



Circular 0011/2022

**TO: BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT, PRINCIPALS AND TEACHING STAFF OF
POST- PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN GAELTACHT LANGUAGE-PLANNING AREAS,
AND TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARDS**

POLICY ON GAELTACHT EDUCATION 2017-2022

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

Ongoing Implementation of the Scheme (2022-2024)

1. Purpose of Circular

The purpose of this Circular is to inform school authorities of the next steps to be taken by the Department of Education (Department) and by post-primary schools in relation to the continuing implementation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme (Scheme) in 2022/2023 and 2023/2024. This Circular follows on from Circular 0013/2021 and previous circulars on the Scheme covering the period from 2017 to 2020/21.

Summary of key messages

- The process to validate the recognition of schools as Gaeltacht Schools under the terms of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme will be undertaken during the period from October 2022 to 2024. This process will be overseen by the Gaeltacht Education Unit, in conjunction with the Department's Inspectorate and with the support of COGG. Further details on the operation of the process will be provided to schools in the Scheme after Easter 2022.
- Schools should continue to monitor and progress the implementation of immersion education to meet the language-based criteria (Appendix 1) by reviewing existing targets as well as identifying new targets and actions in order to obtain recognition as a Gaeltacht school. Schools are also reminded to use the [Guide for Gaeltacht Post-Primary Schools: Indicators of Good Practice for Immersion Education](#) to support the efforts of boards of management and school communities.
- Additional targeted resources, including language-support hours for Irish, a grant for Irish-medium resources, continuing professional development (CPD) and Inspectorate advisory visits/sessions, will continue to be provided to support schools' ongoing participation in the Scheme. The advisory sessions will focus, in particular, on gathering evidence on the progress made by schools in the implementation of the language-based criteria to strengthen immersion education. Examples of good practice in immersion education will be collected and shared in collaboration with individual schools.



Appendices attached to this Circular:

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

Appendix 2: Guide on how to make the most effective use of the additional support hours for Irish

2. Programme of supports for post-primary schools in the Scheme (2022- 2024)

As provided for in previous circulars on the Scheme including 0013/2021, post-primary schools participating in the Scheme working to fulfil the language-based criteria (Appendix 1) are eligible to access additional resources and supports to strengthen immersion education. These additional supports will continue to be made available to post-primary schools in the Scheme in the 2022/23 and 2023/24 school years, as outlined below:

- **Language-support hours for Irish**

Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme – post-primary schools	
Post-primary school enrolment	Number of additional language-support hours for Irish per week per school for the school years 2022/23 and 2023/24
< 150	7
150-300	9
>300	10

- The language-support hours for Irish should be used solely to support the identified needs of native speakers and learners of Irish in order to develop and enrich their proficiency in Irish, and in particular, in oral Irish. **Appendix 2** provides additional guidance on how best to use these language-support hours for Irish. The use of these hours will continue to be monitored during Inspectorate advisory sessions/visits.
- The language-support hours for Irish will be allocated to post-primary schools participating in the Scheme on the Staffing Schedule. Schools will be expected to manage the allocation of these language-support hours for Irish effectively to ensure the maximum benefit for students' learning through the medium of Irish. Schools should also ensure that the teachers selected for these posts are registered with the Teaching Council and have a high level of proficiency in Irish and a good understanding of immersion education.
- As set out in Circular 0013/2021, where a post-primary school is in a supernumerary position and a teacher is awarded a contract of indefinite duration (CID) as a result of the school's allocation for the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, the CID hours will be offset against the Gaeltacht Scheme allocation.
- **Grant allocation:** An annual grant of €1,200 will be paid in 2022 and 2023 to each post-primary school participating in the Scheme for the purchase of additional Irish-medium teaching resources to support the provision of high-quality immersion education. A list of resources available in Irish and for teaching through Irish can be accessed on the [COGG website](#).



For audit purposes, in accordance with public procurement and financial procedures (see provisions of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: Circular 0013/2014), schools are required to retain all receipts and records of expenditure incurred. School authorities must also ensure that the requirements of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Education are met in the public procurement, usage and disposal of assets.

- **Inspectorate Support:** Inspectors will carry out advisory visits/sessions to provide support for schools in implementing the language-based criteria to achieve Gaeltacht school recognition. They will also provide information on progress being made by schools to the Department of Education. In collaboration with schools, inspectors will assist in the identification of examples of innovative practice in the provision of high-quality immersion education. Due to the exceptional circumstances arising from the global pandemic, online advisory sessions will be provided for schools, where it is not possible to carry out face-to-face visits.
- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) support:** Post-primary schools participating in the Scheme will be provided with CPD support by COGG and other nationally-provided CPD is accessed as normal by these schools. A combination of distance-learning webinars and face-to-face sessions (when possible in accordance with public health guidelines) will continue to be provided to support the evolving CPD needs of schools in implementing immersion education. COGG will continue to facilitate opportunities for the development of principal and teacher online networks to enable the identification and sharing of good practice. Every effort will be made to ensure the safety and protection of participants and to minimise disruption to student-teacher contact time.

Where necessary, and as resources permit, substitute cover for attendance at the COGG seminars/workshops will be provided in 2022/23 and 2023/24 through the Online Claims System (OLCS) or under the management of the relevant Education and Training Board (ETB), up to a maximum of two days for two teachers in participating post-primary schools. These days may be claimed from the OLCS by selecting the following options: *Continuing Professional Development/Professional Activities - Gaeltacht Education Policy/Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta*.

Details in relation to CPD plans for schools participating in the Scheme will be provided by COGG.

In addition, all schools in the Scheme can apply to the [Professional Development Service for Teachers](#) (PDST) and [Junior Cycle for Teachers](#) (JCT) for customised school support in all areas of teaching, learning and school self-evaluation.

- **COGG Web Portal:** Language resources for the Gaeltacht and Irish-medium sectors will continue to be developed. The COGG web portal, [An Tairseach](#), which will be launched during 2022, will be linked to Scoilnet and relevant websites and will support whole-school planning, teaching, learning and assessment. All Gaeltacht schools will be informed of the range of Irish-language teaching and learning resources available on the portal. Support will be provided to schools on how to access and use the online resources, and on how their own resources can be developed and shared on the portal.
- **The e-Hub pilot project:** The e-Hub project will continue to be implemented in the 2022/23 and 2023/24 school years to extend the range of senior cycle subject options available through the medium of Irish for students in post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht. The [Independent Evaluation of the Gaeltacht e-Hub Pilot Project](#) for Leaving Certificate Physics, completed by the Education and Training Inspectorate, found that the eHub was fit for purpose and had the potential to be scaled up and extend its reach to small groups of senior cycle students in other schools. A second Leaving Certificate subject – Chemistry – will be



provided through the e-Hub project from September 2022. Additional resources will continue to be provided for digital technology resources, and teaching and supervision arrangements to support the implementation of the e-Hub project in the 2022/23 and 2023/24 school years.

- **Forás:** An evaluation of the Forás Irish-language development programme, currently being piloted in two post-primary schools, is being carried out to assess its impact and inform its future development. This pilot programme involves the allocation of one additional whole-time equivalent teacher to each of the two schools. The objective of the Forás programme is to support, over a transitional period, junior cycle students who have an evident need to develop their Irish-language skills so that they can access the curriculum through the medium of Irish.
- **Links with the language-planning process:** A [Guide for Gaeltacht Schools: Partnership with the community in promoting the use of Irish](#) has been developed by the Department of Education in collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Údarás na Gaeltachta, COGG, Gaeloideachas and other relevant agencies. This guide, published in June 2021, provides practical advice on how best to strengthen links, engagement and participation between the school management, wider school community and the local language-planning committee.
- **Special Education in Immersion Settings:** A Guide for Gaeltacht schools on special education in Irish-medium immersion education settings will be developed in collaboration with COGG in 2022 to support the implementation of the Department's Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools (Appendix 4).
- **Dissemination of examples of good practice:** Plans will progress in 2022-2024 to identify and share examples of innovative practice in immersion education in schools participating in the Scheme. Further details 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 to improve quality of provision in schools. The action-planning for improvement process should involve gathering evidence, making judgements, setting specific targets, implementing actions, monitoring and reviewing progress against targets and setting new targets to strengthen the quality of immersion education in schools.

Schools participating in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme and in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme are required to continue to identify and review targets and actions for improvement, and to record these in a **single clearly-labelled action-planning document**. The DEIS themes¹ and language-based criteria for immersion education, and/or any other SSE priority area(s), should be incorporated under relevant headings in the action plan to facilitate the monitoring of progress and development.

Schools should share a short summary of the school's self-evaluation report and school-improvement plan with their school community annually.

¹ **DEIS Plan 2017 - Themes:** attendance, retention, progression, literacy and numeracy, leadership, wellbeing, continuing professional development (CPD), transitions, partnership with parents, partnership with other schools, educational providers and external agencies, academic outcomes, and improvements in examination attainment.



4. Research and Evaluation Study on the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

The Educational Research Centre (ERC) will continue with the Research and Evaluation Study of the Scheme, in conjunction with the Gaeltacht Education Unit and the Inspectorate of the Department of Education, in 2022-2024. The purpose of the research study is to assess the impact of the Scheme on the provision of education through the medium of Irish and to establish how schools are managing to fulfil the language-based criteria to achieve recognition as a Gaeltacht school. Participation in the Scheme also encourages the fostering of purposeful links between the school community and local language-planning committees to extend the use of Irish in Gaeltacht communities.

An initial [Report on Case-Study Schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme](#) was published in September 2021. These case-studies, which were carried out in twelve primary schools and seven post-primary schools, provide a comprehensive insight into the schools' own innovations and good practices, and on their learnings to date. The ongoing collaboration and participation of schools in this research is acknowledged.

The ERC is undertaking research on student attainment and on the views of parents, students, teachers and principals of schools participating in the Scheme. A report on these research findings will be published by in 2022/23.

5. Validation process for Gaeltacht School recognition

A validation process for granting recognition as a Gaeltacht school will be carried out in the period from October 2022 to 2024. The process will be overseen by the Gaeltacht Education Unit in conjunction with the Department's Inspectorate and with the support of COGG. The validation process implemented will take account of feedback received from relevant organisations, including the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM), Údarás na Gaeltachta, An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) and other members of the Gaeltacht Education Policy Advisory Committee. Further details on the operation of this process will be provided in a Guide for Post-Primary Schools, which will issue to schools after Easter 2022.

6. Further Information/FAQs

The continuing participation of 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. If there is 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.

Additional information on the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and on the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 are available on the gov.ie website.



Queries in relation to the operation of the Scheme or the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 should be emailed to aog@education.gov.ie

Muireann Tóibín
Gaeltacht Education Unit / An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta
Department of Education / An Roinn Oideachais

26 April 2022

Principals of post-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/education and training board, 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 www.gov.ie.



Appendix 1

Language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht post-primary school: Self-monitoring the school's progress in fulfilling the language-based criteria to strengthen immersion education

	The language-based criteria for a post-primary school	1	2	3	4
		to be implemented	progress made	being implemented	implemented
1	Extend the availability of a curriculum containing a total-immersion approach , where all areas of learning, apart from English and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), will be taught through Irish				
2	Deliver high-quality educational experiences through Irish to all pupils focusing particular attention on the differentiated language needs of native Irish speakers ² as well as learners of Irish				
3	Develop a whole-school action plan for improvement that will: a) set out how the school will ensure the use of Irish as the language of communication, instruction and socialisation within the school and b) communicate and promote the benefits of learning Irish and learning through Irish to the school community (principal, staff, pupils, parents and board of management)				
		a)			
		b)			
4	Review the quality of educational provision through Irish to ensure continuous improvement through the school self-evaluation (SSE) process				
5	Implement L1³ specification for Irish at Junior Cycle				
6	Use Irish-language resources to support the teaching of all curricular areas through Irish, apart from English and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL).				
7	Deliver curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities (where provided) through Irish				
8	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				
9	Prioritise the use of Irish in communicating with parents, the local community and other parties				
10	Establish useful and mutually-beneficial language and cultural links with local primary and/or post-primary schools that operate through Irish by using digital technology, online and/or blended-learning opportunities .				
11	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.				

² 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, and that this is declared when he/she is enrolled in the school (*Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022*, p 11)

³ 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

Guide on how to make the most effective use of the additional support hours for Irish

At school management level

- The school's board of management and senior management team should monitor continuously how successfully the additional support hours for Irish are implemented to improve students' learning. The effectiveness of provision should be reviewed regularly through the school self-evaluation process.
- Collaboration at whole-school and class levels is required so that the role and responsibilities of subject teachers, the Irish teachers, special education teacher(s), the support teacher for Irish and the language assistant are agreed in order to provide differentiated language support for students.

Planning for teaching and assessment in collaboration with subject teachers

- Both formative and summative assessments of the students' language competence in Irish should be carried out to monitor their progress, and this should be done in collaboration with other relevant teachers and with the language assistant.
- As part of the school-improvement planning process, schools should make use of recent assessment results to identify the language-learning needs of students. This will assist all teachers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the language needs of students, and to plan interventions accordingly to address the priority language competences of students.
- Clear records of the progress of all learners in Irish should be maintained to inform the teaching and learning process, and the relevant information should be shared with parents, as appropriate.
- It is particularly important that students' self-awareness as language learners be developed through the assessment process and it would be beneficial to develop students' self-assessment and peer-assessment skills.
- In order to develop their independence as learners, it is recommended that students be enabled to develop a language learning log, through which they would self-monitor, in a critical manner, their learning journey. This diary could be designed in a manner that would indicate the students' desired learning goals, their goals attained, and the learning experiences that proved challenging on their language-learning journey.

At class level

- Students need to be taught the academic language and terminology associated with the various curricular areas. Regular opportunities should be provided to enable pupils to practise and acquire the new terminology in creative and innovative ways.
- The native speaker of Irish provides a rich source for the language development of all students. Their language competence should also be developed and further enriched through group activities and team teaching.
- The use of differentiated teaching strategies, questioning, games and communication tasks is recommended. Enriched language input from the teacher and participation in interactive tasks, such as project work, role-play, drama, discussion, and cooperative learning, help students to identify and manipulate target structures in the language. This greatly enhances their self-confidence in speaking Irish.
- Students' participation can be encouraged and their language skills developed through the use of digital technology and digital links, whether students are in school or at home.
- Literature should be used to develop students' writing and reading skills as well as to develop their language enrichment, accuracy, awareness and creativity in an integrated manner, as laid down in the Specification for Junior Cycle Irish and in the Irish syllabus for the Leaving Certificate.
- It is especially important that students be provided with a wide range of reading and literary material in Irish covering, a wide range of genres, including local and oral literature, which is suited to their interests, age and ability in the language.



- Students should be made aware of celebrated speakers of Irish in the local community and further afield, who are a source of Irish-language enrichment and wisdom. The school should avail of opportunities to invite such guest speakers to stimulate students' pride in Irish language and culture.

Outside the class

- It is through participation in language and cultural events that students' motivation, language competency and identity as Irish speakers in their own community and beyond are strengthened. Such activities include literary competitions or festivals, entrepreneurship, reporting, debating, arts and sports as well as participation in Irish-language movements and in networks with students in other L1 all-Irish schools.