

# GAELTACHT SCHOOL RECOGNITION SCHEME



## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



An Chomhairle um Oideachas  
Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta



Gaeiloideachas 

Guth don Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge



AN ROINN  
OIDEACHAIS  
AGUS SCILEANNA

DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION  
AND SKILLS

## The advantages of education through the medium of Irish for your child

- The initial steps in the implementation of the new policy on Gaeltacht education will commence from September 2017. The main objective of the *Policy* is to ensure that high-quality education will be available through the medium of Irish in Gaeltacht schools.
- An important step in achieving this is through **the implementation of immersion education through Irish in schools** located in Gaeltacht Language-Planning Areas (GLPA). In that way, the use of Irish in Gaeltacht communities will be supported and encouraged.

### What does immersion education in Irish mean?

- Immersion education means that the school will provide a learning, teaching and communicative environment through Irish for the child. The school will make appropriate provision for the learning needs of both native speakers of Irish and children who are non-native speakers.

### What are the benefits of immersion education in Irish?

- Learning through the medium of Irish offers your child a unique learning experience that enriches learning and progress in many ways.
- Immersion education provides native speakers with an opportunity to enrich their Irish-language skills. Learners who are non-native speakers are also provided with the opportunity to be immersed in the language.
- Immersion education in Irish supports the child's language acquisition and enrichment, and consequently, develops the child's capacity to learn other languages.
- It is recognised that immersion education is the most effective approach to teach and acquire a second language in a school setting.
- Immersion education provides appropriately for the child who is a native speaker of Irish and also the learner of the language.

### How does two years of early-immersion in Irish help to ensure a high standard of education?

- Early-immersion education in Irish means that it is Irish only that is spoken to the children in junior and senior-infant classes. Children are encouraged to understand and use Irish through activities and play. Specific attention is afforded to Irish-language literacy and no English is spoken to the pupils during this period
- From the first day, a strong foundation in the Irish language is provided for all children, which enables them to continue with the whole primary school curriculum through the medium of Irish.

## How does the two years early-immersion education in Irish help children who are native speakers of Irish?

- If children are encouraged to use Irish from the first day at school, children who are native speakers and learners of Irish will equally understand that Irish is the medium of instruction and communication of the school. The child's language-enrichment skills are developed through the school's differentiated curriculum plan.
- It is important to build on children's vocabulary enrichment and language fluency so as to ensure that their language skills are being developed on a continuous basis.

## How does the two years of early-immersion education in Irish help children who are non-native speakers of Irish?

- According to research, the most effective way to learn a language is to immerse the learner fully in the language.
- Following two years of full immersion, children who are not fluent in Irish will be able to acquire the language much more rapidly, and therefore will be appropriately prepared to continue with the whole curriculum through Irish.

## What about English, will Gaeltacht children be disadvantaged if English reading and writing are not taught until first class?

- All children will learn their reading and writing skills through Irish at the outset. When they reach first class, these skills are then transferable to English and they will use these skills to read and write in English. The children are not starting at the beginning, and, as they already have skills of reading and writing in Irish, they will transfer these skills to the learning of English.
- National and international research shows that skills transfer from the first language to the second language and this approach fosters additional learning benefits, for the person who is competent in more than one language.
- Learning through Irish complements the learning of English.

## What are the advantages of education through the medium of Irish for your child?

### Learning through the medium of Irish is a unique opportunity for your child.

- Learning through Irish enables your child to develop communication skills and to learn other languages.
- Learning through Irish helps to develop your child's higher-order thinking and creative skills.
- Reading and writing skills transfer from one language to another language, particularly from a minority language to a main language.

- Children who are competent in the language have more curiosity and confidence in attempting to read words that they do not know. They also have a very good knowledge of spelling.

## **Your child's competence will be better in Mathematics and in problem-solving**

- Children in sixth class in Gaeltacht schools have attained high standards in Mathematics in studies with children of the same age group in schools where teaching is through the medium of English.
- Language proficiency enhances young people's ability to make progress in problem-solving in Mathematics.

## **Your child will enjoy a rich cultural experience**

- Education through the medium of Irish supports the preservation, protection and maintenance of the language, culture and heritage of the Gaeltacht.
- Young people who are language proficient have a greater interest in engaging with and making links with various cultures and languages.

## **Your child will develop the required skills for third-level education and for the world of work**

- Research indicates that young people who are educated through Irish are fully competent to continue their third-level education – whether through the medium of English or Irish.
- Past pupils of all-Irish and Gaeltacht schools succeed very well in Mathematics at third level.
- There is a broad range of employment opportunities available in Ireland and Europe for those who are competent in languages.
- Young people who receive their education through Irish succeed very well in the science subjects.

This pamphlet, circulars for schools, and further information on the *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022* are available at:

<http://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Management-Organisation/Gaeltacht-Education-Unit.html>

### **Further information is available at:**

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