Fáilte an Uachtaráin
President's Welcome

Dear Principal / Deputy Principal



As we come to the close of another busy and productive school year, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your continued leadership, commitment, and professionalism in guiding your school community through the year.

I am delighted to be in a position to invite you to attend our annual PDA Conference. This year, we are heading to the historic town of Trim, where our conference will take place in the Knightsbrook Hotel from Wednesday, 18th to Friday, 20th November 2026.

Last year, our conference at the Slieve Russell Hotel in Cavan was an incredible success, with a fantastic line-up of speakers and events. Delegates thoroughly enjoyed both the quality of the content and the valuable networking and social opportunities.

We can promise a conference that will once again deliver an engaging and thought-provoking programme, with speakers addressing topics of direct relevance to principals and deputy principals. With significant change continuing across the education landscape, staying informed is more important than ever. This conference represents an excellent opportunity to hear from experts, share insights, and connect with colleagues facing similar challenges.

The conference also provides an important opportunity for us, as school leaders, to focus on our own wellbeing. We spend much of our time supporting others, so it is vital that we take opportunities such as this to care for ourselves.

As a CPD event, the conference is open to all, irrespective of PDA membership, and we would be delighted to welcome you. There is also a long-standing agreement whereby attendees are entitled to claim travel and subsistence from their ETB, along with payment of conference fees. You may need to seek prior approval from your ETB in advance of incurring such expenses.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the successful completion of another school year, and I hope you enjoy a restful and well-deserved summer break. I strongly encourage you to book your accommodation at the Knightsbrook Hotel as soon as possible to avail of our conference rate, and to register early.

I have no doubt that this year's conference in Trim will build on the success of previous years, and I look forward to welcoming you there.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Murphy

President PDA

PDA

PRINCIPALS AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION

CUMANN PRÍOMHOIDÍ AGUS PRÍOMHOIDÍ TÁNAISTEACHA



Book Conference Hotel via **www.knightsbrook.ie**

Overnight Rates € 145 per night.
The Knightsbrook Hotel, Trim, Co. Meath
Phone: +353 46 948 2100 • info@knightsbrook.com

TEACHERS' UNION OF IRELAND
AONTAS MÚINTEOIRÍ ÉIREANN



Brendan Doody

Brendan Doody is a principal officer in the Department of Education and Youth and has responsibility for special education policy. He has extensive experience in special and inclusive education having previously worked as assistant chief inspector with responsibility for inclusive education and as a special education teacher. He is a former school principal and is Ireland's current representative board member on the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.



Dr Aoife Brennan

Dr Aoife Brennan is an Associate Professor and Head of the School of Inclusive and Special Education at the DCU Institute of Education. She is a former primary teacher and Advisor with the National Professional Development Service for Teachers. Aoife teaches across several postgraduate programmes and leads the Inclusive and Special Education pathway on the Doctor of Education (EdD) programme. She has supervised doctoral students in areas including professional learning, inclusive school leadership, teacher resilience, and inclusive mathematics. Her research focuses on inclusive school leadership, professional learning and inclusive pedagogy, which has been published in high-impact teacher education journals. Aoife has spearheaded numerous funded projects, including a Teaching Council project on university-school partnerships supporting collaborative professional learning in both primary and post-primary settings, a Research Ireland-funded project on teacher leadership for inclusive STEM and, most recently, an evaluation of the ETBI Instructional Leadership Programme. She is an Advisory Board Member for the International Symposium on Leadership for Professional Learning and a leadership team member of the DCU Centre for Inclusive Pedagogy.



Professor Jim O'Mahony

Professor Jim O'Mahony is a Senior Lecturer at Munster Technological University (MTU) and is the AI Lead for the Teaching and Learning Unit, MTU Cork. He also co-chairs MTU's Working Group on Generative Artificial Intelligence and has served as a member of the National Advisory Group on Generative AI for the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning. A passionate advocate for innovation in AI in education, Jim specialises in making AI tools more accessible to educators and demonstrating their practical applications in enhancing student learning experiences. His expertise spans a range of diverse AI platforms beyond Chat GPT and is dedicated to exploring how technology can transform education while keeping the work we do as teachers very much human focused. Jim produces the popular LinkedIn newsletter "AI Simplified - for Educators," sharing the latest tools, tips, and Gen AI platforms to help educators work better and smarter.



Professor Patricia Mannix McNamara

Professor Patricia Mannix McNamara is full Professor at the University of Limerick, Ireland, with extensive experience in educational leadership, leadership development and professional learning. Her work focuses on the changing nature of leadership, the development of sustainable and relational approaches to leadership, and the creation of cultures in which people and organisations can flourish.

Professor Mannix McNamara has worked extensively with school leaders and educational professionals, with a particular interest in leadership capacity, organisational culture, relationships, professional identity and the challenges facing leaders in increasingly complex and changing environments.

She has contributed significantly to leadership development in education through her research, teaching, her creation of leadership specific professional programmes and her engagement and advocacy work with system educational leaders and diverse organisations. Her work brings together academic insight and practical experience, with a strong emphasis on leadership that is relational, ethical, sustainable and responsive to the realities of contemporary educational life.

A frequent keynote speaker and contributor to statutory, professional and academic forums, Professor Mannix McNamara is particularly interested in the human dimensions of leadership: how leaders navigate complexity, sustain themselves and others, build cultures of belonging, and lead meaningful change while remaining grounded in purpose and values.



Michael Gillespie TUI General Secretary

Michael Gillespie has served as General Secretary of the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) since August 2020. A native of Co Kildare, he attended Maynooth Post Primary School before studying Physics and Maths in Maynooth University. For 25 years he was a teacher of Physics, Science and Maths in St. Brendan's Community School, Birr. A Union activist throughout his teaching career, he held several TUI elected offices, including workplace representative and various branch officer positions. He was also a member of the National Executive of TUI and held the position of Honorary Treasurer with the Union. In 2013, he was appointed to the position of Assistant General Secretary, Mr Gillespie has been a senior official of the TUI since then.



Emer Smyth

Emer Smyth is a Research Professor at the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Adjunct Professor at Trinity College Dublin. She is joint research area coordinator for education. Her main research interests centre on education, child and adolescent wellbeing, school to work transitions and gender.
She has conducted a number of studies on the effects of schooling contexts on student outcomes. Educational inequality has been an important focus of her research, with a programme of current research on school absence as well as earlier work on a review of the School Completion Programme and an evaluation of the Youthreach programme. Her work has increasingly adopted a broader view of education, looking at the way in which out-of-school activities influence within-school learning and the impact of school processes on broader wellbeing. She has used GUI data to write reports and journal articles on the changing social worlds of children and teenagers, youth mental health in the wake of the pandemic, fathers and child outcomes, the transition into primary school, and arts and cultural participation among children and young people, among other topics.



Donncha Ó Treasaigh

Donncha Ó Treasaigh serves as the Director of Leadership at Oide, the national professional learning support service operating under the Department of Education and Youth. He brings over two decades of experience across primary, post-primary, special education, and youth work.
Donncha began his career in educational leadership as the founding principal of Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh (2006–2019), growing the Irish-medium school from 31 to 700 students. He was appointed by the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) as Director of Schools in 2019, also serving as Acting Chief Executive (2024/2025). His work to date includes establishing Limerick Community Special School, expanding special classes fourfold across LCETB, and leading regional school reconfigurations, amalgamations and a unified admissions process for schools in Ennis, Co. Clare.
He has held prominent governance roles, including service on the Department of Education Digital Strategy Implementation Advisory Group and as Chair of the Limerick Education and Support Centre. He was chairperson of the Hunt Museum in Limerick during a phase of significant development at the museum. A fluent Irish speaker and advocate for Gaeloideachas, he holds a Master's Degree in Education from Mary Immaculate College, a Diploma in Education Law from the Law Society of Ireland, a Higher Diploma in ICT from Maynooth University, a Higher Diploma in Education from Maynooth University and a BA from the University of Limerick.



Michael Murphy, President PDA



Anthony Quinn, President TUI

Anthony Quinn is President of the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI). A dedicated teacher of English and Gaeilge in Inver College Carrickmacross, County Monaghan, he brings frontline educational experience to the role. Elected in 2025, he passionately advocates for teachers and lecturers, fighting to improve conditions for members and to protect the integrity of Ireland's education system.

Wednesday 18th

3.00pm to 7pm	Registration of delegates
8.15 pm	**AN Other - topic to be decided**

Thursday 19th

9.00- 10.20	Registration of Delegates/ Exhibitions
10.20- 11.00	**Brendan Doody Principal Officer DEY– Leadership for Inclusion**
11.00- 11.30	Health Break/Exhibitors
11.30 - 12.00	**Aoife Brennan – Leading inclusive schools through systematic challenges**
12.00 -12.30	**Donncha O'Treasaigh - Facilitated panel discussion with delegate participation**
12.30 13.00	Exhibtors
13.00- 14.00	**Lunch**
14.00- 14.15	**President's Address – Michael Murphy**
14.15 -14.45	**TUI/Forum- TUI President Anthony Quinn – & TUI Gen Sec Michael Gillespie**
14.45 -15.15	**Michael Gillespie – Challenging aspects of school leadership**
15.15 – 15.45	Health Break/Exhibitors
15.45 – 16.30	**Dr Emer Smyth ESRI School attendance and its consequences**
16.30	Time to relax
19.30	Pre Dinner Reception/ Greeting of Guests
20.00	Conference Banquet

Friday 20th

9.00 – 9.45	Exhibitors
9.45- 10.15	Conference Business- Motions/ Elections/Reports
10.15 – 11.00	**Prof Jim OMahony MTU -The ABC of AACs - the logistics of Additional Assessment Components in a Gen-AI world**
11.00 – 11.15	Conference draw supported by sponsors
11.15 – 11.45	Coffee break/Exhibitors
11.45 – 12.30	**Patricia Mannix McNamara UL- The complexities of educational leadership**

Close of Conference and Lunch

****

You are strongly advised to book your Accommodation as early as possible. Booking via hotel website is not possible.

PDA Conference 2026 Hotel Booking and Registration Process - 18th -20th November 2026

You are strongly advised to book your Accommodation as early as possible.
Three Step Registration Process for PDA Conference 2026

Step 1: Book Conference Hotel - **Make sure to ask for PDA Conf Rate (18th and 19th Nov)**

Telephone 046 9482100 **Conference Rate is €145 Single**

Step 2: Complete Registration Form and email to: Sandra O'Toole on the PDA email: irelandpda@gmail.com.

Step 3: Arrange for payment:

- If paying directly yourself - see details on registration form. Email to: Sandra O'Toole on the PDA email: irelandpda@gmail.com. with an order number and she will then email an invoice to you for processing through your local payment system.
- If your ETB does not have the PDA on their system as a supplier, please email Sandra O'Toole on the PDA email: irelandpda@gmail.com with the name of the ETB and she will send in the necessary documents to that ETB.