



# Annual Report

# 2016-17





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# FÁILTE ÓN STIÚRTHÓIR

## Welcome from the Director



On behalf of all involved in the Centre for School Leadership (CSL), I am delighted to present our second annual report.

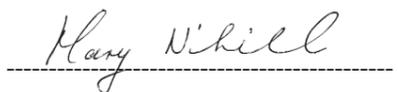
*“Learning is the only thing the mind never exhausts, never fears and never regrets.” —Leonardo da Vinci*

I was reminded of this quote as I reflected on our second year of learning in CSL. Our small team has, over the past year, made significant progress in terms of putting in place essential supports for school principals. The ongoing dedication and hard work of the CSL Steering Committee and Implementation Group in progressing the remit of CSL has resulted in a significant body of work being completed in 2016–17. The respective chairs of these two groups, Dr. Áine Lawlor and Margarita Boyle, have given generously of their time over the year.

All newly appointed principals at both primary and post-primary level can now access a formally trained mentor who has engaged in a professional learning programme with CSL. This, combined with access to a professional coaching service free of charge for principals, is indeed a significant investment in leadership. It is also gratifying to see the level of interest in our Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL), which is being offered by a consortium of third-level colleges headed up by the University of Limerick (UL). These aspiring leaders are the future of our education system.

CSL’s vision is to ensure that every teacher benefits from the highest quality of professional learning so that they can improve learning outcomes for students in their schools. To that end, CSL is developing a Continuum of Professional Learning for School Leadership at every level, from teacher leadership through middle leadership, senior leadership and system leadership. We aim to populate that continuum with high-quality provision that fits into the CSL quality framework for approval of programmes.

It has been a great joy for me personally, to work with my two Deputy Directors, Máire Ni Bhróithe (post-primary) and Anna Mai Rooney (primary). Their vision, enthusiasm and dedication have meant that CSL has made considerable progress in just two years and has established itself firmly in the educational landscape. The two professional organisations, IPPN and NAPD, continue to contribute enormously to the work of the centre. Their advice and guidance has been a huge source of support to the team. I also wish to acknowledge the tremendous support and co-operation we have received from all stakeholders in the Irish education system, and we look forward to continuing work with you to ensure that our teaching profession and our school leaders have the highest-quality professional learning, remaining focused on improving outcomes for all of Ireland’s young people.

  
Mary Nihill, Director

# A WORD FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



As the Centre for School Leadership (CSL) completes the second year of its work, 2016-2017, all those associated with it can reflect with joy and satisfaction on its continuing progress. The significant milestones which have been met over the last year include:

- the availability of mentors for all newly-appointed principals at primary and post-primary level
- a professional coaching service which has already catered for 300 principals, funded by the Department of Education and Skills through the CSL
- the initiation of the Post-Graduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL) facilitated by a consortium of HEIs under the auspices of the University of Limerick (UL)
- the conceptualisation of a Continuum of Professional Learning for School Leadership
- the development of a Quality Assurance Framework for the accreditation of leadership programmes
- the commencement of the Evaluation and Research Project which has been undertaken by Fitzpatrick Associates on behalf of CSL.

The Interim Evaluation and Research Report from Fitzpatrick Associates, based on a wide range of survey and interview data, illustrates the positivity with which the CSL has been received and the high regard in which it is held. We look forward to the Final Report, expected to be issued early in 2018, which we believe will broaden the CSL perspective in terms of the potential for future leadership development in Ireland.

The success of CSL to date can be attributed to a number of factors: the CSL partnership comprised of the Department of Education and Skills, the Irish Primary Principals’ Network (IPPN) and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), who guide and support all aspects of the work of CSL and are its bedrock; the enthusiasm, experience and expertise of the principals and members of the teaching profession who engage with, and nourish the work of the CSL, and the stakeholders in education at national level who welcomed and have been most supportive of CSL. Also included here are: Clare Education Centre and its Director, Pat Hanrahan, who provide administrative support to the CSL; the Implementation Group chaired by Margarita Boyle which looks after the management of CSL; the Steering Committee which is responsible for policy matters in relation to the CSL. Sincere thanks are due to all involved.

Above all else, the phenomenal success of the CSL to date is largely due to the dedication and hard work of the team leading CSL on the ground, namely, Mary Nihill, Director, and the Deputy Directors, Máire Ni Bhróithe (post-primary) and Anna Mai Rooney (primary). We offer them our deep gratitude.

As we look forward, we wish the CSL and all associated with it continued success.

Le gach dea-ghuí  


# MENTORING FOR NEWLY APPOINTED PRINCIPALS

*“Mentoring refers to the process where a person with a serving and inspirational attitude firstly sees development and leadership potential in another still-to-be-developed person. Then the mentor supports, advises and guides, eventually significantly influencing the mentee in the realisation of potential. Mentoring is thus viewed as a dynamic, shared personal relationship.”*

Steinmann, N. (2006), *Fundamentals for Effective Mentoring: Raising Giant Killers*. Knowres Publishing, South Africa

The CSL Mentoring initiative has been a well-documented success story since training began in January 2016. To date, 400 mentors have completed the formal training, which was developed from research carried out by the CSL team on mentoring initiatives in Scotland, Canada and Australia. The training was also broadly based on the writings of Lois J. Zachary and her books *The Mentor's Guide* and *The Mentee's Guide*. The training consists of two one-and-a-half-days' professional learning sessions followed by a Shared Professional Learning Day.

The statistics to date:

- 400 trained mentors, 100 post-primary and 300 primary
- 54% are male and 46% are female
- 60% of the primary mentors are administrative principals and 40% are teaching
- 10% are from Gaelscoileanna
- 4% are from schools from the Gaeltacht
- 7% are from primary special schools

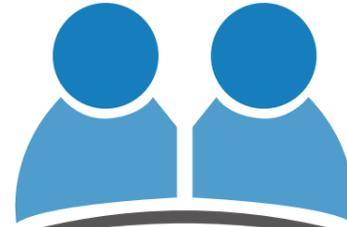
The mentor and mentee meet once a month for a two-hour meeting and have fortnightly contact by phone or email. A Contract of Agreement is signed which includes a confidentiality clause. The mentoring relationship begins in September and ends in June, when the newly appointed principal has the opportunity to access group mentoring with IPPN and NAPD.

The mentors appreciate the continuous quality learning available to them, the networking with colleagues, and the learning for themselves in a relationship in which parity of esteem is key. They speak about the opportunity to give something back to the profession, and to see and understand what is happening in other schools. The support for the mentors from the CSL Cairde is much appreciated.

The following were identified at a Cairde discussion group as being aspects of the mentor-mentee relationship from which they derive most satisfaction:

- The co-professional dialogue with a principal colleague
- The mentee's appreciation of their mentor's influence
- The discernible impact on the practice of the mentee
- The relevance and quality of the mentor training

## Mentee Feedback



*“My CSL Mentor was such a lovely, understanding person. Genuinely wanted the best for me and the school. I felt very much supported.”*

*“My mentor has been very supportive and their advice has been excellent. I enjoy meeting up and bouncing ideas back and forth. I find each meeting very refreshing and very much dictated by what I need, which is brilliant.”*

## Mentor Feedback



*“I have gained confidence in my own role as principal, and the learning from the mentoring relationship has greatly benefitted my school.”*

*“The role of the principal can be a lonely and challenging one. Support from a colleague who has walked in your shoes can be of great assistance. As a teaching principal, I understand the immense workload and the demands on my time both in the classroom and in the office. The process allows me to gain more experience to use in my own leadership role.”*

*“The mentoring relationship reinforces the mentor's own practice in that it provokes/promotes reflection and learning for both mentor and mentee.”*

*“A profitable mentoring relationship is characterised by reward for both parties. It consists of meaningful and valuable discussions. A profitable relationship is characterised by common ground, high levels of trust and openness, substance in discussions and reciprocal outcomes over time for both parties.”*

Source: Steinmann, N. (2006) *Fundamentals for Effective Mentoring: Raising Giant Killers*, Knowres Publishing, South Africa

# UNLOCKING POTENTIAL THROUGH COACHING

*“Coaching is a form of professional development that brings out the best in people, uncovers strengths and skills, builds effective teams, cultivates compassion and builds emotionally resilient educators.”*

—Elena Aguilar, *The Art of Coaching: Effective Strategies for School Transformation*, 2013

## Confidential Service

CSL launched its Coaching Service in January 2017. CSL Coaching is a confidential, one-to-one personal service which is now available for all school principals. Coaching is a particularly powerful tool and one that has proven highly effective in developing individual and organisational performance by unlocking potential and capability.

Coaching is well established as a leadership development service in large organisations and in industry, and this is the first time that Irish school leaders have experienced it for themselves. This service is fully funded by the Department of Education and Skills. This year over **300** principals have benefited from the service.

## Accessing the CSL Service

Most principals face challenges which they want to address with coaches. Some have goals which they want to achieve. Coaching provides the time and space for them to reflect on those challenges and goals. Principals engage with the service by logging on to the CSL website, where they are able to access 40 coaches in 6 regions around the country. They are offered a chemistry check opportunity, followed by 6 more meetings over approximately a one-year period. A final review meeting is held 6 months after the last meeting.

## Interesting Statistics

67% of those accessing the coaching service are female.

72% of those accessing the coaching service are primary school principals.

40% of primary principals accessing the service are teaching principals.

47% of those accessing the coaching service are aged 46–55.

25% are from DEIS schools.

8% are from Irish-speaking schools.

27% have special classes/autism classes in their schools.

54% have had at least 4 meetings with their coach this year.

## What some principals have told us:



*“Coaching has been one of the most useful leadership tools that I have come across. It gives me time to reflect upon myself, my actions and my decisions. I am making changes in my practice.”*

*Post-primary principal, August 2017*

*“I am near retirement and I regret that I am only now experiencing coaching for the first time. It has given me renewed enthusiasm for my job, and I feel my relationships with our small staff have improved immensely since I met my coach.”*

*Primary teaching principal, September 2017*

*“Coaching has been invaluable to me. We experienced a crisis in the school and I believe that it was the coaching that helped me personally get through the crisis and assist the staff in coming to terms with our situation. I couldn't recommend it highly enough.”*

*Primary administrative principal, May 2017*

## Why Access Coaching?

- Helps create a coaching culture in schools
- Enhances capacity to work in a changing environment
- Provides time and space for reflection
- Increases ability to prioritise and manage demands
- Enables management of change more successfully
- Renews enthusiasm for the job

# A CONTINUUM OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

## Why a Continuum of Professional Learning for School Leadership?

Teachers and leaders deserve high-quality learning opportunities at every point of their career. Research suggests that good education systems identify effective leaders for today, and that high-performing systems develop tomorrow's leaders in a planned and progressive way. The people recruited into teaching, their experience during their early years as teachers, and the ways we identify and develop talent across their careers will all contribute to extending the size and quality of the leadership pool.

## What might it look like?

### Continuum of School Leadership



## What could a Continuum of Quality Professional Learning achieve for School Leaders?

- Develop leadership capacity at all levels
- Coordination between various providers and across stages of career development
- Creation of collaborative sustainable professional learning communities
- Improve levels of engagement by teachers and school leaders in professional learning
- Ensure balance between leadership learning and training for operational need

## Why a Continuum of Professional Learning?

- To maximise positive impact on students
- To build leadership capacity
- To build a culture of professional learning
- To reinforce the developmental nature of leadership learning
- To promote collaboration and consistency amongst providers



CSL is very pleased with the interest from the profession in the new Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (PDSL) offered by a consortium of third-level colleges – University of Limerick (UL), National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) and University College Dublin (UCD). Facilitation of the tutorial sessions by experienced practitioners is a very powerful academic/practitioner model of delivery. The blend of face-to-face and online modes of delivery facilitates engagement by participants who are busy practitioners.



Some of the PDSL Lecturers and Tutors

The new programme looks at the specificity of senior leadership and builds understanding of what makes for high-quality leadership in schools. The programme aims to build knowledge, understanding and capacity in aspiring leaders through critical reflection, action-based learning and work placement in the participant's own school as well as in another school setting and in a non-educational setting.

## ENSURING QUALITY PROVISION OF LEADERSHIP LEARNING

CSL is currently piloting a Quality Assurance Framework and Process aimed at ensuring that both aspiring and serving school leaders have access to high-quality leadership programmes and activities.

### The CSL Framework for Approval

<b>Objectives</b>	What does the programme aim to achieve?
<b>Content and Design</b>	Is it informed by the "Looking at Our School 2016" description of quality leadership practice?
<b>Delivery and Approaches to Teaching and Learning</b>	Who is delivering the programme? What are the modes of delivery? What assessment methodologies are envisaged?
<b>Outcomes</b>	Will the programme enhance leadership capacity?
<b>Evidence and Research</b>	Will participants change/improve their practice as a result of participation in the programme?

### Our framework is guided by the principles of:

- Mutual Respect and Trust
- Partnership and Collaboration
- Consistency and Fairness
- Confidentiality
- Clear Communication
- Informed by Evidence



# LOOKING FORWARD

In the past year, the CSL team has worked hard to establish one-to-one formal mentoring support for all newly appointed principals, and professional coaching supports for established principals. We are also pleased that we now have a quality postgraduate diploma in school leadership available to aspiring school leaders.

CSL will continue to monitor these areas of activity over the coming year, with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes for our school communities. CSL will prioritise engagement with stakeholders to develop our Continuum of Professional Learning for school leaders and to populate it with quality-assured programmes and activities.

## Broad Strategic Priorities for 2017–18:

- **Continue** to build awareness of the work and role of CSL
- **Promote** and build awareness of the potential of mentoring and coaching as leadership tools
- **Develop** a Quality Assurance Framework and Process that will ensure that teachers and school leaders can access quality professional learning at every point along their career pathway
- **Monitor** and promote the postgraduate diploma in school leadership
- **Work** collaboratively with stakeholders and providers so as to populate the continuum of professional learning for school leaders
- **Evaluate** the impact of mentoring and coaching as leadership tools



Clive Byrne  
CEO of NAPD



The National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) was established in 1998 to provide a united voice nationally for Principals and Deputy Principals on issues of common concern. As a professional association, NAPD seeks to promote the interests and welfare of second-level school leaders. It is proud to be involved with the Centre for School Leadership as it promotes the professional and personal development of Principals and Deputy Principals.



Páirc Clerkin  
CEO of IPPN



Irish Primary Principals' Network's (IPPIN) vision is Empowered Leaders – Inspired Learners. In achieving this vision, our mission is to support and advocate for exemplary school leadership – Tacaíocht, Misneach & Spreagadh. IPPIN is the professional body for over 6,000 leaders of Irish primary schools. It works with the DES, NPC, management bodies, other education partners, unions, and children's charities to advance primary education. In 2015, IPPIN collaborated with the DES and NAPD to establish the Centre for School Leadership (CSL), which is responsible for the coordination and quality assurance of CPD programmes for current and aspiring school leaders. IPPIN commends the CSL team for its tremendous work over the first two years of its pilot programme and is fully supportive of its plans and aims over the coming years.

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# The Tree of Leadership Learning

