



POLICY ON GAELTACHT EDUCATION 2017-2022

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

**NEXT IMPLEMENTATION PHASE
(May 2019 - August 2020)**

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

Summary of key points to note:

- The first phase of implementation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme to strengthen immersion education¹ in schools commenced in September 2018. The *Scheme* is now moving into its next phase of implementation.
- Schools participating in the *Scheme* should continue to review existing targets and identify new targets and actions to meet the language-based criteria to strengthen immersion education and extend the use of Irish in order to obtain recognition as a Gaeltacht school.
- Targeted supports will continue to be provided to support schools' participation in the *Scheme* including Irish-language support hours, a grant for resources in Irish, additional continuing professional development (CPD) and Inspectorate advisory visits.

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.

Appendices attached to this Circular:

[Appendix 1](#): Language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school (Circular 0033/2017)

[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.

[Appendix 3](#): Sample Action-Planning Template to assist schools in implementing the language-based criteria to strengthen immersion education.

2. Programme of supports for primary/special schools in the *Scheme* (May 2019 - August 2020)

As set out in Circulars 0033/2017 and 0021/2018, primary and special schools participating in the *Scheme* that are implementing actions to meet the language-based criteria (**Appendix 1**) to strengthen immersion education, will be eligible to access the following resources and supports in 2019/2020:

- **Irish-language support hours** will continue to be allocated to primary/special schools participating in the *Scheme* as follows:

Primary school enrolment on 30/09/18	Number of additional Irish-language support hours per week per school for the school year 2019/2020
<54	5
54-83	7.5
84-142	10
143-175	12.5
176-250	15
NEW 251-488	17.5
NEW >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 *Guidance Note for Gaeltacht Primary and Post-Primary Schools - Advisory Visits of the Inspectorate and the Use of Additional Part-Time Hours to Support Irish*. The use of these hours will be monitored during Inspectorate advisory visits.

These Irish-language support hours are automatically approved 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 posts 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 at the [LINK](#).

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 a temporary teaching post for the 2019/2020 school year. In such cases, schools must ensure that the teachers selected for these posts have a high level of proficiency in the Irish language and an understanding of immersion education, and can fulfil the roles of the delivery of the Irish-language support hours and the special education teaching hours, as appropriate. The allocation of the additional Irish-language support hours will be reviewed by the Department in 2020.

- **Grant allocation:** In June 2019, a grant of €1,200 will be paid to each primary/special schools participating in the *Scheme*. The grant is allocated 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/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/special schools participating in the *Scheme* will be provided with additional CPD co-ordinated by COGG in conjunction with relevant 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 attendees in participating primary/special schools in 2019. These days may be claimed from the Online Claims System (OLCS) by selecting the following: *Continuing Professional Development/Professional Activities - Gaeltacht Education Policy/Polasaí um Oideachas Gaeltachta*. It is intended that there will be one day school closure in 2019/2020 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.
- **Inspectorate Support:** Inspectors will conduct advisory visits to support primary/special schools participating in the *Scheme* in the implementation and ongoing review of targets set and actions taken to fulfil the Irish-language based criteria to strengthen immersion education.
- **Indicators of Good Practice in Immersion Education: Draft Guide for Gaeltacht Primary Schools (2018):** This Guide provides practical support for primary schools in implementing immersion education. The Guide can be used to:
 - reflect on teaching and learning practices through the medium of Irish
 - guide professional discussion on learning, teaching, management and leadership in relation to the implementation of immersion education
 - affirm good practice in immersion education
 - identify targets and actions to fulfil the language-based criteria for immersion education.

The Guide will be revised in 2019 and will take account of feedback from schools and education partners.

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 the gathering of evidence, making judgements, setting specific targets, implementing actions, monitoring and reviewing progress against targets and the setting of new targets to strengthen the quality of Irish-medium education.

An example of a revised action-planning template, to support schools in fulfilling the language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary/special school, is provided in **Appendix 3** and at the **LINK**. Schools may use this template and adapt it to suit its own particular school context.

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 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 the school community annually.

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.

As set out in the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, an evaluation study of the impact of the implementation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in schools will commence in 2019. This evaluation study will be conducted by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) in collaboration with the Inspectorate during the period 2019 to 2022. The Inspectorate will commence an external evaluation of immersion education, in the 2019/2020 school year, in the schools participating in the *Scheme* from its inception.

The main purpose of this evaluation study will be to measure the extent to which the implementation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme has met the objectives of the *Scheme* and Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022. 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.

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.

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

5. Further Information/FAQs

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.**

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

**Dr Treasa Kirk
Head of Gaeltacht Education Unit
Department of Education and Skills**

February 2019

Appendix 1

Language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school (Circular 0033/2017)

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

**Application Form to create a temporary full-time teaching post through
school clusters for the 2019/2020 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.

	Options	Please tick
A	Cluster Irish-language support hours between schools	
B	Cluster Irish-language support hours and special education teaching hours between schools	
C	Combine Irish-language support hours and special education teaching hours in the same school	

This form must be completed by 12 April 2019 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.**

Other 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.

**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 <i>Scheme</i>)	
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	No. of Irish-language support hours	No. of special education teaching hours
Base school				
2nd school				
3rd school				
			Total hours:	

All cluster arrangements **relating to the creation of new full-time temporary posts arising from the combination of Irish-language support hours** will be reviewed in 2020/2021.

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

Roll No: _____
Signature of principal of base school Signature of chairperson of base school

Date: _____ Contact Number: _____

2nd SCHOOL:

Roll No. _____
Signature of principal of 2nd school Signature of chairperson of 2nd school

Date: _____ Contact Number: _____

3rd SCHOOL:

Roll no. _____
Signature of principal of 3rd school Signature of chairperson of 3rd school

Date: _____ Contact Number: _____

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 the [LINK](#). Details of this policy are also available in hard copy from the address below upon request.



Aguisín 3

Teimpléad Samplach do Phlean Gníomhaíochta do chur i bhfeidhm na gcritéar teanga don tumoideachas

Ainm na Scoile		Uimhir Rolla	
Comhthéacs na scoile	<p>Tabhair cuntas achomair soiléir le pointí urchair de réir mar atá ábhartha (<i>m.sh. líon foirne agus rollachán; stádas DEIS; comhthéacs teangeolaíochta na scoile; cleachtas reatha maidir leis an teagasc trí Ghaeilge; tacaíochtaí don Ghaeilge ar fáil sa scoil/sa phobal scoile; comhpháirtíocht le tuismitheoirí; nasc leis an gcoiste pleanála teanga; nasc le scoileanna eile/naíonraí &rl</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••		

Seo a leanas sampla de theimpléad a d'fhéadfaí a úsáid chun plean a dhearadh do chritéar teanga amháin a chur i bhfeidhm. D'fhéadfadh sprioc amháin nó níos mó a bheadh ag an scoil don chritéar sin. Is féidir an teimpléad a chóipeáil de réir mar is gá, ag brath ar líon na gcritéar teanga agus líon na spriocanna atá á chur i bhfeidhm sa tréimhse ama ar leith. Moltar plean a dhearadh do bhliain amháin ar dtús le go bhfeicfead an dul chun cinn atá déanta taobh istigh den tréimhse ama sin. Cé gur gá don scoil gach citéar teanga a bhaint amach chun aitheantas mar scoil Ghaeltachta a fháil, is de réir a chéile a dhéanfar an obair chuige sin. Ní gá don scoil pleanáil a dhéanamh do gach gach critéar teanga a chur i bhfeidhm ag tús an phróisis. Leag amach go hachomair na sainghníomhartha atá molta ar mhaithe leis na spriocanna ginearálta thuas a bhaint amach.

Critéar Teanga:	
Anailís ar an bhfianaise a bailíodh chun an bonnlíne gnóthachtála a aimsiú don sprioc agus an dul chun cinn a rianú	
Sprioc a 1 chun an critéar teanga seo a bhaint amach	
Tréimhse ama chun an sprioc a bhaint amach	
Ról Ceannasaíochta	
Critéir Ratha - cén toradh/toradh foghlama a bhainfear amach	
Na gníomhartha a dhéanfar agus na hacmhainní a úsáidfear chun an sprioc a bhaint amach	
An Mhiontóireacht a dhéanfar ar dhul chun cinn na foghlama	
An Mheastóireacht agus an tAthbhreithniú a dhéanfar ar an gcur i bhfeidhm agus ar éifeacht an phlean	Dátaí athbhreithnithe
An Toradh a baineadh amach (le líonadh ag deireadh na tréimhse ama)	
An chéad chéim eile (le líonadh ag deireadh na tréimhse ama)	

Spríoc a 2 chun an critéar teanga seo a bhaint amach	
Tréimhse ama chun an spríoc a bhaint amach	
Ról Ceannasaíochta	
Critéir Ratha - cén toradh/toradh foghlama a bhainfear amach	
Na gníomhartha a dhéanfar agus na hacmhainní a úsáidfear chun an spríoc a bhaint amach	
An Mhonatóireacht a dhéanfar ar dhul chun cinn na foghlama	
An Mheastóireacht agus an tAthbhreithniú a dhéanfar ar an gcur i bhfeidhm agus ar éifeacht an phlean	Dátaí athbhreithnithe
An Toradh a baineadh amach (le líonadh ag deireadh na tréimhse ama)	
An chéad chéim eile (le líonadh ag deireadh na tréimhse ama)	