terms of curriculum time for teaching Health & Wellbeing. We need to focus on Social media, screen time and things that affect young people in their daily lives. We need to give them an alternative and encourage them to talk to each other.

5.3.2 Support for educational needs

In order to meet the needs of all learners the leaders tell us that there is a need for additional supports in the areas of SEN and other areas.

More facilities for SEN pupils.

More SEN resources - staffing being a priority.

Reduce assessment time from 4 years. Last term I got 2 assessments of needs back that took 4 years to complete. One child diagnosed with ASD 4 years later. Disgraceful Reduce class size. Get rid of sending standardised test results home on reports. Reduce curriculum load. Teach children to be more resilient.

Re-establish support teacher for traveller. Reduce pupil teacher ratio. Give us a Home school liaison teacher.

When children struggle that they are given correct supports without undue waiting lists. We have children with ADS who have been without external services for years, children who need CAMHS and can't get in, inadequate SNA supports in school....

The issues here have been highlighted elsewhere in this report. The focus here is on how this lack of support is impacting on children's wellbeing. This is further highlighted in the next section on support for mental health.

5.3.3 Support for mental health

Many leaders are calling for mor focused supports for mental health including counselling for children, reduced diagnostic times and access to trained professionals in a number of areas.

Counselling service IN schools.

More NEPs support.

Access to trained professionals for pupils with mental health and anxiety issues.

School therapists especially in DEIS schools.

Better and more immediate supports for crisis situations.

Schools should have a counsellor allocated based on pupil numbers.   More home school liaison personnel for schools.   Significant increase in SET allocation to support pupil learning, social skills and behaviour.

More psychologists, more OT's more SNA's lower pupils teacher ratios and the exclusion of sports clubs and interested bodies from our schools. Teachers are being Deskilled by coaches, music, gymnastics chess enthusiasts. all should be stopped as teachers are well trained to do their jobs.

PLEASE PLEASE allocate a cluster of schools system whereby pupils can access counselling services / at least the opportunity to talk to someone with expertise , which might in turn , prevent their worries becoming real issues down the line .... where they will have the pleasure of trying to deal with the NON existent mental health service.

Increase the number of NEPS psychologists. Provide an adequate cohort of speech & language therapists and occupational therapists. Re-imagine CAMHS, they operate like a secret service, does anyone know who they are, how do you get to them, do they actually exist? Provide training on a statutory basis on how to be a parent. Enact a law that prohibits children under the age of 12 from interacting on social media. Get children to turn off devices so that they actually talk to other people and get some sleep.

More services and greater access to Educational Psychology NOT LESS Counselling for students and proper psychiatric services. Our 16-18 year olds buried two classmates in the last fourteen months and we are expected to be their counsellors.

Decrease class sizes Increase SET numbers Reduce poverty and homelessness Increase TUSLA social workers and expand on their initiatives to support families- also follow through on chronic absenteeism. Provide every school with or with access to a HSCL teacher.

5.3.4 Supports for teacher wellbeing

Linked to pupil learning is a call for supports for teacher wellbeing. If teachers are not supported they cannot support their pupils.

Teachers cannot be expected to take on wellbeing of pupils on top of everything else. We are not trained to do this, it should be left to professionals.

Better training for teachers and SNAs. Opportunities for the adults to improve their own wellbeing- and thus allow them to pass on the benefits to the students. Better funding for resilience and self-esteem building programmes. Access to counsellors in school.

Look after teachers wellbeing in a supportive and meaningful way.

Funding Therapists in school Human Resources i.e. wellbeing teacher.

Lots there but teachers wellbeing needs to be prioritised or they won't have the heart to support children.

Pupils' Wellbeing!!! If the school leaders - i.e. Teachers and Principals are 'well beings' there is a good chance they'll be able to deal with their pupils well-being - as teachers have done very successfully for generation!!!

If an initiative is added then something needs to be removed by department. Cannot just add more and more something will have to give. Stressed teachers isn't good for student wellbeing. Develop an actual course for L2LP as promised 2/3 years ago. I am not being negative about wellbeing for pupils, but honestly I cannot impress upon people enough how well our children are cared for here in my school. We focus all decisions around the children's wellbeing and education. Our pupils are content, confident and comfortable. We have procedures in place for the time when children struggle with their educational needs and their emotional/relationship needs. I would like to see more freedom and care for the staff in schools, who at present are worn out and exhausted by the ways the media, the government and the department treat them. This will allow the space for teachers and leaders to continue to have the energy and enthusiasm for the great work that they are already doing.

Stop asking teachers to do the job of other professionals (see above) and allow them to concentrate on the job they're trained to do. Happy teachers =happier children.

Leaders remind us that teachers are not social workers and they should not be put in this role, especially without adequate supports.

Teachers are not social workers - most of my work as principal for pupils and staff could be describe as social work.

Parents taking more responsibility and schools not being expected to solve all of society's evils/problems.

The correct supports for teachers. Children have countless needs these days and it is getting worse from year to year, all is falling on the shoulders of teachers who have 30 children (in the case of our school) in front of them to teach. Teachers in my school are beyond dedicated to the children but if what we see continues they will burn out.

5.3.5 Supports for parents

Leaders also call for supports for parents in their role of enhancing pupil wellbeing.

More accountability for parents. Too much emphasis now on disempowering parents- e.g. child comes to school at 830 for breakfast club, also gets lunch, stays for afterschool until 530 so has lunch again and homework done. Less and less family time and responsibility for parents. Also a policy of more investment in outdoor creative play facilities particularly in junior end. In school model of counselling and HSE services as so many miss appointments outside of school e.g. speech and lang.

Parenting, Parenting and more Parenting skills !! So many are struggling!!! Also need to reintroduce a type of Learning Support for children without a diagnosis but still finding school tough. There is a whole band of children who have missed out on support as so much Special Ed staff time is absorbed into the needs of pupils with a diagnosis.

Continued focus on wellbeing and physical health. All schools should be entitled to a PE hall. We were refused one when granted other extensions 10 years ago. Recognition of nurture rooms - we opened one after much research as a desperately needed measure for our children with additional emotional/behavioural needs. However we had to staff it from our normal allocation, meaning we gave one SET teacher and one SNA to the room (full time) as that is our greatest support need. Therefore we are short in other areas. The inspector is very supportive but cannot help have it recognised by the department.

Roll out the clinical therapeutic supports being trialled in a pilot to all schools. Make a behaviour specialist and a counsellor available to clusters. Run parenting programmes through the school. In my years I have noticed a distinct change to parenting and its evident in the ability and attitude of children now attending. Many have never been encouraged to help at home and come to school unable or afraid to do things for themselves, many have never heard 'No' and do not understand boundaries. 5 JI without SEN presented this year not toilet trained and many children will be disrespectful from the start.

The current emphasis is needed. Resources for sports rather than ICT.   Parental programmes on parenting responsibly (it can't be on the school all the time). Internet platform education for parents. These issues are coming into schools too much. We need to tackle some parenting issues. I believe that we should start with providing parents with more parenting courses, some parents have really struggled over the lockdown and were not able to provide good role models for their children. As a result we are dealing with children who have been left to their own devices and those pupils are suffering the consequences- anxiety, inability to self-regulate, difficulty with social interactions.

Enhanced parenting programmes which are part of school admissions process.

5.3.6 Physical infrastructure

All schools need to have at a minimum a GP room for PE, drama and other classes.

Every school should have a general purpose room for PE classes or dept should provide grant to cover cost of renting and traveling to the local gym/ hall.

Lower class sizes, recognition and retention of our nurture room and it's staff, which is absolutely vital in our school, Reinstatement of Home school liaison teacher, Continuation of hot school meals programme, Much greater focus on SPHE/wellbeing, every single school should be entitled to a school hall for PE (we were refused one).

More provision for PE, creative schools, the arts, and mindfulness less homework More PE from specialised PE teachers.

Abolition of traditional homework, availability of in-school counselling, more emphasis on mindfulness and provision of equipment and space for practical skills e.g. a full kitchen, proper art and science rooms.

Reduce the stress and burden on Principals and teachers and you will see an automatic improvement in pupils' wellbeing. Reduce class sizes and install proper PE halls.

In conclusion, this section highlight the central role schools, leaders and teachers play in supporting and enhancing pupil wellbeing. The physical structures, external supports and the curriculum all have a role to play in maintaining wellbeing and enhancing it.

5.4 Teachers' wellbeing

In this section we discuss what leaders suggested needed to be put in place to enhance teachers' wellbeing. The two big areas discussed here was curriculum overload and communication from agencies such as the DE. In addition, pay rates, professional development, mental health supports and pupil teacher ratio were all discussed by participants. As one respondent said "*Stop with initiative after initiative and let schools and staff breathe*".

In addition some good ideas were presented by the leaders including the following:

> *Teachers should be able to spend time in other schools in Ireland and overseas to learn from the experiences of others. Teachers should be given access to counselling and wellbeing services free of charge.*

> *Provide more varied career opportunities Provide adequate resources for special needs - more special classes in non DEIS schools, more special school places, more EBD units, nurture rooms. Provide more flexibility. DE to provide a fund to school for social and wellbeing committee.*

> *A reappraisal of homework and its workload for staff, end to two-tier pay, real staff development to enhance positivity, reduction in curriculum overload, emphasis on appreciation of different teaching styles, more emphasis on socialisation among staff.*

Leaders want teachers to have adequate physical facilities such as big classrooms with adequate space for outdoor play. This also was mentioned in the section on enhancing pupils' wellbeing.

> *An adequate environment that gives teachers the physical space to provide a stress free learning . High dependency students with behaviours that concern. Deserve the best school structures with outdoor play areas that provide therapeutic opportunities for those that need it.*

> *Focus on self-wellbeing. Encourage self-development. Provision of opportunities to develop a creative side or exercise/ movement classes on school premises after work time - extracurricular activities for staff!*

They also called for a decrease in class size and supports for all learners.

> *Decrease class size. Increase SET numbers. Reduce poverty and homelessness. Increase TUSLA social workers and expand on their initiatives to support families- also follow through on chronic absenteeism. Provide every school with or with access to a HSCL teacher.*

The need to address the negative portrayal of teachers in the media was mentioned by respondents.

> *Better PR - the teachers do a brilliant job which is appreciated by parents particularly when their child has extra needs but the media, the unions and the general public are very negative and rarely portray the really fantastic work that teachers, SNAs and ancillary staff do in schools. Provide proper equipment for remote teaching like other sectors do for their staff working from home. Perhaps even allowing for the staff to be treated to a meal without the guilt of accounting for it!!*

The role of the teacher is ever expanding and becoming more demanding.
> *If Covid has done anything, it has shown clearly that the role of the teacher must be redefined. I am now a teacher, a counsellor, baby sitter, and after school therapy resource and even a disputes resolution officer. Where does parenting begin and end?*

Teachers terms and conditions are of concern and the external inspection system was mentioned by many respondents.

> *Do away with external inspection system, in particular the unannounced inspections which have added hugely to teacher stress in recent years, as well as the publication of reports - an underlying lack of trust and respect which needs to be addressed, More SNA help and Special Education Teacher Allocation to help with the number of children with significant complex needs being enrolled in mainstream school as above, fund primary schools properly. We should not have to fundraise for basic services m. If the DE requires schools to provide remote learning then fund it (ongoing hardware, software, staff CPD) . Restore the Posts of Responsibility. Recognise the Principal benchmarking award . Restore the increment for a Master's.*

Teachers and leaders having to fundraise for vital services in their school was mentioned by many as an added stress.

> *More opportunities to build staff relations and develop professionally and personally. More time to engage in staff collaboration. We always feel that we are chasing ourselves and it would be nice to just have the gift of time. Greater funding for schools to allow freedom to do all the things we want to do with our pupils and not feel that we have to fundraise like a charity to just get through the year.*

This long quote mentions many of the issues that came up in the data.

> *-More staff to pupil ratios e.g. smaller class sizes or introduce general classroom assistants to all classes to support learning, wellbeing, movement breaks and/or sensory needs and resource preparation. -Increase SNA allocation; make it easier and timely to increase SNA numbers during the school year to respond to highly challenging behaviour or sudden changes in care needs to support pupils. -Planning and preparation release time for all teachers with teacher cover in place - similar to PPA time in the UK. -Consideration of 4 day working week. -Increase training available in education centres and for schools to avail of for free/funded in Croke park hours. - More funding for education concrete and visual resources for*

pupils so that teachers are not spending lengthy time making resources.   -Active campaign to highlight awareness of teacher bashing and click bait headlines about schools in the press and the damaging and negative effects this causes.   -Generate guidelines for schools to try to not send emails after 5pm or on weekends to encourage work/life balance.

5.4.1 Curriculum overload

The majority of the respondents mentioned curriculum overload as a stress for their teachers [and also their pupils].

More support for teachers and less curriculum overload.

Coordinate the initiatives and developments in Education so that there isn't overload for teachers.

Trust us. Remove all the terrible initiatives that have been shoehorned since 2011 and go back to the wonderful thinking that was happening at the time.

There is a real sense that there is initiative overload in primary schools and this needs to be considered in the coming years.

Pay equity, more promoted roles to deal with the increased workload and a change from the mindset whereby schools deal with any societal problem via some new-fangled programme!!!

Less focus on paperwork, scrapping of ill-thought out initiatives from DE. Inspectors to actually play a supportive role.

Allow teachers teach a manageable curriculum and stop all the additional asks of them by stopping the introduction of new programmes to include in their planning. The curriculum that they are being asked to cover has become too vast.

Teachers wellbeing would improve if the conditions of their job improved. Schools are not 'fix all' buildings. If teachers had lower class size, realistic reform calendar and were paid properly for the job they do, then I think that would greatly help their wellbeing.

I think more emphasis on work/life balance. A directive on 'switch off time, where we don't reply to emails etc and there isn't an expectation that we should. There needs to be time for teachers to heal from this experience too, without the pressure of more directives from the DE. I would also think that a solid partnership with the DE would help, rather than the current passive aggressive one.

On site therapeutic supports for the children in their classes, no new initiatives for a year or two post COVID, more NEPS support, fix the pay imbalance for new teachers, treat teachers like the professionals they are, stop undermining them, give more SNA support.

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Training for all staff and additional planning time for staff when implementing changes to curriculum. Not enough to have a day here and a half day there. There needs to be plenty of time for people to absorb what is being asked of them. Support structure when dealing with challenging issues within class. Training for all members on issues such as SSE not just the principal. Reduced pupil teacher ratio; so you can plan for and give appropriate attention to all children in class
SNA training needs to move from a 14 week course. Not good enough to develop a professional outlook in schools that teachers are constantly expected and incentivised to continue CPD while SNAs whose work is so closely aligned to the success of the child with additional needs.

Stop us burning out . Let us breathe reduce workload class sizes and expectations to be experts at everything and answerable to everyone . Too much expected from teachers.

If children were supported by OT, speech and Lang , AON, teachers could teach more effectively. Not enough services for kids.

More interest from DE on teacher wellbeing. Less new ' initiatives' and give us the opportunity to embed all that we have taken on in the past 5 years
Stop piling too many new initiatives on their plates. So much comes in for teachers - ESB /Safe Food/ PAWS Aquatics/ Fundraisers/ all the flags - this can feel overwhelming at times.

Ensure our young teachers are properly paid....Ensure there are supports for SEN including proper access to NEPS. Stop throwing new initiatives at us, let us get on with our role of leading learning.

Reduction of curriculum overload, slowed pace of change, too many new initiatives are being introduced - staff are taken to an education centre for one day of training and then it's considered job done, teachers are left alone to muddle through. There are PDST supports but some of the advice can be very aspirational and not take into account the changing nature of the 2020 classroom e.g. children coming from homes with less structure, lacking in respect, not being used to having to follow rules.

Curriculum needs to be reduced. Feedback given by schools needs to be listened to especially from NCCA.

Realign work hours 9 am to 5pm and then go home. No after-hours planning, making materials devising IEPS, BSPs etc. Proper curriculum reform that is meaningful for pupils and workable for schools/teachers. Revised Primary Language Curriculum a good example of a bad outcome. DE to be less swayed by perceived benefits of slavishly following trends in other countries but daring to be truly innovative and be teacher-led, not Civil Servant led.

Linked to this curriculum overload was the need for more streamlined professional development for teachers. Having this happen as collaborative learning events is desirable.

Less CPD, less Croke Park, more funding and greater sharing of ideas.

Structured career path. More opportunities to skill up. IT support for all schools.

Time for up-skilling together. Time to process what is happening in our schools. We feel that our staff meeting and Croke park hours are eaten away with day-day issues. It would be nice to have specific training days. The New Language Curriculum days were lovely to experience together.

Time during the school day, cease the practice of providing so many courses after school hours. Time table the courses during the school day and provide cover from staff or substitute cover. There are far too many courses taking place outside school hours at the moment. This practice needs to change.

5.4.2 Communication with schools and teachers

Communication between agencies such as the DE and schools is a recurring theme in the data.

DE and society stop making constant demands.

More autonomy!!! All the Department protocols and circulars are making for a neoliberal agenda. Every school is unique to its cultural and community situation but at present the department seems to want each school to comply with their Vision. It should be the department helping me to impact my schools vision.

A defined role. A defined day length. A realisation that one person can't do it all - distributed leadership is fine in theory .... in practice, for a school, the buck stops with the PO. Instead of introducing new initiatives the PO must oversee have another body responsible for them. Take Droichead and the probation of NQTs out of the school's concerns.

An entitlement to break or lunch time. External supervision for children. A minister for education who is not transient and understands what it is schools and teachers do. A reduction in contact time with children to allow for planning time and consultation time each day, with each other and parents. A reduced curriculum or access to visiting experts in certain areas (love the new foreign language, I'm already nervous about the expectations of us after a half day training!) time- we need time. Media coverage that portrays the truth of what hard work I and others see in our schools. Provision for real inclusion or more information for parents about the inclusion illusion- the government need to make a choice on this.

I don't see it as a priority in my particular case as staff present as being very happy..... DE communications regarding proposed reopening since Christmas have attempted to drive a wedge between teachers and parents, a lot of very unhappy hardworking staff, who have been portrayed as not wanting to work, are feeling very let down by the DE...

Days for teachers to complete trainings, for staff meetings, for staff to complete policies as a whole group - pupils NOT in the building. All of these are using

completed after school when staff are tired!! Parent WhatsApp groups to be registered with some sort of regulator or simply banned.

No emails or admin after certain times, more information for staff about role of principal and all that they do during holidays like putting down stencils, signs, post, email, cleaning, painting etc...nobody understands 😕

Personally , I feel the negative spin which the media are allowed to put on a lot of school related issues could do with being addressed. The teaching profession is the perfect scapegoat for those ready to teacher bash . More positive media coverage is desirable , not the headlines we have seen of late .

Inspectors being in the role of support instead of trying to catch people out with surprise visits that show absolutely no professional courtesy of a simple phone call the day or week before... I'd love to feel inspectors were there to support your leadership and school not catch you out...less pressure and expectations of paperwork alongside a crowded curriculum...but that'll never happen, teachers aren't that valued or important sure..

Less SSE work...current model is not working except at a compliance level but no real transformational change resulting as an outcome from all the work that goes into it Inspectors need to start activating their advisory role...very poor input over Covid

More praise for the amazing job most teachers are doing. Public support from our employer in the face of very negative reporting in the press. This is very disheartening for teachers who feel very underappreciated. Appropriate training for principals who have not got the skills to manage staff and create a negative atmosphere in their schools.

5.4.3   Other supports that could help

There were other supports mentioned such as pupil teacher ratio, mental health and the need to acknowledge the work of teachers.

Reduce pupil teacher ratio to 20:1 Create time for teachers to have professional conversations and planning time.

Again smaller class sizes will be critical as will safe ways to return to full staff rooms and face to face staff meetings and gatherings.

Helpline services should be extended for teachers who need to avail of help and advice made available for further supports.

Principals should be able to refer for suspected stress and / or mental issues in teachers. Currently we cannot, and bear the brunt of eccentric and dysfunctional staff behaviour.

Stop demanding more from schools and teachers. In Ireland we have very intelligent, well-educated teachers who are professional and dedicated - trust them to do their job, support them in their work, adequately finance education and schools,

remunerate teachers well (this attend believe me). You can't whip a dead horse - I'm a dead horse/principal!

Realistic workload for role we're in and correspond to the level of pay, for example my recent promotion to DP has doubled my workload for a small increase in pay as am not in a larger school. Ensure that teachers are able to take the time for their 'sos beag' and lunch. When on yard duty supervision can difficult to get your full time for lunch.

Department initiatives to teach teachers about their own wellbeing and in turn, they can teach it to the children. Once a year/two-year health and emotional wellbeing check-in from MedMark or some such service.

Praise, support, acknowledgement. Less media bashing.

Less anxiety for teachers, current situation not helpful re reopening of schools due to Covid and bad press teachers and SNAs are receiving,

In conclusion, the needs of teachers are not unlike the needs identified by leaders for the pupils in their schools. At the centre of the proposals is the need to look at curriculum overload as this is vital to the relationship between the teacher and their pupils.

5.5 Leaders' wellbeing

Many of the responses in this section overlap with other sections of this report. The main themes are listed in order of how often they were mentioned in Figure 27 with illustrative comments from the data. There is a lot of overlap here with the section on the changes to the role that leaders would like to see happening the next five years.

Figure 27. Suggested changes that can be made over the next 5 years to improve leaders' wellbeing.

5.5.1 Time for professional development

Leaders are looking for more focused CPD and also events that allow them to meet other leaders and share experiences.

> *More opportunities for meaningful CPD. Uninterrupted holidays.*
> *Recognise that the principals job is distinct from the term school leader. School leaders can be trained but the Principal needs extra support and bespoke CPD.*
>
> *Professional Development as is provided to Mentors from CSL - really high-quality CPD available to all leaders - with release time, not on their personal time. Something like and EPV day to pay back all of the holiday time taken on school business would be welcome. I was too busy this year with school work to do an online course! A personal Development Day would be a good option, it could be spent on a wellbeing programme.*
>
> *It is necessary to encourage leaders to attend school related CPD events during school time where possible and not always at night and in the two hours after school.*

Many agencies are genuinely trying to provide support and training but where leaders have already worked a full day (particularly this year) it is very crucial that there is no pressure to attend another session that evening or night. Yes we want the information but it should be available to run during our admin days and possibly agencies could run an open Q and A for a week or two afterwards to facilitate queries from later on.

More programmes like Misneach where you can meet with others in same situations and ask for advice. Need support if inspectors to help and support - not just to do evaluations.

Continue the development of the local support network through the education centres. Speakers on topics relevant to the needs of principals. Inspector visits as support.

I have always found residential programmes e.g. forbairt, or residential conferences e.g. IPPN hugely beneficial. An opportunity to discuss, debate, be inspired and relax with colleagues away from the workplace and all that it entails in terms of responsibility.

Opportunities to leave the building for professional activities. Regular principal support meetings possibly facilitated by independent people. At present we plan agenda, run and do up minutes. A lot of work in top if all other meetings we have to run. Develop the other leaders within the school Stop expanding the job description IPPN has had an extremely positive impact on me as a leader particularly through providing information in a clear form immediately, rather than providing it later on as an afterthought (like DE) CSL training has been excellent in providing me with training which gives me a chance to commend myself on what I have done well. More leadership training would be appreciated.

Re-imagine relationship with the Inspectorate. Further enhance the role of CSL. Improve leader specific in-service on a skills basis.

A sub-set of the professional development is the need for on-going coaching. This is interesting as all leaders [apart for one] speak positively of their experience of coaching in the data.

Continued and enhanced coaching and team coaching provision. Distributed leadership - more release time, more middle leaders to share the load. Shared admin supports locally. Admin and finance supports.

Smaller classes. Happier children and happier teachers will lead to happy leaders! Coaching every year.

Saying openly that teaching principalship is not possible according to current standards. Coaching for principals Reducing class sizes Equalising institutional and individual responsibility - at the moment, institutions are held to a higher standard of responsibility than individuals - individuals can say what they like but institutions are often bound to confidentiality, etc.

One to one coaching for leaders needs to be continuous not just six sessions. This made the biggest difference to me and I am considering paying for the service myself going forward as already I can feel I really could do with talking to the coach again but I've used up all my sessions.

24 hour counselling, more resources in school , calm room, inhouse professional access, a chain of command that support the principal.

5.5.2 Role definition

This is coming up in this section again, leaders are telling us that they need their role defined, and this will enhance their wellbeing.

Reduce work load by appointing accountants building companies etc and let us lead teaching and learning.

A LOT MORE MONEY! A proper job description that is negotiated and if things need to be added to it then concessions have to be made or more money or benefits offered alongside it.

Ensure substitute cover is allowed for all teacher absence. Centralise parts of the role where possible. Placing the responsibility for dividing up short SET resources on Principal's shoulders should be rolled back on.

Reduce the threshold for admin principal.....we should all be admin principals. Provide sub cover for EPV days....I never take them. An allowance for attending BOM meetings, Tusla meetings, meetings with accountants, dealing with revenue (RCT/ ancillary staff pay etc.), delivery of Droichead, working with the FSSU, building projects etc....the job of principal has become enormous.

The role needs to be defined. As mentioned earlier the role of teaching principal has to be reviewed as a priority. More defined roles for in school management teams have to centrally formalised and monitored by the inspectorate and not just left up to the principal.

Stop new initiatives. Set work hours and abide by them. Appoint qualified Treasurers for every board. Define the role of the principal. Stop adding new roles. Pay the benchmarking award.

Principal's want to concentrate on leading teaching and learning. Give them time and space to do this.

A contract- one for principals that clearly defines where the buck stops, funding that meets the need and various demands and 'good ideas', split release time, secretarial on full-time basis, central management, lunch hour, continued IPPN support.
This area is very important and having a job statement would go a long way to enhance well-being. The fact that our role has not been defined since 1973 shows that the government is terrified of setting out what we actually do and how it would show how underpaid and undervalued we are.

The demands vary hugely & I think the diversity of the role needs to be examined. We are teachers not builders/architects/IT Consultants/Accountants etc. The remit is too board and provision needs to be made to enable us to focus on the children and not the rest. Meaningful engagement with DE, a review of BoM structure, a genuine feeling of having someone to advise and help would be great.

5.5.3 Middle Management

Leaders would like a more defined middle management structure.

More middle management to spread the work. More training for BOM to help them support the running of the schools.

More management team members. Less initiatives. Respect from the DE. Positive news about schools and teachers rather than the constant teacher bashing that goes on in the media. Stop with the Friday evening circulars.

Sort out all of the above and maybe I will be able to sleep at night, I am well aware of the issues that I can control, influence. The ones that cause me and my staff the most stress are those where we look for help (NCSE) (DE) and none is forthcoming.

More support. If not DP admin, give a certain number of days of substitution to each school to allow for school planning and discussions. Any other business has a weekly meeting early in the week to discuss ongoing issues, firefight and plan Reduce the workload.

Restore all of the posts of responsibility and allowances for qualifications so more people will endeavour to upskill in schools. Lessens the load on leaders.

Additional senior management positions. As a large school at primary only 1 admin DP. Should be more in line with secondary as work load is the same. DE should not be permitted to send communications requiring actions during annual leave periods. If they do overtime should be paid or leave in lieu.

Give us a break. Stop sending emails to us at every hour of the day. Stop telling us to mind our wellbeing and then hyping up the hysteria from Dept of Education. Appoint WOMEN to the board of directors. For a profession with a majority of female staff it is shameful to see our governing bodies and support organisations predominantly male.

Whatever can be done to reduce the administrative workload - increase the number of Deputy Principals in larger schools and again, increase the number of senior and middle management posts.

Examine the role of the ISM team so that leadership is shared properly. Give Boards of Management proper support so that they don't need to be trained by the Principal every four years.

5.5.4 Pay

Some respondents talked about payment of benchmarking.

Lower the pupil teacher ratio. Proper pay for a proper job less death by initiative Payment of benchmarking award and equalisation with post primary colleagues, proper ISM training, availability of a 'listening ear' for each principal.

Payment of benchmarking. Defined Job description. Proper and uninterrupted annual leave. Address inadequacies of BOM system. Step down system for principals. Job sharing option to make the role more sustainable.

Moratorium on posts lifted to start with. Address under performance through Inspectorate v's Voluntary Boards. Give us a day off and sort something out so we at least have a weekend off. Recognise we give up all school holidays annually, we'd be paid for working overtime in McDonald's. Proper buildings supports especially if deficient. Payment for actual staffing managed (SNAs) as well as other ancillary staff vs just teachers. Have 21 additional staff to the teacher numbers but not recognised in salary....why not? I can't tell them I don't get paid to manage you....! Sort out your DE stuff, recruitment during summer months, building projects during summer months, Section 29s during summer months, Section 37s during summer months etc etc etc. Even the DE staff have an out of office on their services, payroll section doesn't take calls between certain hours to allow for 'volume of work'... if we did that.....!!!

Increase pay, increase release time for teaching principals & deputy principals of teaching principals.

The number and quality of applicants for Principalship is falling dramatically. The job has become to all and life consuming. Greater management of the workload, opportunities for formal reflection/time out and adequate remuneration for the important role.

5.5.5 Step down facility for leaders

Leaders would like to be able to step down from the role after a period of time.

I think principals should have a step back option for a few years. Having done the job it is very difficult.

Option to step down from principalship after 6 years with reduced impact on salary.

Absolute minimum of one weekly admin day per week to be set in stone, option to step down from principalship without loss of seniority after an agreed period of time e.g. 10 years.

Step down facility for school leaders. Give them a year out without being penalised...support to attend IPPN conference as this gives leaders an opportunity to grow, to forge professional relationships with others and to be part of the changes.

5.5.6 Reduce initiatives

This theme emerged in other sections of the data. There appears to be a wide consensus from our leaders that there is initiative overload in Primary Schools. Coupled with this is a call for a more supportive role for the Inspectorate for schools.

> *Once every 3 years Principals and DPs should be given an update on leadership and management. A refresher. Done like a licence where you would choose an area and get time to partake in this professional development. Also I think we need our inspectors to come and support our leaders and schools. They should work with us, alongside us, leading us to lead our staff. Affirming Principals in their roles, as many feel the cut and paste of WSEs can be minimal in their value to a school. We can all perform for a week or a few days. Inspectors need to stick with us when there are real decisions to make such as (as experienced by my staff this Sept) how do we prioritise Special Ed for our kids knowing they missed so much and then trying to understand how to support a new junior infant with Down Syndrome when neither teacher nor SNA knew what they were doing as well as me and no support was available due to Covid. Would an inspector be able to support me by just landing in to do an incidental visit in that class? No she would be of much better use visiting us regularly, advising us on supports, helping with IEPs etc. But instead they get to visit to check it my sanitiser station is up and running. An insult to me and to them.*

> *More support from inspectorate and more release time to cover all admin. Also a better union who actually do something besides talk.*

> *Inspectorate in supportive role. The 'supportive' phone call over lockdown was a series of questions to be answered on what Principals had done also needed to give reasons why hadn't done or had done certain things. Box ticking exercise at principals expense. Parents so demanding and less appreciative year on year. Guidance and support should be given to teachers/schools.*

> *Pull back on initiatives. Let us focus on what is at hand right now: health and wellbeing during a global pandemic. Getting our kids back to reading, writing and enjoying school.*

> *Better communication from DE. Fewer new initiatives. More career options for teachers/ principals to branch out to.*

> *More consultation between DE and school leaders regarding what is possible for school to take on. At times there are demands coming from staff, children, parents, boards ,DE & a myriad of other agencies and it can seem impossible to deal with at times.*

5.5.7 Need for more ancillary staff

There is a need for more funding for ancillary staff for schools especially in schools where the leaders is also teaching.

An office to work in. Funding to pay for full time secretary. Funding to pay for a caretaker. Stability in staffing and SEN provision. DE to stop putting all the responsibility on a principal's desk without funding, training or personnel to implement same.

Secretarial support on DoES pay scale BOM payment for work Less admin being passed off on school leaders Support who come to the school and help - take on tasks I currently have a secretary 6 hours a week. Before October 2020 we never had a secretary.

All schools have a full time secretary and also access to accounting skills as part of the staff.

More admin support (walking DP's), less demands from DE, stop loading the accountability onto one person. No more late night emails. More financial resources to pay people properly to do specific jobs. DE employed members of staff (ancillary: sec/caretaker/accountant)- we are not qualified to do half of what is expected of us and can't afford to employ people who are.

A functioning management system to replace Boards of Management. Full-time DE paid ancillary staff. Primary funding on the same level as secondary funding.

Option to step down with dignity Enhanced ancillary staff Training days with social dimension when Covid is over Funding for study POR release time.

Full time maintenance personnel for schools. Get rid of grants and just maintain every school properly. All principals should be Admin principals, no teaching principals.

Additional staffing -reinstated in school management posts- we have lost 5 over past 11 years Secretarial support outside of school hours for schools Release time for CPD Pause on new initiatives.

5.5.8 Reduce bureaucracy

As in all life, leadership could be so improved if we could reduce bureaucracy.

Support and definition of the role - less bureaucracy and paperwork. Dealing with the DE is a nightmare due to the amount of different sections - e.g. I had a pay query and ended up speaking with 3 different offices to get the answer - I needed 'terms and conditions' in the end and I didn't even know there was such a section in the DE - it's ridiculous!!! One person as a liaison for each school who would answer all the school's questions would be superb. A principal could email that person and then they would make all the phone calls necessary and feedback the info to the school - it would save a huge amount of time.

Reduce the ridiculous amounts of paperwork required to apply for supports and resources. Make the above processes easier. Produce some streamlined, concise

literature defining roles of teachers, SNA's, Principals etc. It will allay concerns as to what role the principal actually has with regard to managing HR and staff issues. Less paperwork and form filling. Streamline application process for resources. Secretarial support. Proper financial support at an equal level with second level schools so we don't have to be fundraisers.

As above, the Department of Education has been paying lip-service to leaders' wellbeing but in reality, most school leaders have worked without a real break from March to now. I took a week "off" in August and that was when we received the outcome of our SNA Exceptional Review (Despite the fact the deadline for feedback had been 30th June). There seems to be no joined up thinking on the impact of school leaders of multiple requests from multiple sources and there is an expectation that school leaders are on call 24/7. The October mid-term break was taken up with dealing with the fall-out from the approved sanitiser and cleaning products debacle, yet no apology was ever received and school leaders were just expected to pick up the pieces.

Cut out all the unnecessary paperwork/ surveys / data collection. Filling in "urgent" and mandatory data surveys about how the school is heated is beyond the call of duty.

Let us do our jobs. Most of us know what we are doing and have garnered great expertise in our professions. Why do we have to constantly beg for what we know is right for the children in our care? Multiple form filling so someone else can tick a box! Parents (a few) to learn that we actually do care and that we do know what we are talking about.

5.5.9 Teaching Principals

Many responses mention the need to keep the extra administration days allocated this year for teaching principals.

Continue to support teaching principals with release time. Reduce the amount of "paperwork" for DE and outside agencies in favour of focusing on the development of the pupils and staff within the school.

A guarantee of one admin day a week, the DoES to reengage meaningfully with school leaders & the changing of inspectorate role to that of support & guidance. Continue with one admin day a week (minimum) Local administration of cluster of schools with principal able to focus on teaching and learning.

Principals should be given more admin days. I act up regularly and it's hard to teach and act up as principal too as I don't get any admin days so I spend many hours in the evening following up on day to day stuff. All teaching principals have a very tough role....I wouldn't apply for it in a million years.

What about principals wellbeing? Well, Teachers and principals are being trashed in media and principals need their wellbeing looked after far more especially now. The DE talk big about well-being and how management can support staff and pupils but they still issue circulars on Fridays and host "very important" webinars on Covid at

> *7pm in the evening. If it's so important make it obligatory and part of real working hours!*

In conclusion, There is a lot of overlap between this section and the section on role changes in the next five years. Two main themes emerge here, one is the sense of initiative overload and the need for time for professional development. Both these also link to the need for role definition and a more structured middle management and funding for ancillary staff to look after the increased bureaucracy.

5.6 Taking personal action for my wellbeing

In this section we discuss personal actions that leaders will take to protect their wellbeing. Figure 28 gives an overview of the main themes that emerged from the qualitative data in this section of the research. Each one is discussed using the comments from the leaders to illustrate the themes.

Figure 28. Personal action to reduce stress and protect wellbeing

The number one response was to talk about retiring or changing jobs. After that many spoke of seeking counselling, improving their lifestyle, changing their attitude, better time management and planning. However, a number again reiterated that they were unable to take personal action due to time constraints and work load.

5.6.1 Changing my job or retiring

Many leaders mention retiring, over 200 mentions. Typical quotes are as follows:

> *I will retire as soon as I can (though I will still have 2 children in college).*

> *Change job or retire.*

> *Look for alternative employment opportunities.*

> *Retrain for a new role and in the meantime leave the laptop in work whenever possible, switch off at weekends*

*Early retirement! *

I am going to get out of the job. It's unsustainable.

Look at early retirement - seriously. The job has become untenable. I'm not supported or recognised by the DE-I manage staff that I am not paid to manage. I am more of a plumber electrician counsellor paper organiser etc than a leader of learning. I am the BOM Despite the best will of the volunteers that serve who really don't understand the complexities of what schools are like now. How realistic is it to expect 8 volunteers to manage a school these days? With all that goes on! Irony is when the BOM are supposed to tell the principals what to do but the principal is the one who tells them what's happening and probably what we should do!!! Schools need accountants, lawyers, HR specialists and building specialists on every board.

Continue to self-educate on well-being. Strive for work- life balance. Plan for leaving the role of teaching Principal- Despite loving my work I know that if further burdens are placed on me, it will negatively affect my health in the long run. An interesting enquiry would be to find out if teaching Principals remain in their roles now for as long as those principals in the same position 30 years ago - my guess is no.

Retire from principalship.   Unfortunately I don't see any other way. I thought I was going to keel over this September. I, like every Principal in the country, had worked non-stop since last Christmas - no holidays - and then came back to school during an extremely stressful time. I am fed up of hearing our government and others telling us how the schools have been kept open due to 'our teachers and principals' but these are just words. The real message is 'work them 'til they drop' - well they will get just that - principals are dropping out of teaching!

Retire in next few months   Life is too short for the stress and past few months have been most difficult I have experienced in my 36 years teaching. Change career, that's being honest. I feel THE DE have taken principals for granted and expected miracles. I had no break since last March. Running on empty honestly.

I am currently deciding if I should give up my position as principal. This will help my wellbeing and sense of isolation.

Resign!!! Because this job is not sustainable in the long term. There are so many elements of the job that I love but at what personal cost to me and my family?! Of course it's never as cut and dry as that and it causes internal conflict and I know as a principal I am not alone in saying that! As I said before teaching the children gives me a lift on a daily basis and keeps me doing what I'm doing but for how long?! Retirement us the only way I actually see myself having any quality of life/ having any real time to spend with my family.

5.6.2 Healthy lifestyle

In addition to counselling many respondents talked about making changes to their work life

balance and striving to live a healthier lifestyle.

More exercise and lower my expectations of myself.

Drink less alcohol. Exercise more.

Daily mindfulness practice and 4 times a week minimum walking for one hour. Completing this questionnaire has highlighted that if I don't take better care of myself, nobody else will. Here's to the development of my personal wellbeing plan!

Continue with exercise and keep the faith!

Learn how to prioritise and to exercise daily while getting enough sleep and meditating.

I don't need any more websites or phone numbers telling me how to look after my well-being. I need to be able to take a break during leave time. Thinking of taking unpaid leave... I feel like I will never get a break any other way.

Healthy eating , exercise, and try to remember to drink more water. Reflect more and take a step back when faced with difficult situations

5.6.3 Planning and time management

To make these changes to their lives the respondents mention the need for planning and time

management. Typical responses include:

Spend more time with my family, go home at a reasonable time, shut the computer down at a reasonable time. Delegate to the ISM and BOM , stay connected with family and friends.

I leave school at 3pm on Friday and try to forget about it until Monday at 8am.

Try to sort staff relations try to put better admin systems in place to save time try to delegate more .... keep trying 🙈🙈🙈🙈🙈

Try to develop a better work life balance. Ignore evening and weekend emails Ignore the myriad of initiatives being rolled out to schools Say NO !

Try to keep weekends school free! Implement a daily exercise routine
Leave work at work, go home at a reasonable time, delegate, stay home when sick rather than battling on (as I usually do), try to stop the overwhelming feelings of guilt for never getting everything done, be proud of what I/we have achieved In our school.

I will try to leave school earlier & bring less work home. I will try not to be distracted by emails and messages during the few mins I see my kids in the evening.

Trying to leave school at a reasonable time; making family time; realising that the work will never be done and being ok with that. Looking after my health.

I have started a long overdue exercise programme. I will leave work earlier. I will leave work at work... I will continue on my doctoral journey.

Keep to a 40 hour week as much as possible. Keep up exercise regime. Spend time with family.

When restrictions are lifted I hope to socialise more and do activities to take me away from the laptop and to-do list. Develop my skills for this position, particularly prioritising and distributing leadership.

I am going to sign up for CSL. I feel so swamped with schoolwork now, there is so much to do I am regularly at my laptop at 8 or 9 at night. I think I need to press re-set. When Covid hit I became the rock for everyone in the school , I had to 'know' what to do and guide everyone else. I have not had a break since March and am mentally exhausted. The return to school in September was stressful for everyone and yet again I was the one that had to be there for everyone- teachers, parents, staff. I do believe strongly in empowering people to solve things themselves but because Covid was so serious I felt a massive responsibility to be there for everyone. That pressure has not eased off at all even though we have settled back very well. My new year's resolution is to try to make more time for myself!

Prioritising what is important for our school and throwing the rest on the "Maybe" pile. Ignoring nonsensical demands and being led only by the things that will enhance school life for our pupils. No more working through every break, weekend and holiday.

Try to not look at emails at weekends and holiday times, this is impossible during lockdown but hopefully once the pandemic ends, may be more doable.

5.6.4 Change of attitude

In order to implement changes out leaders need to have a change of attitude and try not to be

all things to all people.

I'll keep laughing and smiling.

Talk to others have the crack don't do things by the book.
Continue with exercise (hopefully), more time for reading and travel (when we're allowed again) Would love an international exchange but stymied because of being a Gaelscoil.

I'm lucky that this job has not eradicated my wellbeing Despite all the efforts of the DE and because of the inaction of the IPPN and other stakeholders.

I will control what I can control and let the thoughts and opinions of others go astray. I've started taking mental health days. I have to mind myself. No one else is looking out for me. As principals we tend to brave on. I see many colleagues hanging on by a thread while they pretend all is fine. That narrative needs to change. The role is unsustainable in its current form. Expectations and responsibilities are ridiculous.

Continue to develop a positive mindset and accept that I am not perfect but am on a journey of learning.

Stay fit and healthy, keep running, positive attitude, maintain sense of humour and enjoy the holidays.

I am continuing my cycling. My children bring me joy. I am filling out this survey with the hope that my responses will affect positive change. I just have to keep getting up in the morning. No matter how bad things are they could always be worse, I try to be thankful for all that I do have. This is something I have consciously worked on.

Keep interests outside school. Make school as happy a place as possible. Improve the working conditions. Cultivate outside spaces in school to be visually and aesthetically pleasing. Promote the arts. Paint, swim, play golf.

Remind yourself that this too will pass Remind yourself that you are replaceable Remind yourself that ma nagging yourself and your reactions every day with staff is the most important tool in the box.

One respondent is very positive about the time available to them.

We work 182 days officially a year. Where else would you get it with pupils going home at 3pm every day. If they can't manage that they should not be in the job. The job is a fantastic rewarding job which has huge responsibilities as the future of children can be etched out by a principal and all they do in school.

5.6.5 Seek help- counselling
This theme has come up in other sections of this research. Many respondents are seeking help

to deal with work stress through counselling.

Counselling will be where I will start.

Already going to therapy & find it helpful.

I've started seeing a counsellor to help me, I'm at my lowest morale with school and my career, burnout is a real potential and I can't afford that to happen... school currently is all about the students, we're not mentioned...sure the Independent or some Facebook slur will appear soon to really kick us in the teeth or a Friday after hours email will arrive to cheer me up... maybe I'll work through this summer like I did last year, sure what harm would it do to not take a physical, emotional or psychological break from a pressured and highly demanding job that is like a tree with many branches and parts that all lead back to the principal ...

5.6.6 Work -life balance is difficult to achieve.

Some respondents remind us that work-life balance is difficult for some leaders to achieve.

It is hard to find the time to do anything outside of work. Each time I have tried, I find myself being swamped with work as I haven't put in the hours at night also .I am trying to take Saturday's completely off to spend time with my 2 small children.

I have tried so hard this year to try and regularise my hours. It's safe to say that there has been a 'crisis' a week at least since we returned. These things are not crises, it's just that if I am not dealing with them all of the time, or if my focus is on teaching, they spiral out of control. It is too much for one person. As I said, there is so much I love about my job and it devastates me that no stakeholder is listening.

It's hard to say at such a difficult time. I have recently been put on blood pressure meds due to school related stress. My GP said my numbers were far too high for someone my age & with good health. This is a direct cause of stress & huge workload in school.

I try to develop hobbies but I do not have the time to pursue due to workload, this year in particular as it has been all go since July, i.e. no break due to the size of the school and Covid - related problems. Even Halloween was hassle due to sanitiser issues in DE recalling products. It is only 2nd December and already I am running on empty.

No time at moment. This survey has forgotten that many teaching principals are also working mothers who go home in the evening to face into another role - dinners , homework, laundry , cleaning, paying bills etc. This along with fitting in another couple of hours school work that couldn't be done at school means the working day does not finish until maybe 10 o clock at night. There really is no time for self-care. This reality for many of us has not been considered by IPPN etc.

In conclusion, many leaders are putting actions in place to help them cope with the stress of their role, however, it is worrying how many are talking about retiring. Many of the changes requested by leaders are linked to ways to make their work load more manageable apart from comments on pay. The call by many asking to spend more time on leading learning should be noted by policy makers as this is where the heart of our schools beat.

5.7 Summary

In this chapter on student, teacher and leader wellbeing the voice of the respondents is most deafening. There is a crisis facing primary education if we do not look to respond to the many suggestions given by respondents in this section of the research. In all three areas curriculum and pedagogy are spoken about, this is not surprising when you read section 4.1

on why leaders like their job, it is working with children and making a difference. As one leader put it *"happier children and happier teachers will lead to happy leaders"*. One cannot consider wellbeing of one level of the education system without impacting on other levels. Therefore, it is the whole system at various levels that needs to change in order to enhance the lives of our children in classrooms. It requires all levels to communicate and work together.

6. Overall Summary

The current study is the first one to establish a direct link between leaders' wellbeing and the pressures associated with their daily tasks. Previous studies have alluded to the immense demands that were put on primary school leaders, heavy loaded with administration, constant interactions with staff, unexpected situations, out-of-hours demands (IPPN, 2004; Stynes et al., 2018). However, the current study provides evidence of the impact of specific tasks on leaders' wellbeing. Our overall recommendations can be found in chapter one of this report.

In order for leaders to implement changes in schools and to ensure that wellbeing of their school community is put on their school agenda, they need to be well themselves and have the time to do it. Wellbeing is contagious (Fowler & Christakis, 2009; Harding et al., 2019) and unhappy, overworked leaders may negatively impact on their team, who may in turn influence the wellbeing of pupils. Therefore, action needs to be taken to ensure that leaders' wellbeing is put on the government's agenda to the same extent that young people's wellbeing is currently prioritised. The current research demonstrated that significant amount of leaders' time can be saved by centralising tasks that fall outside the core leadership duties (DES, 2016b), which can subsequently reduce leaders' pressures, enhancing their personal and work-related wellbeing. However, further research is required to identify how proposed changes to leaders' role might impact on their stress levels and overall wellness.

It needs to be noted that leaders (teaching principals and deputies) have limited flexibility around when they can take any break, due to the rigid timetable, and also the need for staff to undertake yard duty/supervision of pupils at break times. Leaders tend to be on for all the breaks and this is impacting on their wellbeing. IPPN recommends that a rota be put in place to ensure all staff get at least one break every day away from pupils. Some schools rota their SNA breaks at different times to the sos beag so they can do yard duty and allow teachers to take a break. Some think this creates a them/us between SNAs and teachers. However, it is imperative that something is agreed upon to solve the issue of leaders' time for breaks.

It is time to start looking towards the future post-Covid. The current study captured the voices of school leaders who have created their vision of the post-Covid education. They offered suggestions as to what changes can be made to their role to ensure sustainability of

leadership in Irish schools. They offered suggestions as to the ways in which teachers' and students' wellbeing can be improved over the next five years. Now, it is the time for the decision-makers to listen to leaders' stories and respond to their request for change. Unless this happens, their voices will be lost in space.

Appendix A
Principals' communication net (IPPN, 2006)
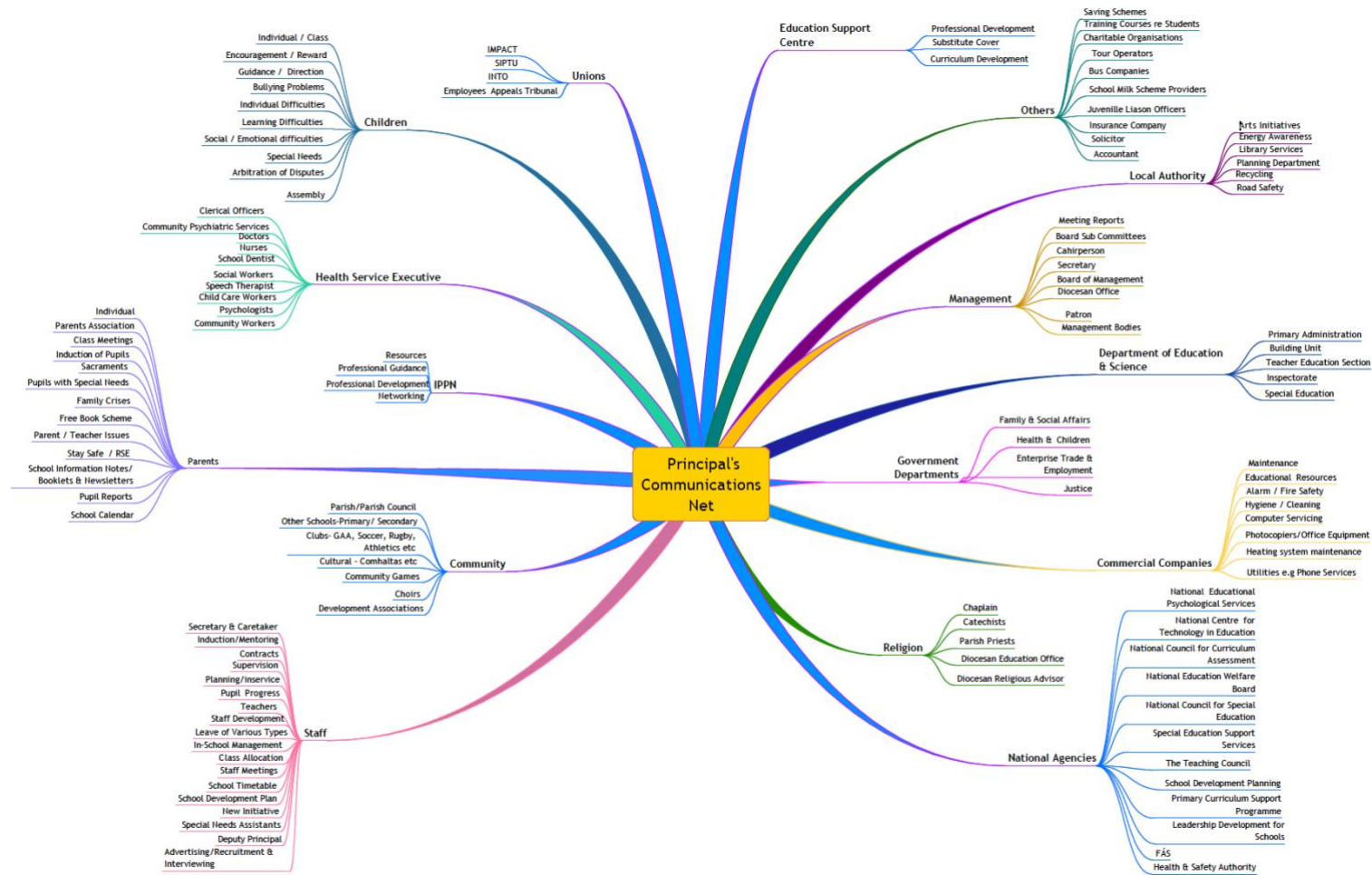
Appendix B

Swimming in Alphabet Soup: Agencies and Interactions in Primary Schools.

(Based on data from this survey and IPPN (2014) *Administrative Burden*)

Who	What	When
Department of Education (DE) – Statistics ESInet	Roll book (Leabhar Rolla). Attendance Book (Leabhar Tinrimh). Annual Statistics Form. Education Services Interactive (ESInet) is a secure web based portal through which on-line services are delivered to schools	
DE – Primary Payments	Salary Returns. Returns for part-time resource teachers, language support teachers. Teacher absences, principal release days, maternity leave etc.	
DE – Teacher Education	Summer course certificates for teachers availing of EPV days.	
DE - Social Inclusion/ Child & Family Agency	Applications for school meals	
DE	Teacher allocation	
DE	STen scores	
DE – Planning and Building Unit	Prefab replacements applications Planning and Building of major schools' projects, Minor Capital Works, Summer Works Scheme Application Emergency works applications Furniture applications when granted new room (increasing enrolment) ICT Grant application when granted new room	
DE – School Transport Section	Information including the ordering and distribution of bus passes for eligible pupils, informing the bus company of pupils leaving the school etc.	
DE/ERC	DEIS Programme. Form to establish the level of disadvantage in a school - requires information on the socio-economic profile of all pupils.	
DE - Governance Section	SNA Redundancy Forms Vacancy notification Teacher appointment form Learning support clusters Resource clusters	

	Application for part-time hours School calendar
DE - Schools Financial Section	Assistive Technology applications (3 quotes and application form) Application for Free Book Grant Book Rental
DE - Inspectorate	Report on use of Croke Park Hours Adoption of Children First, annual audit of policy Information on teaching staff, position in the school and the number of teachers for diploma examination School calendar, break times School Information Form – WSE
DE – Teaching and Learning	School Self Evaluation (SSE) School Improvement Plan (SIP) Digital Plan
HSE	Plan for Living with COVID-19 and the 'Work Safely Protocol' which has been developed by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health with guidance documents provided by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). Contact tracing. The HSE Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is a specialist service for people under the age of 18 with mental health difficulties. The Early Intervention Team is for children, aged 0-6 years, and their families who have complex developmental needs. The team comprises of an Occupational Therapist, Psychologist, and Speech and Language Therapist.
HSE – Local Health Centre	Lists of students and parents for Junior Infants and 6th class - Vaccinations, hearing, and vision.
HSE – Dental	Lists of students and parents in specific classes – screening.
Medmark	Medmark Occupational Healthcare are the current providers of the Occupational Health Service (OHS). The service provide professional occupational health advice and services on

	employee medical fitness as follows: pre-employment health assessments, sickness absence assessment, medical fitness to return to work assessments, ill health retirement assessments and Critical Illness Provisions (CIP).
TUSLA **Child and Family Agency**	Child Protection Referrals and Case Conferences School Attendance Returns School Completion Programme Information regarding suspension and expulsion of pupils and Section 29 appeals.
NCSE/SENO/ SESS	Audit of pupils with SEN and the resources they receive, their psychological reports and other relevant reports together with letters of sanction from the DE. Schools are required to put in place a Personal Pupil Plan (PPP) including a care plan for all pupils availing of SNA support. Schools who employ SNAs must have a clear policy in place, as part of the school planning process to manage and deploy SNAs: (Section 15: Personal Pupil Plan (PPP). Audit of pupils who have the services of a Special Needs Assistant. Resource Teacher/ SNA applications. Application for resources for pupils with low incidence SEN is made through the Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO). Special Education Teaching Allocation (SET). Resource Teaching Hours (RTH). The Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA) is provided by NEPS and DE. Transition of pupils to secondary Form.
Enable Ireland	Enable Ireland is a non-profit state-funded organisation that provides free services to children and adults with disabilities and their families in Ireland. The core of its funding comes from the HSE.
NEPS	Application is made to NEPS concerning pupils with SEN with a view to the pupil being assessed

and being able to apply for resource teaching hours and/or the services of an SNA.

Parental consent forms.

Pupil standardised tests results, non-standardised
tests results, class tests results.

Critical Incident Plan.

Code of Behaviour.

Occupational Therapist	Referral forms.
Speech and Language Therapist	Referral forms.
Child and Adult Mental Health Service	Referral forms, review forms.
Teachers	Print of OLCS – DE requirement
Substitute Teachers	DE requirement. Circular 31/2011 Section 5.1
All Staff	Contracts Vetting administration Payslips for ancillary staff.
Patron's Office Diocesan Advisors	See IPPN 2014 for details
Accountant	Annual account audit
Revenue	RCT, P30 returns, VAT Employers PRSI.
Local Education Centre	Teacher contact details and lists for in-service.
In-service providers PDST	CPD requirements .
Third level colleges	Requests for placement.
Teaching Council	Droichead Induction and probation.
Courts	Section 20 Appeal – considerable paperwork for the principal if parents bring an appeal.
Board of Management	On-going engagement.
Parents Council	On-going engagement.
Health and Safety	Annual Audit by BoM on health & safety.

Authority	
Bus Éireann	School Calendar.
National Council for Curriculum & Assessment (NCCA)	Curriculum development
Community & Comprehensive, Primary and Voluntary Secondary	The FSSU is a support mechanism for the school management in the Community & Comprehensive, Primary and Voluntary Secondary sectors which assists them in complying with the provisions of the Education Act 1998 in terms of transparency, accountability and financial responsibility for State and other funding.
CLÁR	CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects in rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. The funding works in conjunction with local/Agency and other Departmental funding programmes and on the basis of locally identified priorities.
Centre for School Leadership	Coaching and support.
Irish Primary Principals' Network IPPN	Networking, professional development and support.
INTO	Support and representation.
Other agencies	Substance Misuse Prevention Programme National Safety Council The Equality Authority Léargas, The Exchange Bureau National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) Sporting organisations Local churches Local partnership groups

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Maynooth University Department of
<Insert Department name here>
National University of Ireland Maynooth,
Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland.

Roinn na <Insert Department name here>
Ollscoil Mhá Nuad
Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad, Má Nuad,
Co. Chill Dara, Éire.