



Circular 0012/2020

POLICY ON GAELTACHT EDUCATION 2017-2022

INVITATION TO PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GAELTACHT LANGUAGE-PLANNING AREAS TO CONSIDER JOINING THE GAELTACHT SCHOOL RECOGNITION SCHEME

(February 2020 - August 2021)

TO BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT, PRINCIPALS AND TEACHING STAFF OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE GAELTACHT NOT CURRENTLY IN THE SCHEME

1. Purpose of the Circular

The purpose of this Circular is to remind school authorities of a further opportunity which is being provided by the Department of Education and Skills (Department) to schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas to join the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme (Scheme) in 2020.

The Department is committed to providing additional resources to schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas to support them in fulfilling the Irish language-based criteria to gain recognition as Gaeltacht schools under the terms of the Scheme. This Circular follows on from circulars 0033/2017, 0021/2018 and 0011//2019, which provide an outline of the implementation of the Scheme covering the period from 2017 to 2020.

Part A of the Circular sets out the steps involved in order to join the Scheme in 2020. **Part B** outlines the additional supports that will be provided at planning and implementation stages for new applicant schools in 2020/21.

Summary of key points:

- Schools that are not currently participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme are being given a further opportunity to join the Scheme in Spring 2020 and additional supports will be fast-tracked to these schools in the Gaeltacht to strengthen the provision of education through the medium of Irish.
- To join the Scheme, a school must complete an *Expression of Interest Form* attached to this Circular (**Appendix 2**).
- A school opting to participate in the Scheme will be required to develop an action plan linked to language-based criteria to strengthen immersion education¹ taking account of its particular school context.

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.

- Additional targeted supports at planning and implementation stages will be provided to support schools joining the *Scheme*. Following the approval of action plans, schools will have access to Irish-language support hours, a grant for the purchase of Irish-medium teaching resources, additional continuing professional development (CPD) and Inspectorate advisory visits.

Appendices attached to this Circular:

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

Appendix 2: *Expression of Interest Form* for primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas opting to join the *Scheme* in 2020. The completed *Expression of Interest Form* must be submitted to the Department **by Monday, 23 March 2020**.

Appendix 3: *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 4: *Sample Action-Planning Template* to assist schools in implementing the language-based criteria to strengthen immersion education.

PART A

1. Invitation to schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas to join the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in 2020

Schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas that are not already participating in the Scheme are now being offered a further opportunity to consider joining the Scheme in 2020.

Table 1 provides an overview of the activities and additional supports which will be provided to schools joining the Scheme in 2020.

TABLE 1: Summary of activities required to be eligible to participate in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme					
PLANNING PHASE					INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION PHASE
February/March 2020	23 March 2020	March to May 2020	15 June 2020	June 2020	September 2020/21
Consult with school community and local language-planning committee	Submit <i>Expression of Interest Form</i> to the Department	Prepare action plan to implement immersion education	Submit action plan to the Department for review	Feedback provided to schools and approval of action plans	Commence implementation of targets and actions set out in action plan to strengthen immersion education
Initial supports provided to schools including release time for planning, continuing professional development (CPD) provided by An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) and Inspectorate advisory visits					Grant and additional Irish-language support hours provided

1.1 Expression of Interest to join the Scheme in 2020

Firstly, schools must make the decision to complete the Expression of Interest Form for participation in the *Scheme*. The decision to participate in the *Scheme* must be taken following consultation with the school's patron, teaching staff, parents' association and local language-planning committee and must be approved by the school's board of management. In making this decision, the Department urges schools and their communities to consider the educational benefits of immersion education and the opportunity for schools to make a real difference in addressing the current challenges relating to the use of the Irish language in Gaeltacht communities.

Once the decision to join the Scheme in 2020 has been made, the Expression of Interest Form included in **Appendix 2** must be completed and returned electronically to aog@education.gov.ie or by post to: An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta, An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Bloc 3, Sráid Maoilbhríde, Baile Átha Cliath 1, DO1 RC96 **no later than Monday 23 March 2020.**

1.2 Whole-school action-planning to strengthen immersion education (March to May 2020)

Schools joining the Scheme in 2020 will have a period of time from March to May 2020 to develop an action plan for improvement linked to language-based criteria to strengthen immersion education taking account of the school context. The language-based criteria for primary schools to gain recognition as a Gaeltacht school are set out in **Appendix 1**.

The Scheme is based on the continuing development of immersion education through the effective use of the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. The school's action plan will set out how the school will fulfil the language-based criteria to improve immersion education for its first and second-language learners of Irish in a phased incremental manner. This includes planning for purposeful linkages with the school community and local language-planning committees to extend the use of Irish in Gaeltacht communities.

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.

An example of an action-planning template to support schools in fulfilling the language-based criteria for recognition as Gaeltacht primary/special schools, is provided in **Appendix 4** and at the **LINK**. Schools may use this template and adapt it to suit their own particular school context. Each school participating in the *Scheme* must submit its action plan to the Department for review **by 15 June 2020.**

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 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.

Following the review of plans, feedback will be provided by the Gaeltacht Education Unit to each school applying to enter the *Scheme*. Schools will be given an opportunity to make any

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

necessary amendments to action plans in **June 2020**. Following the approval of action plans, schools will be able to access the additional resources provided by the Department to support the implementation of immersion education from **September 2020**.

PART B

2. Initial supports available to primary schools in the Gaeltacht new to the *Scheme* during the action-planning phase (March to June 2020)

During the action-planning development phase, the following additional supports will be provided for primary schools entering the *Scheme* (March to June 2020):

- **In the case of primary schools with teaching principals**, two additional release/administrative days with substitution cover will be provided for teaching principals to support the development of an action plan to strengthen immersion education.
- **In the case of primary schools with administrative principals**, one additional release/administrative day with substitution cover will be provided for one member of the teaching staff to support the administrative principal in their action-planning processes. These release days must be used in the period from March to June 2020 for the purpose of progressing the action-planning process.
- Advisory visits from the Inspectorate will provide support and feedback to schools on the action-planning for school improvement process.
- Additional CPD will also be provided by An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG).

3. Additional resources and supports available to primary schools in the Gaeltacht new to the *Scheme* during the first phase of implementation (September 2020 - August 2021)

- Following the approval of schools' action-plans, schools new to the *Scheme* will be eligible to access additional resources and supports in 2020/21 to assist them in the implementation of their action plans.

3.1 Additional supports for primary schools during the first phase of implementation (September 2020 to August 2021):

- **Irish-language support hours:** From September 2020, additional Irish-language support hours will be allocated to primary schools participating in the *Scheme* whose action plans have been approved.

Table 2 sets out how the additional Irish-language support hours will be allocated to primary schools participating in the *Scheme*.

TABLE 2: Primary schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme	
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 3** 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 a temporary teaching post for the 2020/21 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 schools participating in the Scheme for the purchase of resources in Irish 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 website at www.cogg.ie

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 13/2014). 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):** Schools participating in the *Scheme* will be provided with additional CPD co-ordinated by COGG in conjunction with other relevant support services and the Inspectorate. Where necessary, and as resources permit, substitution cover for attendance at seminars/workshops will be provided through the Online Claims System (OLCS) up to a maximum of 2 days for 2 attendees in participating primary schools in 2020/21. These days may be claimed from the 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 2020/2021 for each 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 support schools participating in the *Scheme* in the implementation and ongoing review and monitoring of targets set and actions taken to fulfil the Irish-language based criteria to strengthen 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 due course.

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

February 2020

Principals of primary 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

Expression of Interest Form

To be completed by the management of primary schools expressing an interest in participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in 2020

Please return your completed Expression of Interest Form 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 no later than Monday, 23 March 2020.

School name: _____ Roll number: _____

School address: _____

Phone number: _____ E-mail: _____

I wish to confirm that the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and the content of Circular 0012/2020 was discussed at meetings with the teaching staff, the parents' association, and the board of management.

	Signature	Date
Principal of school		
Chairperson of the board of management		

I wish to confirm that the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and the content of Circular 0012/2020 was discussed with the Chairperson of the Gaeltacht language-planning committee.

	Signature	Date
Chairperson of the Gaeltacht language-planning committee		

3) In expressing interest in joining the *Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme* in 2020, please provide a short account on the following (max 200 words):

- The school's decision with regard to participation in the *Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme* in 2020
- The steps which were taken, including consultation with the school community, to come to the decision to participate in the *Scheme* in 2020
- Any initiatives which the school is currently involved in to promote the Irish language in the community
- The contact the school has made with the committee responsible for the language plan in its Gaeltacht language-planning area to ensure that the committee is aware of the school's interest in participating in the *Scheme* to achieve Gaeltacht school status.

It is possible that the information provided by you in this form may become the subject of a request under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2014, and this may lead to some or all of it being released to a requester. We are therefore requesting you, as part of your reply, to identify any information in your reply which you deem to be sensitive and exempt from release under the FOI Act. This will assist the Department of Education and Skills in the decision-making process if a FOI request is received. Please note that information contained in this form may also be provided to COGG to facilitate their role in the implementation of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022.

I wish to REGISTER OUR SCHOOL'S EXPRESSION OF INTEREST in participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

	Signature	Date
Principal of school		
Chairperson of the Board of Management		

Appendix 3
Primary 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 <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	Total No. of Irish language support hours allocated to 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			
2nd school			
3rd 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**.

Appendix 4

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 bhfeicfean an dul chun cinn atá déanta taobh istigh den tréimhse ama sin.

Critéar Teanga						
Spriocanna Feabhsúcháin	Gníomhartha Riachtanacha	Fráma Ama	Ba(i)ll Foirne atá freagrach	Monatóireacht agus Athbhreithniú		
1				Dáta	Gnéithe atá bainte amach	Forbairt le déanamh
2				Dáta	Gnéithe atá bainte amach	Forbairt le déanamh
3				Dáta	Gnéithe atá bainte amach	Forbairt le déanamh