



Circular 0021/2018

POLICY ON GAELTACHT EDUCATION 2017-2022

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

**NEXT IMPLEMENTATION PHASE
(APRIL 2018 TO END OF SEPTEMBER 2018/19 SCHOOL YEAR)**

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

Purpose of Circular

The purpose of this Circular is to bring the attention of school authorities to the next steps to be taken by the Department of Education and Skills (hereinafter referred to as the Department), primary schools and special schools with respect to the implementation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme (hereinafter referred to as the *Scheme*) from April 2018 to the end of the 2018/19 school year. This Circular follows on from Circular 0033/2017 which outlined the Initial Implementation Phase covering the period from April 2017 to June 2018.

PART A of this Circular applies to primary schools that are already participating in the *Scheme* and **PART B** relates to the primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas that have not applied to date to participate in the *Scheme*. The roles and responsibilities that relate to the co-ordination and implementation of the *Policy* and the *Scheme* are set out in **PART C**.

PART A

Primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas that chose to apply to participate in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme

1. Summary of key points to Note

- The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme is moving into the next phase of implementation.
- Additional funding and teaching supports will be available in 2018/19 to the 80% of primary schools that are participating in the *Scheme*.
- To assist primary schools in using the school self-evaluation (SSE) process effectively in the implementation, monitoring and ongoing review of their action-plans as an integral part of this work, the following supports will be available:

- advisory visits provided by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills to discuss with principals and relevant teachers the selected language-based targets and actions (based on the domains and standards of *Looking at Our School, 2016*) as the focus of their self-evaluation process
- regional seminars and support visits provided by COGG to provide additional guidance and professional development support for primary schools on the implementation of their selected targets and actions to implement immersion education through SSE
- the publication and issuing of *Interim Draft Guide for Gaeltacht Primary Schools: Immersion Education: Good Practice Indicators (2018)* to every school, with the support of COGG.
- A list of the primary and post-primary schools participating in the *Scheme* will be published on the Department's website in Summer 2018.

The Appendices attached to this Circular include:

- A. Update on primary schools' response to the *Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme* (April 2017 to April 2018) and on the implementation of other *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022* actions
- B. Expression of Interest Form: Allows for primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas that did not opt to participate in the *Scheme* in the first implementation phase to submit an expression of interest to the Department in 2018
- C. Programme of Supports for primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas not yet in the *Scheme* and wishing to submit an Expression of Interest in 2018
- D. Membership of Gaeltacht Education Policy Advisory Committee.

2. Programme of Supports for primary schools and special schools in the Gaeltacht in the next implementation phase (September 2018 - August 2019)

In line with Circular 0033/2017, primary schools that are participating in the *Scheme* and whose action plans have been accepted shall be eligible to receive a grant in May 2018 and to receive additional supports and resources during the school year 2018/19. Ongoing access to the supports and resources will be dependent on the implementation and continuous monitoring and review of targets set in action plans by schools. Each school in the *Scheme* is required to commence implementation of the targets set out in the action plan for improvement as soon as possible but no later than the commencement of the 2018/2019 school year.

Schools that are **already** participating the *Scheme* and whose action plans are deemed acceptable by the Department are eligible to access the following resources and supports in 2018/2019:

- **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. Where necessary, and as

resources permit, substitution 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 2018. These seminars will be supplemented by additional school visits for the remainder of the 2018/2019 school year, as required and as resources permit. A schedule of the CPD seminars for primary schools and special schools participating in the *Scheme* will be provided by COGG in advance, and in collaboration with other support services.

- **Grant allocation:** In May 2018 a grant of €1,200 will be paid to each primary school and special school in Gaeltacht language-planning areas participating in the *Scheme* whose action plans for improvement are developed and deemed acceptable to inform the first stages of implementation of the *Scheme*. The purpose of the grant is for the purchase of Irish-medium teaching resources to support the provision of high quality immersion education. Primary schools and special schools are required to retain all receipts and records of expenditure incurred for audit purposes in accordance with public procurement procedures.

A full list of available resources through the medium of Irish can be accessed on the COGG website at www.cogg.ie

- **Additional part-time Irish Language Support Hours:** Commencing from September 2018, additional part-time Irish language support hours will be allocated to primary and special schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas participating in the *Scheme* as follows:

School Enrolment	No of additional part-time language support hours per week per school
<54	5
54-83	7.5
84-142	10
143-175	12.5
>175	15

These additional part-time Irish language support hours will be available to schools via the Online Claims System (OLCS) and schools will have full autonomy in the management of the allocation of these part-time hours. The allocation of these additional part-time hours will be reviewed by the Department in 2019.

The part-time language support hours should be used solely to support the identified needs of first- and second-language speakers and learners of Irish to develop and enrich their Irish-language skills. Continuous monitoring of pupils' progress is required to facilitate the implementation and ongoing review of the school's action plan to strengthen immersion education.

Primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas are required to outline in their annual school self-evaluation plan how the additional language support hours are used to support the learning experiences provided for pupils in the curriculum through the medium of Irish.

- **Inspectorate Support:** A dedicated team of inspectors will continue to support primary schools in the Gaeltacht in the implementation of their action plans to strengthen the quality of education through Irish and increase the use of Irish in the school community.

3. School self-evaluation

School self-evaluation (SSE) provides all schools with an internal process for developing, progressing, reviewing and updating action plans for improvement on an annual basis to strengthen Irish-medium educational provision.

Schools are reminded that self-evaluation is a way of working or an approach that involves reflective enquiry leading to action for improvement that is informed by evidence gathered within each school's unique context with a particular focus on teaching and learning. SSE provides each school with a process for the ongoing development, monitoring and review of its own action-plan to strengthen Irish-medium educational provision and the implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum (2015) and DEIS themes, where relevant.

Once the investigation and analysis of evidence stage is complete and the school's self-evaluation and action plan for improvement has been developed, schools need to monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's action plan on students' learning during the implementation phase.

The six-step SSE process and the teaching and learning section of *Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools*, also available in the *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2022: Primary Schools*, should be used when reflecting on and evaluating current practice. Inspectors will carry out advisory and monitoring visits to support schools' self-evaluation and improvement work as part of the supports available to primary schools under the *Scheme*.

PART B

Primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas not yet in the *Scheme* opting to participate in 2018

Primary schools in Gaeltacht language-planning area that are not already participating in the *Scheme* are provided with a further opportunity to submit an Expression of Interest Form to the Department in 2018. **Appendix B** of this Circular includes a copy of this form. These primary schools are eligible to access similar resources and supports that were provided to primary schools in the initial implementation phase, in accordance with the terms and conditions of Circular 0033/2017, which are updated in **Appendix C** of this Circular.

The board of management, the school community and local language-planning committee must be involved in the decision to complete the Expression of Interest Form for participation in the *Scheme*, as outlined in paragraph 3.1 of Circular 0033/2017.

Participation in the *Scheme* involves the primary school's engagement in action-planning for improvement, the submission of the primary school's action plan to the Department by 31 January 2019 and subsequent approval of the action plan by the Department to access additional resources as outlined in Appendix C of this Circular.

The continuing participation of primary schools in the *Scheme* will be contingent on satisfying the conditions of this Circular and any other circulars relating to the *Scheme*. Primary schools must demonstrate adequate progress and ongoing improvement in fulfilling the language-based criteria through the whole-school implementation, monitoring and review of targets set out in their action plans.

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.

PART C

Roles and responsibilities relating to the co-ordination and implementation of the *Policy* and the *Scheme*

1. Gaeltacht Education Unit

The dedicated 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.

2. An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) – Actions for 2018/19

The Gaeltacht Education Unit will continue to be supported by COGG in the implementation of the *Policy*. Additional resources have been allocated to COGG in 2018 including continued provision for the secondment of two education officers to support the implementation of the *Policy*.

Measures to be implemented by COGG in 2018 include:

- co-ordination of the provision of CPD seminars related to the specific needs of principals and teachers of schools in the Gaeltacht participating in the *Scheme* to support the implementation of their action plans for improvement in immersion education
- ongoing provision and dissemination of information to school communities on the benefits of Irish-medium education
- co-ordination of the development of networks for schools participating in the *Scheme*
- provision of 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 a resource portal with high quality Irish-language resources for schools in the Gaeltacht.

3. Support from the Inspectorate

- A dedicated team of inspectors will continue to assist the Gaeltacht Education Unit through the provision of advisory visits to support primary schools and special schools in the Gaeltacht to reflect on the actions they have put in place to respond to the needs of first and second language learners.
- The Inspectorate will monitor and report on the implementation of primary schools' and special schools' action plans and the progress made in Irish-medium educational provision.
- The Inspectorate will also work closely with COGG and the various school support services to ensure an integrated, consistent approach to strengthen educational provision through Irish in Gaeltacht schools.

4. Further Information/FAQs

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* or the *Policy on Gaeltacht Education* should be emailed to aog@education.gov.ie or addressed to: **An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta, An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, Sráid Maoilbhríde, Baile Átha Cliath 1, DO1 RC96.**

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

Treasa Kirk
Principal Officer, Gaeltacht Education Unit
Department of Education and Skills

March 2018

Appendix A

Update on primary schools' response to the *Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme* (April 2017 to April 2018) and on the implementation of other *Policy on Gaeltacht Education* actions

- The majority of primary schools in Gaeltacht Language-Planning Areas opted to participate in the *Scheme* in 2017/18 school year. With the publication of this Circular, the Department is now providing a further opportunity for primary schools in the Gaeltacht not yet in the *Scheme* to participate in the 2018/19 school year.
- A total of 106 advisory visits were carried out by a dedicated team of inspectors between September and November 2017 to support primary schools in the *Scheme* in their action-planning for improvement linked to language-based criteria to strengthen their educational provision in immersion education.
- All primary schools (with the exception of one) that expressed an interest in the *Scheme* in 2017 received additional continuing professional development (CPD) co-ordinated by COGG in conjunction with relevant support services and the Department's Inspectorate.
- All primary schools that opted to participate in the *Scheme* during the 2017/2018 school year submitted their action plans to the Department in accordance with the terms of Circular 0033/2017. All action plans received have been reviewed by the Gaeltacht Education Unit and primary schools have been notified of the outcome of the review. Additional follow-up support is being provided in the form of additional advisory visits, as required.

Update on the implementation of teacher education actions as set out in the *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022* (April 2017 to April 2018)

- Following ongoing consultation and collaboration between the Department of Education and Skills and the Office of Government Procurement (OGP), a Request for Tenders (RFT) for the design, development and delivery of two new Irish-medium teacher education courses was published by the OGP on behalf of the Department in late December 2017. The new teacher education programmes include a full-time 4-year Irish-medium Initial Teacher Education (ITE) B.Ed. programme (primary teaching) and a part-time 2-year Irish-medium M.Ed. postgraduate teacher education programme for practising primary and post-primary teachers and principals.
- The objective of the introduction of the two new Irish-medium teacher education programmes is to increase the supply of teachers who can provide high quality Irish-medium education and also to enhance the Irish language proficiency of existing teachers.
- The planned commencement date for the Irish-medium B.Ed. is September 2019, while the Irish-medium M.Ed. will commence in September 2018.
- As part of the *Policy* implementation, the Department also provided 2 additional teaching posts on the *Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas* teacher education programme at the National University Ireland, Galway (NUIG) via secondment arrangements. The objective of these 2 additional posts is to work towards increasing the number of post-primary teachers who can deliver a range of subjects through the medium of Irish.

Appendix B

Expression of Interest Form for participation in 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 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 1st June 2018.

School Name: _____ Roll Number: _____

School address: _____

Phone number: _____ E-mail: _____

- I wish to confirm that the content of Circulars 0033/2017 and 0021/2018 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: _____

- I wish to confirm that the content of Circulars 0033/2017 and 0021/2018 and the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme was discussed with the Chairperson of the Gaeltacht language-planning committee:

Signed: _____
Chairperson of language-planning committee

Phone number: _____ E-mail: _____

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

- The school's decision regarding participation in the *Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme*
- The steps which were taken to come to the decision to participate in the *Scheme*
- 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***

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Principal

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Programme of Supports for any primary school in the Gaeltacht that wishes to express an interest to participate in the *Scheme* in the 2018/19 school year (Amended extract from Circular 0033/2017)

- **Seminars for school communities:** In Autumn 2018, 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 to support and enhance Irish-medium education in schools participating in the *Scheme*.
- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD):** Primary schools and special schools in the Gaeltacht opting to participate in the *Scheme* will be provided with additional CPD, which will be co-ordinated by COGG, in conjunction with relevant support services and the Department of Education and Skills' Inspectorate. This CPD will comprise two seminars/sessions for the principal and one other member of the teaching staff in Autumn 2018 to assist the school to ensure that there is a whole-school focus in their action-planning processes to enhance the quality of education through Irish. Follow-up workshops will be provided in school clusters from January to June 2019 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 opting to participate 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 2018:** In order to support primary schools opting to participate in the *Scheme* in 2018/19, two additional release days, with substitution cover through the Online Claims System (OLCS), will be provided for teaching principals participating in the *Scheme* from **September to December 2018**. The two additional release days must be used by primary schools in the period September to December 2018 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 of Circular 0033/2017.

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 2018** 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 primary schools opting to participate in the *Scheme* in 2018/19 on their target-setting and whole-school action planning for improvement using language-based criteria to support the implementation of high quality immersion education.
- **Grant allocation:** Primary schools opting to participate in the *Scheme* in 2018/19 will be required to submit their action plans for improvement to the Department by 31 January 2019. Subject to the approval of these action plans, a grant of €1,200 will be allocated those primary schools in May 2019 to pay for additional Irish-medium resources to support the implementation of schools' action plans. Primary schools are required to retain all receipts and records of expenditure incurred for audit purposes in accordance with public procurement procedures.

Appendix D

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 Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA)
- Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG)
- 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