



POLICY ON GAELTACHT EDUCATION 2017-2022

PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN GAELTACHT LANGUAGE-PLANNING AREAS PARTICIPATING IN THE GAELTACHT SCHOOL RECOGNITION SCHEME

Ongoing Implementation of the Scheme (2020 - 2021)

TO BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT, PRINCIPALS AND TEACHING STAFF OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL SCHOOL(S) IN GAELTACHT LANGUAGE-PLANNING AREAS

1. Purpose of the Circular

The purpose of this Circular is to inform school authorities of the next steps to be taken by the Department of Education and Skills (Department) and by primary schools/special schools in relation to the continuing implementation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme (Scheme) in 2020/2021. This Circular follows on from Circulars 0033/2017, 0021/2018 and 0009/2019, which outlined the implementation phases of the Scheme covering the period from 2017 to 2020.

Summary of key points:

- Schools should continue to plan for the implementation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme to improve the quality of immersion education¹ by reviewing existing targets, identifying new targets and actions, and monitoring progress to fulfil the language-based criteria (**Appendix 1**) in order to obtain recognition as a Gaeltacht school.
- Additional targeted resources will continue to be provided to support schools' participation in the Scheme including Irish-language support hours, a grant for Irish-medium resources, continuing professional development (CPD) and Inspectorate advisory visits.
- During the 2020/21 school year, the Inspectorate's advisory visits will place a particular focus on good practice relating to immersion education in schools participating in the Scheme.

Appendices attached to this Circular:

Appendix 1: Language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school

Appendix 2: *School Cluster Application Form*: This application form is provided for primary schools in the Scheme that wish to cluster or combine their Irish-language support hours and/or special education teaching hours to form shared full-time temporary teaching posts

¹ In the context of a Gaeltacht primary school, immersion education refers to the practice of teaching all curriculum areas entirely through the medium of Irish, apart from the English curriculum. Early-immersion refers to the practice of implementing a two-year total immersion programme through Irish in infant classes, where English is not taught during this period.

Programme of supports for primary/special schools in the Scheme (2020 - 2021)

As provided for in previous circulars (Circulars [0033/2017](#), [0021/2018](#) and [0009/2019](#)), schools in the Scheme are eligible to access additional resources and supports in order to fulfil the language-based criteria. These additional supports will continue to be made available to primary schools and special schools in the Scheme in the 2020/2021 school year, as outlined below:

- **Irish-language support hours:**

Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme – primary schools	
Primary school enrolment on 30/09/19	Number of additional Irish-language support hours per week per school for the school year 2020/2021
<53	5
53-82	7.5
83-142	10
143-175	12.5
176-250	15
251-488	17.5
>488	25

The Irish-language support hours should be used solely to support the identified needs of native speakers and learners of Irish to develop and enrich their proficiency skills in Irish, particularly oral Irish. For guidance on the use of these Irish-language support hours, schools should consult the Department of Education and Skills' publication: *Inspectorate Advisory Visits 2020/2021: Guidelines for Primary and Post-Primary Schools in the Scheme*, which is available **HERE**. The use of these hours will be monitored during Inspectorate advisory visits.

These Irish-language support hours are provided as part-time hours for schools participating in the Scheme. Schools will be expected to manage the allocation of these Irish-language support hours effectively to ensure the maximum benefit for pupils' Irish-language learning.

A group of schools may form a cluster to create a temporary full-time teaching post by combining part-time Irish-language support hours allocated to each school in the cluster. A School Cluster Application Form is available in **Appendix 2** and on the Department's website **HERE**.

While the additional hours for Irish-language support under the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and the hours under the Special Education Teaching Allocation will be allocated separately, schools can combine these hours to create temporary teaching posts for the 2020/2021 school year. In such cases, schools must ensure that the teachers selected for these posts have a high level of proficiency in Irish and an understanding of immersion education.

- **Grant allocation:** In May 2020, a grant of €1,200 will be paid to each primary school and special school in the Scheme for the purchase of Irish-medium teaching resources to support the provision of high-quality immersion education. A list of resources in Irish can be accessed on An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) website at www.cogg.ie Primary schools and special schools are required to retain all receipts and records of expenditure incurred for audit purposes in accordance with public procurement and financial procedures (see provisions of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: Circular 0013/2014). School authorities must also ensure that the requirements of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the

Department of Education and Skills are met in the public procurement, usage and disposal of assets.

- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** Primary schools and special schools participating in the Scheme will be provided with additional CPD co-ordinated by COGG in conjunction with other support services and the Inspectorate. Where necessary, and as resources permit, substitution cover for attendance at seminars/workshops will be provided up to a maximum of 2 days for 2 primary teachers attending the CPD in 2020/21. These days may be claimed from the Online Claims System (OLCS) by selecting the following option: Continuing Professional Development/Professional Activities - Gaeltacht Education Policy/Polasaí um Oideachas Gaeltachta. It is intended that there will be one day school closure in 2020/2021 for each primary/special school participating in the Scheme to enable all teaching staff attend the CPD provided. Details in relation to CPD plans for schools participating in the Scheme will be provided by COGG.
- **A revised version of Good-Practice Guidelines on Immersion Education for Primary Schools will be published in 2020** to provide practical support for schools in implementing high quality immersion education. The Guide will support schools in:
 - identifying targets and actions to fulfil the language-based criteria for immersion education
 - reflecting on effective teaching and learning practices through the medium of Irish
 - engaging in professional dialogue on learning, teaching, management and leadership in the implementation of immersion education
 - identifying, developing and extending good practice in immersion education.
- **Inspectorate Support:** Inspectors will conduct advisory visits to provide support to schools in implementing the language-based criteria and to provide information on progress being made by schools to the Department of Education and Skills.

In addition to the advice provided to schools, inspectors will observe examples of good innovative practice, identified by schools, relating to the provision of high-quality immersion education.

- **Event to celebrate and share good practice:** A shared-learning event will be organised in Quarter 4, 2020 to celebrate and share good innovative practice in immersion education in schools participating in the Scheme. Further details about this event will be circulated to schools in the Scheme in due course.

3. Whole-school action-planning to strengthen immersion education

School self-evaluation facilitates schools to engage in a cyclical action-planning process that includes regular review. The action-planning process should involve gathering evidence, making judgements, setting specific targets, implementing actions, monitoring and reviewing progress and setting new targets to strengthen the quality of Irish-medium education.

Schools participating in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme are required to develop and implement action plans for improvement under the DEIS plan 2017 on specific themes.² Targets and actions in respect of the DEIS themes as well as those linked to language-based criteria related to immersion education, and/or any other priority area(s), should be incorporated, under relevant sub-sections, into **one clearly-labelled action-planning document**. Schools should create a short summary of the self-evaluation report and school improvement plan and share it with their school community annually.

² DEIS Plan 2017 themes: attendance, retention, progression, literacy and numeracy, leadership, wellbeing, continuing professional development (CPD), transitions, partnership with parents and examination attainment.

4. Evaluation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

The Scheme is based on the ongoing development and enhancement of immersion education whereby the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is effectively used to guide the identification and implementation of targets and actions, and to foster purposeful links between the school community and local language-planning committees to extend the use of Irish in Gaeltacht communities.

A three-year Research and Evaluation Study plan has been developed by the Gaeltacht Education Unit in collaboration with the Educational Research Centre (ERC) and Inspectorate to evaluate the impact of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme to inform future policy and practice. The findings from the evaluation study will identify the strengths of the Scheme and inform further improvement in the provision of high quality Irish-medium education to gain recognition as a Gaeltacht school. An Interim Composite Report on the initial findings from this research and evaluation study will be published in 2020.

5. Further Information/FAQs

The continuing participation of primary/special schools in the Scheme will be contingent on satisfying the conditions of this Circular and any other circulars relating to the Scheme. Where the Department, at any time, determines that the conditions of the Scheme are not being fulfilled, the right is reserved to remove a school from the Scheme. In case of dissatisfaction with the Department's decision regarding any specific aspect of the administration of the Scheme, an appeal will be considered by an independent panel.

The Gaeltacht Education Unit in the Department of Education and Skills will continue to oversee, manage and support the implementation of the *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022* and the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in this next implementation phase.

Additional information and updates on the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and on the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 are published regularly on the Department's website. A frequently-asked questions (FAQs) document is also available on the Department's website and will continue to be updated.

Queries in relation to the operation of the Scheme and/or the Policy should be emailed to aog@education.gov.ie or addressed to: **An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta, An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Sráid Maoilbhríde, Baile Átha Cliath 1, DO1 RC96.**

Treasa Kirk

Ceannasaí an Aonaid um Oideachas Gaeltachta/ Head of Gaeltacht Education Unit
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna/Department of Education and Skills

February 2020

Principals of primary/special schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas are asked to please bring this Circular to the attention of each member of the board of management and teachers (including those on leave of absence), the school patron, ancillary staff, parents/guardians, and the local school community. This Circular can be accessed on the Department's website at the following LINK: www.education.ie

Appendix 1

Language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school

1.	Implement a two-year total-immersion programme ³ through Irish in infant classes, during which no English will be taught.
2.	Implement a total-immersion approach, where all areas of learning, apart from English, will be taught through Irish.
3.	Deliver high quality educational experiences through Irish to all pupils focusing particular attention on the differentiated language needs of native Irish speakers ⁴ as well as learners of Irish.
4.	Develop a whole-school action plan for improvement that will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out how the school will ensure the use of Irish as the language of communication, instruction and socialisation within the school and • communicate and promote the benefits of learning Irish and learning through Irish to the school community (principal, staff, pupils, parents and board of management).
5.	Review the quality of educational provision through Irish to ensure continuous improvement through the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.
6.	Provide Irish-language learning experiences in accordance with the L1 ⁵ learning outcomes in the Primary Language Curriculum for Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools.
7.	Use Irish-language resources to support the teaching of all curricular areas through Irish, apart from the English curriculum.
8.	Deliver curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities (where provided) through Irish.
9.	Support their school community in the language-planning process (under the Gaeltacht Act, 2012) by contributing to the use and maintenance of Irish in the school and local Gaeltacht community.
10.	Prioritise the use of Irish in communicating with parents, the local community and other parties.
11.	Establish useful and mutually-beneficial language and cultural links with local Irish-medium early-years settings (<i>naíonraí</i>).
12.	Establish useful and mutually-beneficial language and cultural links with local Irish-medium post-primary schools and other Irish-medium primary schools.
13.	Make every effort to recruit teaching and ancillary staff who are proficient in Irish, and have a knowledge and understanding of pedagogical practice relevant to teaching through Irish as well as an understanding of the language and cultural dynamics of the Gaeltacht.

³ A total-immersion programme in infant classes means that the learning environment operates solely through Irish and the teaching of English will commence from first class. This enables the fuller development of children's Irish-language capacities in infant classes.

⁴ A native speaker of Irish is defined as a child who is raised through Irish in an Irish-language community and whose parents speak Irish as the main language of communication in the home, such being declared at the point of enrolment for school (*Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022*, p 11)

⁵ L1 refers to Irish as the main language of the school in relation to teaching and learning, and communication in official, administrative and recreational affairs.

**Appendix 2
School Cluster Application Form 2020/21**

Application Form to create a temporary full-time teaching post through school clusters for the 2020/2021 school year

Schools must ensure that the teacher selected for the post has a high level of proficiency in the Irish language and can fulfil the roles, as appropriate.		
	Cluster options	Please tick one option
A	<u>Irish-language support hours</u> between schools	
B	Combine <u>Irish-language support hours</u> and <u>special education teaching hours</u> between schools	
C	Combine <u>Irish-language support hours</u> and <u>special education teaching hours</u> in the same school	

This form must be completed by 8 April 2020 and returned to the Gaeltacht Education Unit, either electronically to aog@education.gov.ie or by post to: An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta, An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Sráid Maoilbhríde, Baile Átha Cliath 1, DO1 RC96.

**Details of Base School for the new full-time temporary post created by clustering hours
(1 post = 25 hours)**

Name of the Base School: (The base school must be participating in the Scheme)	
Roll Number:	
School Address:	
Email Address:	
Phone Number:	

**Details of partner schools for the new full-time temporary post created by clustering hours
(1 post = 25 hours)**

	School Name	Roll Number	Total no. of Irish-language support hours allocated to the school under the Scheme	No. of Irish-language support hours in the cluster	No. of special education teaching hours in cluster
Base school					
2nd school					
3rd school					
Total cluster hours:					

Details of part-time Irish-language support hours not used in this cluster (i.e. total language support hours less language support hours in cluster). These hours will be approved as part-time hours

	School Name	Roll Number	No. of Irish-language support hours <u>NOT</u> used in cluster
Base school			
2 nd school			
3 rd school			
Total:			

All cluster arrangements **relating to the creation of new full-time temporary posts arising from the combination of Irish-language support hours will be for the 2020/21 school year only.**

Please note: In the exceptional case that a school is involved in more than one cluster arrangement, the appropriate form must be submitted for each cluster.

Declaration

I declare that the above information is correct and that I am in agreement with the proposed cluster arrangements for this post as outlined above.

BASE SCHOOL: School name: _____ Roll No: _____

Signature of principal of base school

Signature of chairperson of base school

Date: _____ Contact Number: _____

2nd SCHOOL: School name: _____ Roll No: _____

Signature of principal of 2nd school

Signature of chairperson of 2nd school

Date: _____ Contact Number: _____

3rd SCHOOL: School name: _____ Roll No: _____

Signature of principal of 3rd school

Signature of chairperson of 3rd school

Date: _____ Contact Number: _____

Relevant sections of the Department will be provided with the information in this form, as required. The Department's Teacher Allocation Section will also be provided with a copy of this Form for its records.

The main purpose for which the Department requires the personal data provided by you is for the arrangement of school clusters for the creation of temporary shared teaching posts in 2020/2021 on the basis of the additional hours allocated to schools under the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. The personal data provided may be exchanged with other sections within the Department of Education and Skills and other schools involved in the clustering arrangement. Full details of the Department's data protection policy setting out how we will use your personal data as well as information regarding your rights as a data subject are available at this **LINK**.