



Circular 0033/2017

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

## POLICY ON GAELTACHT EDUCATION 2017-2022

### GAELTACHT SCHOOL RECOGNITION SCHEME FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN GAELTACHT LANGUAGE-PLANNING AREAS

#### INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

**(APRIL 2017 TO JUNE 2018)**

#### 1. Purpose of this circular - Participation in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

The purpose of this Circular is to inform managerial authorities, principals and teachers of the initial steps being taken by the Department in the implementation of the *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022*<sup>1</sup> for the school year 2017/18. The circular provides guidance to primary schools and special schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas regarding the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme (hereinafter referred to as the *Scheme*) and the supports which will be available during the period in which schools will be action planning to participate in the *Scheme*. A specific circular about this *Scheme* will also issue to post-primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas for the school year 2017/18. Another circular will issue for the 2018/19 school year before the start of that school year. Further circulars will inform schools of the relevant steps in the *Policy* implementation process.

#### This Circular:

- provides an overview of the initial implementation phase (April 2017 to June 2018) of the five-year *Policy (2017-2022)* for primary schools and special schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An electronic version of the *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022* is available at [www.education.gov.ie](http://www.education.gov.ie)

<sup>2</sup> The Gaeltacht Act (2012) provides the statutory framework for the language-planning process. There are 26 Gaeltacht Language-Planning Areas (GLPAs) recognised under the Act. Údarás na Gaeltachta is responsible for supporting community organisations regarding the preparation and implementation of language plans in the GLPAs. Údarás na Gaeltachta has selected Lead Organisations to undertake the preparation of language plans in their own language-planning areas to preserve and strengthen the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht.

- sets out the procedures for expressions of interest by schools to participate in the *Scheme*
- invites primary schools and special schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas to complete **an expression of interest form** to participate in the *Scheme*
- outlines the supports which will be available to schools participating in the *Scheme* to strengthen the action-planning process
- sets out a summary of the actions to be undertaken by primary schools and special schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas participating in the *Scheme*, April 2017 to June 2018
- outlines the action-planning requirements for schools participating in the *Scheme* to fulfil language-based criteria
- outlines how supports available to schools that choose to participate in the *Scheme* will be co-ordinated.

Attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 are:

- An expression of interest form to be completed for the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme (to be returned to the Gaeltacht Education Unit no later than 15 June 2017)
- An example of a template for the action plan for improvement linked to the language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school or Gaeltacht special school (this is not required at the initial expression of interest stage).

## **2. Background – Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022**

The Department of Education and Skills' (hereinafter referred to as the Department) *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022* (hereinafter referred to as the *Policy*) sets out a comprehensive strategy for education in the Gaeltacht. The *Policy*, which was published in October 2016, is consistent with the Government's *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010 - 2030* and is one of the Department's commitments included in the *Action Plan for Education 2016–2019*.

The overarching goal of the *Policy* is to ensure the availability of a high quality and relevant Irish-medium education in Gaeltacht schools and, in this way, to support and encourage the use of Irish in Gaeltacht communities. The *Policy* supports immersion education and the use of Irish as the language of communication and instruction to assist with the language acquisition of learners of Irish and the language enrichment of native speakers. In recognition of the challenges faced by Gaeltacht schools, the Department of Education and Skills is committed to ensuring that a dedicated and proportionate range of supports is provided to develop the capacity of recognised Gaeltacht schools to meet the objective of providing high quality Irish-medium education.

A Gaeltacht school is currently defined on the basis of geographical location in a recognised Gaeltacht area. The Gaeltacht Act, 2012 provides for a redefinition of Gaeltacht areas based on language criteria instead of geography. Schools located in Gaeltacht language-planning areas are now eligible to seek recognition as Gaeltacht Schools on the basis of implementing specific language criteria, set out in section 3.2 of this Circular, and on condition that they are participating in the language-planning processes under the Gaeltacht Act, 2012.

The broad-ranging actions and supports designed to facilitate implementation of the five-year *Policy* are set out under the following seven headings:

- 1) Strengthening the structure of educational provision
- 2) Improving the quality of teaching through Irish

- 3) Building the capacity of school leaders and school management
- 4) Improving the curriculum for Irish
- 5) Improving language resources and supports
- 6) Strengthening early-years' educational provision
- 7) Building awareness of the benefits of Irish-medium education, communicating with, and supporting parents.

**The implementation of the *Policy* in schools will begin on a phased basis during the 2017/18 school year. Certain actions will be prioritised in 2017/18. These *Policy* implementation actions will be extended and further actions added over the five-year term of the *Policy*, as resources permit.**

The Department's Inspectorate and the Educational Research Centre (ERC) will collaborate on the evaluation of the impact of the *Policy* throughout its term.

## **2.1 Consultation and community involvement**

The *Policy's* actions to strengthen education through Irish in the Gaeltacht are grounded on the principles of partnership and collaboration with local school communities. In order to ensure the successful implementation of the *Policy*, each school participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme will be required to support its school community by participating in the local language-planning process and by contributing to the use and maintenance of Irish in the school and local Gaeltacht community. In order to participate in the *Scheme*, a school must create a link with the group or committee responsible for the language plan in the Gaeltacht language-planning area.

Primary schools recognised as Gaeltacht schools are expected to foster links with *naíonraí* to strengthen transitions between early-years settings and primary schools in the Gaeltacht. This should help to ensure progression in the Irish-language development of both native speakers and learners of Irish as they move from Irish-medium early-years' settings to primary school.

Key stakeholders, including the Department of Education and Skills, An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA), the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), teacher education providers, school management authorities, school communities (principal, teachers, ancillary staff, pupils and parents) all have particular responsibilities to progress the *Policy* actions.

The Gaeltacht Education Policy Advisory Committee (hereinafter referred to as the Advisory Committee), comprising representatives from the Department and its Agencies, and external stakeholders, has been established to provide advice and feedback on the implementation of actions within the *Policy*. The Advisory Committee will identify challenges and opportunities, as they arise, to support the effective implementation of the *Policy*. A full list of the membership of the Advisory Committee is attached at Appendix 3.

### 3. Participation in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

#### 3.1 Expression of interest in the Scheme

Under the terms of the *Policy*, schools located in Gaeltacht language-planning areas are now invited to complete an Expression of Interest Form to participate in the *Scheme*. Schools expressing an interest in participating in the *Scheme* must, through their self-evaluation processes, develop an action plan for improvement. This action plan should clearly illustrate how the school will progress towards compliance with the language-based criteria, as set out in section 3.2 below. The board of management and the school community should be involved in the decision to complete the Expression of Interest Form for participation in the *Scheme*. The board of management should also liaise with the local language-planning committee before making its decision.

Under the Gaeltacht Act, 2012, there is an important requirement regarding a school's participation in the language-planning process in order to foster links with the lead organisation which is responsible for the preparation and implementation of the language plan in the language-planning area in which the school is located. This means that the school would assist with the promotion and use of Irish in the school and in the local Gaeltacht community.

The Department strongly advises schools to participate in the *Scheme* from the start, in view of the educational advantages regarding language learning, and also as a means of responding positively to the current challenges facing the status of Irish as a community language in the Gaeltacht. While early participation in the *Scheme* will expedite the realisation of the *Policy's* objectives, schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas will be given the option to participate in the *Scheme* at a later stage during the five-year term of the *Policy*.

An awareness-raising campaign to generate interest in the *Scheme* will be organised in collaboration with the other relevant Government Departments and agencies to support schools and their communities in this important decision-making process.

When a school has made the decision, in consultation with its school community, an **Expression of Interest Form** at Appendix 1 must then be completed and sent electronically to aog@education.gov.ie or by normal post to: An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta, An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Bloc 3, Sráid Maoilbhríde, Baile Átha Cliath 1, DO1 RC96 **not later than 15 June 2017**.

#### 3.2 Language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school

An action plan for improvement will set out the way in which the primary school intends to fulfil the language-based criteria below, in a phased manner, **within the five-year term of the *Policy***.

While working towards attaining recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school, and with the additional supports which will be provided, **primary schools participating in the *Scheme* will be expected to:**

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

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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)

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> The COGG website [www.cogg.ie](http://www.cogg.ie) provides a variety of resources to support teaching through Irish in primary and post-primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas.

#### 4. Programme of supports for primary schools and special schools to participate in the *Scheme* (September 2017 to June 2018)

- **Seminars for school communities:** In Autumn 2017, COGG, in collaboration with the Department and other interested parties, will coordinate seminars intended to raise the awareness of boards of management, parents and representatives from language-planning committees. These seminars will be organised on a cluster basis in Gaeltacht language-planning areas. The objective of the seminars is to raise awareness to support and enhance Irish-medium education in schools participating in the *Scheme*.
- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** Primary schools and special schools participating in the *Scheme* will be provided with additional CPD, which will be co-ordinated by COGG in conjunction with relevant support services and the Inspectorate. This CPD will comprise two seminars for principals and teaching staff in Autumn 2017 to assist schools to ensure that there is a whole-school focus in their action-planning processes to enhance the quality of education through Irish. This CPD will involve one full-day school closure for CPD in primary schools expressing interest in participation in the *Scheme* in Autumn 2017. Follow-up workshops will be provided in school clusters from January to June 2018 in response to identified local needs to strengthen Irish-medium educational provision. If necessary, and as resources permit, substitution for attendance at these seminars/workshops will be provided.

**A schedule of the information seminars and CPD for primary schools and special schools participating in the *Scheme* will be provided by COGG in collaboration with other support services, as necessary, in advance of each school term.**

- **Two additional release/administrative days to support action planning in the school year from September to December 2017:** In order to support primary schools participating in the *Scheme*, two additional release days, with substitution cover, will be provided for teaching principals participating in the *Scheme* from **September to December 2017**. The two additional release days must be used by primary schools in the period September to December 2017 for the purpose of progressing the action-planning process linked to the language-based criteria for Gaeltacht school recognition, as set out in section 3.2.

In the case of primary schools with administrative principals that are participating in the *Scheme*, two additional release days will be provided **from September to December 2017** with substitution cover for one member of the teaching staff to support administrative principals in their action-planning processes.

- **Inspectorate Support:** A dedicated team of inspectors will provide advice, support and feedback to schools on their target-setting and whole-school action planning for improvement using language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht school.
- **Grant allocation:** On approval of a school's whole-school action plan for improvement, and in preparing for the implementation of the action plan, a grant will be allocated to each primary school and special school participating in the *Scheme*, in April to June 2018, to pay for additional Irish-medium resources. Primary and special schools will be required to retain all records of expenditure incurred for audit purposes in accordance with public procurement procedures.

It should be noted, that only those primary schools and special schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas that register an interest in participating in the *Scheme* shall be entitled to the **additional release days** from September to December 2017 in order to advance the action-planning process linked to language-based criteria. Those schools are required to attend the CPD on action-planning for improvement of the quality of education through Irish. The allocation of grants to participating schools for additional supports through Irish, and other future supports under this *Scheme*, shall be dependent on the approval of participating schools' action plans by the Department's Inspectorate.

## 5. Summary of actions for primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas from April 2017 to June 2018

Each school participating in the *Scheme* will be obliged to draft an action plan focussing on improvements in their Irish-medium educational provision that is linked to language-based criteria and the specific school context, as referenced in section 3.2 of this circular. Following the approval of schools' action plans by the Department of Education and Skills in **Spring 2018**, schools will be granted additional supports, as the *Scheme* commences, and as each stage of the *Scheme* is successfully completed.

| Summary of Activities   | Timeframe / Deadline             |
|---|----------------------------------|
| <b>Expression of interest form to be completed:</b> In order to participate in the <i>Scheme</i> , complete the expression of interest form at Appendix 1 and return it electronically to aog@education.gov.ie or by normal post to: An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta, An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Bloc 3, Sráid Maoilbhride, Baile Átha Cliath 1, DO1 RC96  | April to<br>15 June 2017         |
| <b>Continuing Professional Development:</b> In Autumn 2017, continuing professional development will commence regarding the implementation of the <i>Policy</i> and action-planning for improvement of Irish-medium education, which principals and teachers who expressed an interest in participating in the <i>Scheme</i> must attend. A schedule of the information seminars and CPD will be provided by COGG in collaboration with other support services, as necessary, in advance of each school term. | From Autumn 2017<br>onwards      |
| <b>Action Plan:</b> Each school participating in the <i>Scheme</i> must develop an action plan, which focuses on the improvement of Irish-medium education, and which includes, as appropriate, the language-based criteria and the specific language context in which the school is operating. This action plan will be shared with the inspector supporting the school, and feedback will be provided on the merit of the plan, as part of the advisory and support process.                                | September 2017 –<br>January 2018 |
| <b>Submit action plan to the Department:</b> The board of management of each school expressing an interest in participating in the <i>Scheme</i> , will submit its action plan for improvement to the Department for approval for participation in the next stage of the <i>Scheme</i> .  | 31 January 2018                  |

| Summary of Activities   | Timeframe / Deadline   |
|---|------------------------|
| <b>Review of action plan:</b> Each action plan for improvement will be reviewed by the Department and discussions will be held with the school and/or additional inspection visits will be made to individual schools or school clusters, where further clarification is required.                                | February to March 2018 |
| <b>Outcome of action-plan review:</b> The board of management of each school will be informed of the outcome of the review of its action plan to inform the board if it may participate in the next stage of the <i>Scheme</i> .  | April 2018             |
| <b>Allocation of grants:</b> Depending on the outcome of the review, and following approval of the action plan, each school in the <i>Scheme</i> will be allocated a grant which will assist with the cost arising from the purchase of additional resources to support the provision of education through Irish. | April to June 2018     |
| <b>Schools participating in the <i>Scheme</i>:</b> A list of the schools participating in the <i>Scheme</i> will be published on the Department's website   | Summer 2018            |
| <b>Implementation of action plan:</b> Each school in the <i>Scheme</i> will commence implementation of its action plan for improvement which must fulfil the language-based criteria and relates to the specific context in which the school is operating as regards the use of Irish.                            | From September 2018    |

## 6. School self-evaluation and whole-school action planning to strengthen Irish-medium education

The Department adopted school self-evaluation (SSE) as the strategy for school improvement in 2012. This builds on the school-development planning process, which schools are required to engage in under the Education Act, 1998. Through SSE, schools reflect on and review their day-to-day management practices and their policies, with a particular focus on teaching and learning. SSE provides all schools with an internal process for developing, progressing, reviewing and updating action-plans for improvement on an annual basis. SSE provides each school in Gaeltacht language-planning areas with a framework for developing its own action-plan to strengthen Irish-medium educational provision.

Schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas participating in the *Scheme* should, within their own particular contexts, use the SSE process when planning for improvement to strengthen Irish-medium education, and partnership with parents and others. The SSE and school-development planning processes that schools use are vital to each school's preparation of its application to participate in the *Scheme*, and subsequently, to their whole-school action plan linked to language-based criteria. The action plan for improvement developed by schools participating in the *Scheme* will satisfy the requirements of SSE (as required under Circular 39/2016).

Primary schools in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)<sup>7</sup> programme are required to develop and implement improvement plans on a number of themes [literacy, numeracy, attendance, retention, progression, links with parents (home-school links) and with agencies in the

<sup>7</sup> DEIS Plan (2017) available at: <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools/>



community] as a condition of their participation in DEIS. These schools should combine their action-planning for improvement in respect of the DEIS themes and action-planning linked to language-based criteria in respect of recognition as a Gaeltacht school. **Hence, only one joint document is required containing an SSE report and an improvement plan, which covers the DEIS themes and the school's actions to strengthen education through Irish.**

Following schools' completion of the expression of interest form, primary schools and special schools participating in the *Scheme* will have a period of time from September 2017 to January 2018 to develop an action plan for improvement linked to language-based criteria and the school context. Principals from schools expressing an interest in the *Scheme* will be invited to attend CPD sessions from Autumn 2017 to assist them in developing a whole-school action plan for improvement, in order to meet the overarching goal of the *Policy* to improve the quality of Irish-medium education in Gaeltacht schools.

Another step towards participation in the *Scheme* is the approval of the whole-school action plan for improvement in Spring 2018. Subject to a positive outcome of the review of the plan, a grant for the purchase of additional resources that are specifically related to Irish-medium provision will be awarded to those schools following approval of their action plan.

An example of a template for an action plan linked to language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school or special school is attached as Appendix 2. Schools may use these templates and adapt them to the school's context. Other samples are available on the SSE website at: <http://schoolself-evaluation.ie/primary/resources/reporting-sse/>. Where relevant, the DEIS planning templates designed by the school development planning initiative may also be of assistance to schools. These are available at <http://www.pdst.ie/node/975>.

## **7. Allocation of additional resources and supports: January 2018 to June 2019**

### ***January 2018 to June 2018***

Once each school's whole-school action plan for improvement have been reviewed and approved by the Department in Spring 2018, a grant will be allocated to enable schools participating in the *Scheme* to purchase Irish-language resources, as outlined in section 4 and section 5 of this circular.

### ***September 2018 to June 2019***

A new circular will issue in Spring 2018 containing details of the additional dedicated resources and supports that will be provided for primary schools and special schools participating in the *Scheme* from September 2018. It is anticipated that such resources will include further CPD opportunities and language supports for schools.

## **8. Lack of engagement with the process following application for Gaeltacht school recognition**

Under the *Policy*, schools in language-planning areas will be assisted, on a phased basis, towards full-immersion through Irish in order to attain recognition as a Gaeltacht school. The continuing participation of schools taking part in the *Scheme* will be contingent on satisfying the conditions of this circular. Schools must demonstrate adequate progress in the achievement of the language-based criteria in their action-planning for improvement processes.

## **8.1 Removal of a school from the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme**

Where the Department, at any time, is satisfied that the conditions of the *Scheme* are not being fulfilled/ complied with, the right is reserved to remove a school from the *Scheme*. The Inspectorate and the Department's Gaeltacht Education Unit will, as required, monitor progress in this regard, as appropriate.

In case of dissatisfaction with the Department's decision regarding any specific aspect of the administration of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, an appeal will be considered by an independent panel.

## **9. Co-ordination of supports for implementation of the *Policy* (2017 – 2018)**

### **9.1 Gaeltacht Education Unit**

The implementation of the *Policy* commenced with the establishment of a dedicated Gaeltacht Education Unit in the Department of Education and Skills to strengthen the structure of Irish-medium educational provision in Gaeltacht language-planning areas and to:

- manage and provide support for the phased implementation of the *Policy*
- administer and manage the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and liaise with Gaeltacht communities and schools
- oversee the allocation of resources and supports to schools in collaboration with relevant sections of the Department and other agencies
- monitor the implementation of the *Scheme* in schools in collaboration with the Department's Inspectorate in order to strengthen Irish-medium educational provision.

### **9.2 An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) – Actions in 2017-2018**

The Gaeltacht Education Unit will be supported by COGG in the implementation of the *Policy*. COGG will co-ordinate the delivery of particular supports and initiatives for Irish-medium Gaeltacht education in collaboration with the Gaeltacht Education Unit and various support services. Additional resources have been allocated to COGG to co-ordinate certain actions relating to the *Policy* to support schools opting to participate in the *Scheme*.

Measures to be implemented by COGG from 2017 to June 2018 include:

- the co-ordination of awareness-raising seminars on the *Scheme* and on the benefits of Irish-medium education for parents and representatives of boards of management and language-planning lead organisations
- the co-ordination of the provision of CPD to the principals and teachers of schools participating in the *Scheme*
- the co-ordination of the development of networks for schools participating in the *Scheme*
- the provision of additional research bursaries to principals and/or teachers participating in the *Scheme* to engage in research on Irish-medium and Gaeltacht education.
- the further development and enhancement of the COGG website as an Irish-medium resource portal for schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas, where high-quality Irish-language resources will be available.

### 9.3 Support from the Inspectorate

A team of inspectors has been assigned to assist in the work of the Gaeltacht Education Unit and to support and advise schools that opt to be recognised as Gaeltacht schools. From September 2017 onwards, these inspectors will:

- engage with clusters of schools that have opted to participate in the *Scheme* and provide support for them
- provide advice, support and feedback to schools on their target-setting and whole-school action planning for improvement using language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht school, as set out in section 3.2
- monitor and report on the impact of the *Policy* and on schools' achievement in relation to the language-based criteria
- provide advice, recommendations and report to the Department regarding the admission of schools and the continued participation of schools in the *Scheme*.

The Inspectorate will also work closely with COGG and the various school support services to ensure an integrated, consistent approach to school improvement in Irish-medium schools.

### 10. Additional Information/Queries

During the implementation phase, the Gaeltacht Education Unit will engage in close consultation with other relevant agencies, with the support of COGG, regarding the development of a communications strategy, the provision of information and guidance to schools, and the delivery of actions in the *Policy*.

Frequently-asked questions (FAQs) on the application process and on the implementation of the *Policy* will be available on the Department's website, and will be updated regularly to reflect the queries and feedback from schools and the Advisory Committee.

Queries in relation to the operation of the *Scheme* or other queries relating to the implementation of the *Policy* should be forwarded electronically to [aog@education.gov.ie](mailto:aog@education.gov.ie) or addressed to: **An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta, An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Bloc 3, Sráid Maoilbhríde, Baile Átha Cliath 1, DO1 RC96**

**Principals of schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas are asked to please bring this Circular to the attention of each member of the board of management, teachers (including those on leave of absence), the school patron, ancillary staff, parents/guardians, and the local school community. This circular may be accessed on the Department's website at: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). An Irish-language version of this circular is also available on the Department's website.**

Dr Treasa Kirk  
Gaeltacht Education Unit  
Department of Education and Skills  
April 2017

**Appendix 1:**  
**Expression of Interest Form for the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme**

**To be completed by the management of primary schools / special schools in  
Gaeltacht language-planning areas**

Please return your completed expression of interest form to the Gaeltacht Education Unit electronically to [aog@education.gov.ie](mailto:aog@education.gov.ie) or send it to the postal address: An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta, An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Bloc 3, Sráid Maoilbhríde, Baile Átha Cliath 1, DO1 RC96 no later than 15 June 2017

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Roll Number: \_\_\_\_\_

School address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**1) I wish to confirm that the content of Circular 0033/2017 and the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme was discussed at meetings with the teaching staff, the parents' association, and the board of management**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**2) I wish to confirm that the content of Circular 0033/2017 and the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme was discussed with the Chairperson of the Gaeltacht language-planning committee:**

Signed: : \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of chairperson of language-planning committee

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**3) As part of the expression of interest in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme, please provide a short account on the following (max 200 words):**

- a) The school's decision regarding participation in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme
- b) The steps which were taken to come to the decision to participate in the *Scheme*
- c) Any initiatives which the school is currently involved in to promote the Irish language in the community
- d) 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.

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 2:

### Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme Whole-school Action Plan for Improvement [Primary Schools & Special Schools in the Gaeltacht]



**School name:**

**Roll number:**

**Period of Plan:**

**Date of ratification by Board of Management:**

## Improvement programme informed by language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school or Gaeltacht special school: Summary statement

### Whole-school Action Plan for Improvement Summary

**Improvement targets:**

Provide a clear summary account of the improvements that the school has planned to achieve as a result of the actions in the Whole-school Action Plan for Improvement. Attention is drawn to the difference between improvement targets and the actions to be implemented in order to achieve those targets. *(number the targets, beginning with 1. 2.3. below; the box will extend as needed. Reference should be made to the language-based criteria as set out in Circular 0033/2017.*

**Overall targets:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Actions related to specific targets:**

State briefly the specific actions that are proposed in order to achieve the above overall targets. *Further rows may be copied and pasted below or on the following page if required. Reference should be made to the language-based criteria as set out in Circular 0033/2017.*

| Specific targets | Actions to address specific targets | *Success criteria | Who? | Lead responsibility | When? | Resources? |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------|---------------------|-------|------------|
|                  |                                     |                   |      |                     |       |            |
|                  |                                     |                   |      |                     |       |            |
|                  |                                     |                   |      |                     |       |            |
|                  |                                     |                   |      |                     |       |            |
|                  |                                     |                   |      |                     |       |            |
|                  |                                     |                   |      |                     |       |            |
|                  |                                     |                   |      |                     |       |            |
|                  |                                     |                   |      |                     |       |            |

\*Success criteria: How you know you have achieved the specific target

## Improvement programme informed by language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school or Gaeltacht special school: Summary statement

| Specific target | Actions to address specific targets | *Success criteria | Who? | Lead responsibility | When? | Resources? |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------|---------------------|-------|------------|
|                 |                                     |                   |      |                     |       |            |

**Monitoring:**  
State briefly how progress will be monitored and at what intervals (monthly/termly/annually . . .) over the period of the plan

**Overall Evaluation:**  
State how the impact and effectiveness of the actions on the improvement targets (which are informed by the language-based criteria) will be evaluated at the end of the period of the plan, using baseline data and targets as a guide.

\*Success criteria: How you know you have achieved the specific target



## **Appendix 3:**

### **Membership of the Gaeltacht Education Policy Advisory Committee:**

- An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)
- An Foras Pátrúnachta
- Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS)
- Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI)
- Association of Teacher Education Centres of Ireland (ATECI)
- Catholic Education - An Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST)
- Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta
- Conference of Heads of Irish Colleges of Education (CHOICE)
- Conradh na Gaeilge
- Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA)
- Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)
- Department of Health
- Early Childhood Ireland
- Educational Research Centre (ERC)
- Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
- Foras na Gaeilge
- Gaeloideachas
- Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO)
- Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN)
- Irish Secondary Students' Union (ISSU)
- Joint Managerial Body (JMB)
- Muintearas
- National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE)
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- National Parents' Council - Post Primary
- National Parents' Council – Primary
- National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG)
- Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne
- Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
- State Examination Commission (SEC)
- Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI)
- Teaching Council
- Tuismitheoirí na Gaeltachta
- Údarás na Gaeltachta