

Review of

# IRISH-MEDIUM EDUCATION REPORT



Department of  
**Education**

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# Review of Irish-medium Education Report

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## Ministerial Foreword

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I want to welcome this Review from the Irish-medium Review Board, and acknowledge the on-going work of the Irish-medium sector in the north of Ireland. The Irish Language sector is a bold, dynamic and thriving one; the Irish Education sector is a key component of that sector.

In terms of the consultation, it must share that same vision, that same dynamism. All stakeholders, enthusiasts and educationalists from across Ireland have a key role to play in this consultation and I encourage them to contribute to the Review.

The Irish language is an integral component of our rich and shared heritage; as a sector it is thriving, educationally, socially and economically. More than ever students passing through the Irish Education sector have the opportunity to continue their education, set up home and choose a career all through the medium of Irish. Organisations across the Island, such as TG4, Ráidió Fáilte, and Forbairt Feirste are thriving and offering very real opportunities for growth and employment to students within the Irish-medium sector. The public sector, and other bodies such as Foras na Gaeilge and the GAA, work in many areas to develop employment and participation opportunities for increasing numbers of people.

Gaelscoileanna are producing confident, capable, productive, dynamic and bi-lingual students every year and this is a wonderful contribution to our society. We must ensure that the highest standards set by the Irish-speaking community across the Island are matched by those of us in the education sector.

The Irish language is a vital part of the total education system and everything that we do must reflect that fact.

This Review is just that, and key stakeholders must avail of this chance to have their say. I ask you to join with us in the Department in making sure that our vision for Irish Language Education is the right one. Our goal coming out of this Review must be to ensure the highest standard of education for our children through the medium of Irish.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta will have a key role to play in taking forward this vision, as we work to make Irish-medium Education accessible to a greater number of parents and children in the future.

I urge you to read the Report carefully. It contains a detailed body of work, and I would value your engagement in this consultation and any comments you provide.



**CAITRÍONA RUANE MLA**  
Minister for Education

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## Chairperson's Introduction

This Review is an important part in the ongoing development of Irish-medium Education as a valued part of the education system. Irish-medium Education brings a unique additional depth to the education system by providing a route to learning through one of Europe's oldest indigenous languages.

The Project Board wishes to acknowledge from the outset that the development of Irish-medium Education has been driven by highly committed parents and communities, who have established and supported a range of provision in support of their vision. The vision they have been inspired by is of a high-quality education, available to all, reflecting the way that the Irish-language has historically drawn speakers and supporters from across our communities.

Irish-medium Education aims to develop children into competent and confident bilinguals in Irish and in English. It is committed to providing those outcomes across the whole curriculum for all the children that it serves.

This Review aims to provide an important milestone in the continuing development of Irish-medium Education, by presenting a comprehensive, creative and strategic way forward for the sector. This Review comes at time when the challenges facing education are numerous. In addressing these challenges the Project Board has sought to develop imaginative yet robust solutions that draw on the opportunities of today's learning environment to provide the tools to overcome present and future challenges.



**LOUISE WARDE HUNTER**

Chairperson of the Review of Irish-medium Education





## Definitions and Abbreviations

<b>BEd</b>	Bachelor of Education
<b>Bilingual</b>	Able to speak (usually fluently) in two languages
<b>Biliterate</b>	Able to read or write in two languages
<b>BoG</b>	Board of Governors
<b>Bunscoil</b>	Primary school teaching through the medium of Irish
<b>C2K</b>	Classroom 2000 Project
<b>Capital Funding</b>	Investment in assets which will provide or underpin services in the longer-term (eg school buildings)
<b>CASS</b>	Curriculum Advisory Support Service
<b>CCEA</b>	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
<b>CCMS</b>	Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
<b>CLIL</b>	Content Language Integrated Learning
<b>Coláiste</b>	College
<b>CnaG</b>	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta
<b>CPD</b>	Continuing Professional Development
<b>DCAL</b>	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
<b>DE</b>	Department of Education
<b>DEL</b>	Department for Employment and Learning
<b>DETI</b>	Department of Trade and Investment
<b>Development Proposal</b>	A Development Proposal is required before any significant change can be made to the character of a school. Its aim is to ensure that all interested parties are informed about proposed changes to schools and have an opportunity to comment before a final decision is reached
<b>Delayed Immersion</b>	In an international context this means immersion education beginning between the ages of 8 to 14

<b>Early Immersion</b>	In an international context this means immersion education beginning before the age of about 8
<b>Economic Appraisal</b>	Process to achieve value for money by systematically examining alternative uses of resources, assessing needs, objectives, options, costs, benefits, risks, funding, affordability and other factors relevant to decisions
<b>ELBs</b>	Education and Library Boards
<b>EME</b>	English-medium Education
<b>Entitlement Framework</b>	A framework for schools to provide pupils with access to 24 courses at Key Stage 4 and 27 courses at post-16. In both cases at least one-third of the courses must be general (academic) and at least one-third applied (vocational/ professional/technical)
<b>EPD</b>	Early Professional Development
<b>EPP</b>	Effective Pre-School Provision
<b>ESA</b>	Education and Skills Authority
<b>ETI</b>	Education and Training Inspectorate
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FE</b>	Further Education
<b>Federation (for schools)</b>	A single school in law, with one principal and one Board of Governors, but operating on two or more sites
<b>Forest Schools</b>	Settings providing education through outdoor play and learning, which are available in Wales through the medium of Welsh
<b>FSM</b>	Free School Meals
<b>Gaelscoil</b>	School teaching through the medium of Irish
<b>Gaeltacht</b>	A region where the native or primary language is Irish
<b>GCSE</b>	General Certificate of Secondary Education
<b>GM</b>	Grant Maintained

<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IM</b>	Irish-medium
<b>IME</b>	Irish-medium Education
<b>Immersion</b>	Learning through a language that is not the student's first language
<b>InaG</b>	Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta
<b>InCAS</b>	Interactive Computerised Assessment System
<b>IPD</b>	Initial Professional Development
<b>Key Stage</b>	Key Stage 1: Ages 6-8 Key Stage 2: Ages 8 - 11 Key Stage 3: Ages 11- 14 Key Stage 4: Ages 14 - 16
<b>Late Immersion</b>	In an international context this means immersion education beginning after the age of about 14
<b>LMS</b>	Local Management of Schools (funding policy)
<b>LNI</b>	Learning NI
<b>Meánscoil</b>	Post-primary school teaching through the medium of Irish
<b>Naíscoil</b>	Pre-school setting conducted through the medium of Irish
<b>NIO</b>	NI Office
<b>NISEAC</b>	NI Schools Examinations and Assessment Council
<b>Partial Immersion</b>	Learning that is partially through a language that is not the student's first language
<b>PfG</b>	Programme for Government
<b>PGCE</b>	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
<b>PQH</b>	Professional Qualification for Headship
<b>PSA</b>	Public Service Agreements
<b>PSEEP</b>	Pre-School Education Expansion Programme

<b>Recurrent Funding</b>	The ongoing cost of providing services (e.g, wages or running costs)
<b>RTU</b>	Regional Training Unit
<b>SDP</b>	School Development Plan
<b>SEN</b>	Special Educational Needs
<b>Statutory pre-school</b>	Pre-school education in nursery schools or nursery units in primary schools
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths
<b>Stream</b>	Setting attached to an English-medium school, where the curriculum is delivered partly through Irish and partly through English
<b>Total immersion</b>	Learning that is totally through a language that is not the student's first language
<b>UCETNI</b>	Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers, NI
<b>Unit</b>	Setting attached to an English-medium school where the curriculum is delivered through the medium of Irish
<b>Unqualified Teachers</b>	Persons without the qualifications necessary for eligibility and registration as a teacher
<b>Voluntary pre-school</b>	Pre-school education provided in a range of settings by the Voluntary/Private sector

## Executive Summary

### Overview

- i) The Project Board welcomes and celebrates Irish-medium Education as a valuable part of our educational landscape. Irish-medium Education reflects the cultural and linguistic aspirations and identity of parents who seek an educational approach and learning environment they believe is right for their children.
- ii) The aim of this Review is to ensure that Irish-medium Education is fully and appropriately supported as an integral part of the educational system and contributes to the building of a shared future for all our citizens based on equality.
- iii) The Project Board has made a number of recommendations, which are summarised below. These recommendations address a wide range of issues, reflecting the concerns that were raised by stakeholders during this Review. The recommendations are interdependent and need to be read in conjunction with each other, rather than in isolation. Taken together, the Project Board strongly believes that they will address the needs of Irish-medium Education. Some recommendations could be implemented quickly, and will have a visible outcome on the ground in the short-term: these include some of the issues affecting teaching and learning, and accommodation. This would be a welcome indication to the Irish-medium sector that their concerns have been listened to, and addressed.
- iv) Other recommendations will take longer to have an impact that is visible to the majority of those who are in the sector. These recommendations tend to be concerned with the future development of the sector. The Project Board believes that, taken together, all the recommendations, short-term and long-term, provide a roadmap for the continued development in the future of high-quality, sustainable Irish-medium provision.
- v) New issues of concern to the Irish-medium sector will arise in the future. The recommendations in this Report should provide a framework within which future concerns can be addressed, recognising the place of Irish-medium Education as a valued part of our educational landscape.
- vi) Many of the recommendations draw on two key resources that have the potential to help deliver high-quality Irish-medium Education in a sustainable and cost-effective way. The first of these is Information and Communication

Technology (ICT). The potential of ICT to improve the educational experience for learners is immense in all sectors of education. For Irish-medium Education, the potential benefits are even greater, because of the highly dispersed nature of the sector and the associated challenges of delivering curricular breadth at primary level, and the Entitlement Framework at post-primary level. Other benefits to be realised through ICT relate to learning, teaching, management and administration. Additionally, ICT offers the means of accessing and contributing to the wider Irish language community. It is essential that those involved in Irish-medium Education draw on the potential of ICT in meeting existing and other challenges consequent on wider developments in education policy. Using the existing as well as future ICT facilities and infrastructure will be central to the continuing development of Irish-medium Education.

- vii) The second key resource is co-operation across the island of Ireland. In many instances the small size of the Irish-medium sector mean that economies of scale cannot be harnessed. Taking account of all the demands for Irish-medium resources, including human resources, across the island of Ireland would go a long way to addressing this difficulty. In addition, the Project Board recognised considerable benefits that could accrue from East-West co-operation, as well as throughout the island of Ireland. The issues faced in Scotland and Wales are often similar to those faced here, and much could be gained through pooling of information and resources. In particular, the linguistic similarities between Scottish and Irish Gaelic could provide fertile ground for mutual benefits, for example in sharing pedagogy and learning resources. The beneficial outcomes of all-Ireland co-operation can flow in both directions, and they are likely to be limited only by the ingenuity of the sectors in the various areas. The Project Board believes that the Irish-medium sector is well placed to participate fully in working across the island of Ireland, for the benefit of learners wherever they are located.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **How Irish-medium Education is Delivered**

#### **Recommendation 1: Models of Immersion and School Structures**

DE and all stakeholders of Irish-medium Education should be open to a range of:

- i. Models of immersion; and
- ii. School structures to deliver Irish-medium Education.

Interested parties should consider how to meet local needs on a case-by-case basis. A school's policy on immersion, considered where necessary through the development proposal process, is a matter for the school authorities and community, in the light of available Irish language resources of all kinds, and should be made clear to parents. The Project Board strongly believes it is best practice for a school to agree these issues with parents and key stakeholders.

## **Developing Sustainable Irish-medium Pre-school Provision**

### **Recommendation 2: Revising the Existing Policy on Funding for Pre-school Provision**

The existing policy on funded pre-school provision should be revised in light of the unique combination of the obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the recognised benefits of pre-school education and the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education, to allow registered, Irish-medium providers with sufficient children to receive funding even where English-medium provision is available in the area.

### **Recommendation 3: Necessary Pre-school Experience**

The Project Board recognises the importance placed by the Irish-medium sector on Irish-medium pre-school Education. Nevertheless, it concluded that Irish-medium pre-school experience should not be a compulsory requirement for entry into an Irish-medium primary school.

### **Recommendation 4: Pre-school Settings – Voluntary vs Statutory**

The issues for Irish-medium pre-school provision should be considered as part of the Early Years' Review's deliberations on the levels of support provided to statutory and to voluntary settings.

### **Recommendation 5: Research into the Educational Outcomes of Irish-medium Pre-school Education**

Research on the educational outcome, including linguistic outcomes, of different types of Irish-medium pre-school experience should be taken forward.

## **Developing Sustainable Irish-medium Primary Provision**

### **Recommendation 6: Sustainable Irish-medium Primary Education – Developing New Provision through Federation**

The Project Board recommends that the future development of Irish-medium primary education should be through a system of schools which enhances strong school leadership and the capacity for support for the professional development of teachers and staff, in order to ensure high-quality education. The following factors are recommended to guide future development:

- i. A new setting providing Irish-medium primary education should be developed as part of a federation with another school, with a single board of governors and principal; the process will require a Development Proposal and an Economic Appraisal.
- ii. At every site in the federated school the intake into Year 1 must be at least 12 pupils per year in rural areas, and 15 in urban.
- iii. Units and streams should be developed where appropriate: the combined English and Irish-medium parts of the school must form a sustainable school;
- iv. The combined total enrolment across a federated Irish-medium primary school, and English-medium schools with Irish-medium units or streams, should encompass sufficient pupils that the shared principal would not be required to have teaching duties.
- v. The development of new primary provision, in a federation, unit or stream, should be preceded by a protocol setting out how the provision will operate.
- vi. The Department of Education must ensure that the capital development needs of the Irish-medium Education sector are addressed.
- vii. ICT will play a key role in:
  - the learning, teaching, management and administration of the school;
  - maintaining the corporate identity of the federated school by enabling high-quality communication and sharing of resources;



- supporting communication with parents; and
- supporting communication with the education support services, other schools, and the wider community.

### **Recommendation 7: Sustainable Irish-medium Primary Education – Centrality of Federation to Developing New Provision**

The Project Board recommends that, in establishing new Irish-medium primary provision, the federated model should not be set aside other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

### **Recommendation 8: Existing Primary Schools' Accommodation Issues**

The Project Board recommends that:

- i. existing small Irish-medium primary schools should urgently consider federation, as a means of supporting their long-term viability in the interests of pupils and staff;
- ii. DE should ensure the accommodation needs of existing Irish-medium primary schools are clearly identified;
- iii. DE should ensure the needs of viable Irish-medium schools are taken into account in programmes of capital expenditure on the schools' estate; and
- iv. DE should work with the Irish-medium sector to identify a suitable mechanism to provide funding as a matter of urgency, to address the most pressing accommodation deficiencies in existing schools.

## **Developing Sustainable Irish-medium Post-Primary Provision**

### **Recommendation 9: Developing Sustainable Post-primary Provision**

New post-primary provision, which can be delivered through a range of school structures, should be developed at the optimal geographical location within local Area-Based Plans to draw on feeder primaries and integrate with other services, such as transport. Development should be preceded by a protocol setting out how the provision will operate, including how it will relate to other Irish-medium provision.

## **Irish-medium Units and Streams**

### **Recommendation 10: Units and Streams**

The development proposal for establishing an Irish-medium unit or stream should be preceded by a protocol setting out an agreement on how the unit or stream and host-school will operate, recognising their mutual interdependence, to ensure that the needs of both parts of the school are considered, with a focus on achieving maximum joint benefit from their relationship.

## **Support for Educators**

### **Recommendation 11: Boards of Governors**

- i. Boards of Governors should ensure they develop and update their skills to enable them to meet their evolving responsibilities, co-opting members where necessary and availing of existing training programmes.
- ii. In delivering common support services in a sectorally-sensitive way, ESA should ensure that the particular needs of Irish-medium schools are addressed in the training for Governors.
- iii. Boards of Governors must ensure that their statutory duties are discharged effectively, including the duty to safeguard the welfare of children throughout the school, to secure Child Protection arrangements, and to undertake School Development Planning.

### **Recommendation 12: Leadership Training**

- i. Principals and aspiring principals should undertake available leadership training and, using ICT and other approaches, share best practice within the sector and beyond.
- ii. The needs of Irish-medium Educators should be taken into account in delivering common leadership training and support services in a sectorally-sensitive way.

### **Recommendation 13: Training Teachers for Irish-medium Settings**

- i. The Department of Education should ensure that sufficient teacher training places are provided to meet the needs of the:

statutory pre-school, primary, and post-primary Irish-medium sector.

- ii. Opportunities for conversion training for those in the English-medium sector should be identified and incentives offered as a means of encouraging uptake.
- iii. Irish-language skills should be developed during Irish-medium initial teacher education, with experience in the Gaeltacht strongly recommended as an integral part of this development;
- iv. Unqualified teachers should be given a specific time period within which to gain a teaching qualification, after which schools should be prohibited from employing them further, within the parameters of the relevant legislation.

#### **Recommendation 14: Teachers' Continuing Professional Development**

- i. All principals and teachers, including those in Irish-medium, should make best use of the available opportunities for training, and should receive common support services from ESA in a sectorally-sensitive way, to help them prioritise their continuing professional development.
- ii. Introduction to, and development of, best practice in teaching across the range of Irish-medium settings should be part of EPD and CPD.
- iii. Teachers should seek to develop their Irish-language skills during EPD and CPD, for example, by spending time in the Gaeltacht, having support for placements in Irish-medium schools in the south, through in-house language courses and through C2K.
- iv. Irish-medium Education providers should develop opportunities and a forum to disseminate best practice and to share teachers among institutions.
- v. Exchanges and development opportunities should be developed, on an all-Ireland and east-west basis.
- vi. Sharing of best practice in immersion education should be maximised (using ICT) on an all-Ireland and east-west basis. This process should be supported by communication technologies now available to schools generally, and should be informed by developing practice in the English-medium sector.

### **Recommendation 15: Classroom Assistants and Pre-school Educators**

- i. Classroom assistants should also develop their classroom skills and their language skills through means such as those listed above tailored to their particular needs.
- ii. Pre-school leaders and assistants: Professional staff in pre-school centres should have opportunities for IPD and CPD through courses adapted and developed to match their particular needs in immersion education for young children.
- iii. Ancillary staff in all pre-school, primary and post-primary Irish-medium provision should be encouraged and supported to develop their language skills through, for example, new courses developed in further and higher education.

## **Educational Resources**

### **Recommendation 16: Curriculum and Teaching Resources**

- i. The needs of the Irish-medium sector should be factored in from the start when curriculum and other classroom resources are developed within the education system.
- ii. For certain subjects/curriculum areas, high priority should be given to developing teachers' resources in Irish where there are specific technical vocabulary issues which relate directly to specialist content, in order to support consistency and raising standards.
- iii. Outstanding needs in respect of teaching resources should be identified and addressed, including on an all-Ireland and east-west basis.
- iv. Existing classroom resources, such as those developed by teachers in the sector, should be identified and shared by ESA in support of good practice and raising educational standards.
- v. The Irish-medium sector should explore how to harness the resourcefulness of the individuals with the necessary skills to develop curriculum and teaching resources in a way that benefits the whole sector.
- vi. ICT should be used, through C2k, to support the development and dissemination of resources.

### **Recommendation 17: Support for Special Educational Needs**

- i. The Education and Skills Authority should develop the capacity to meet the special educational needs of children through the medium of Irish where possible, with a particular focus on areas where such support would be most beneficial. This will need appropriately skilled SEN support staff with high-quality Irish-language skills, which could be developed, for example, through bursaries.
- ii. The Project Board recommends that, where SEN support is not available through the medium of Irish, children should receive as much support as possible through the medium of English, making full use of the C2K infrastructure and other resources. In these circumstances the Education and Skills Authority should ensure that the support is sensitive to the needs of the children learning through Irish. Best practice should be disseminated, including taking account of the specific context and issues relevant to Irish-medium education, and engaging with schools and teachers on these issues.
- iii. Teachers in Irish-medium Education should be supported through sharing of existing best practice in SEN, particularly from the Irish-medium sector. This should be promoted and supported by the Education and Skills Authority and other support agencies, drawing on sources on an all-Ireland and east-west basis from English-medium settings as well as immersion language contexts. ICT will have a key role to play in the realisation of the available benefits for pupils and their teachers.
- iv. High-level diagnostic tools for the Irish-medium sector should be developed, drawing on all-Ireland and east-west opportunities.

### **Recommendation 18: Informal learning through Irish**

The Department of Education should encourage and support informal opportunities for learning through the medium of Irish in the youth sector, and through the extended schools approach. The use of ICT will be an essential part of the development and delivery of opportunities for learning.

### **Recommendation 19: Irish-language support for children at home**

The Project Board recommends that:

- i. The Department of Education should ensure that its policies that are delivered outside school take account of Irish-medium Education; and
- ii. Stakeholders across the Irish-speaking community should seek opportunities to share best practice in language development and support with a particular focus on children in English-speaking homes.

The use of ICT is essential for delivering this support, and schools should utilise developments for the benefit of learners.

### **Recommendation 20: Multiple Translations of Examinations taken in Irish**

- i. Efforts should be made to access subject specialists with the necessary language skills, including on an all-Ireland basis, to remove the need for multiple translations in the assessment and examination process for children in Irish-medium Education.
- ii. The impact on students of the current regime of multiple-translations should be assessed.

## **Embedding IME in the Educational System**

### **Recommendation 21: Policy Development and Delivery**

- i. The Department of Education must ensure that Irish-medium education is considered systemically throughout policy development.
- ii. The Department of Education must ensure that appropriate support is provided for all existing and new schools, subject to their meeting agreed sustainability criteria, and that the needs of Irish-medium education are addressed in a fully integrated way by the Education and Skills Authority in the delivery of its services.

## **Recommendation 22: Research**

The needs of Irish-medium education should be taken into account appropriately in the research strategies of DE and educational partner bodies. Opportunities for all-Ireland research co-operation should be maximised.

## **Recommendation 23: Increasing Access to Irish-medium Education**

Outreach to those not currently accessing Irish-medium Education should be taken forward through a staged approach, reflecting shared linguistic heritage across these islands, on an east – west and all-Ireland basis. In particular the affinity of Irish with Scottish Gaelic should be emphasised, exemplified and employed as a motivation for the further development of the Irish language across communities.

## **All-Ireland opportunities for Irish-medium Education**

### **Recommendation 24: All-Ireland and Trans-regional opportunities for Irish-medium Education**

The Department of Education should identify development opportunities for co-operation with other areas in support of Irish-medium Education, particularly on an all-Ireland basis.





# Introduction

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Context of the Review

- 1.1) Irish-medium Education is a distinctive part of the education system, and aims to provide a range of vibrant settings meeting the educational and linguistic needs of pupils. It is much more than simply English-medium education delivered through the Irish language. The desired outcome, high-quality education for children who leave school as competent and confident bilinguals, is an important one at a time when value-added as a concept includes more than purely finance-related considerations. The enriching experience of having developed bilingualism provides an additional resource upon which these children can draw as they move forward in their lives.
- 1.2) This Review has been undertaken in a positive spirit, ready to question and challenge where necessary, but most importantly, to find new solutions to complex problems, with the aim of supporting the continued development of Irish-medium provision within a broader education system. The recommendations put forward by the Project Board aim to create the clear, strategic framework that will assist the Department of Education and its partner bodies to deliver this future development.

### Origin of the Review

- 1.3) In 2006 a review of education was undertaken under the leadership of Sir George Bain, looking at education funding, and the strategic planning and organisation of the schools' estate. The Bain Review took account of changing demographic trends, education reforms, the planning for a ten-year programme of investment in education, and the reform of public administration. The Report of the Independent Strategic Review of Education (the Bain Report), published in December 2006, noted (para 11.23, p. 157):

"There appears, however, to be a lack of consensus about aspects of the educational process in IM education and about the most appropriate environment: educationally, linguistically, socially and physically. There is need for further debate to inform a rationale for an agreed model of immersion, in keeping with international best practice."

- 1.4) Bain then recommended that DE should develop a comprehensive and coherent policy for Irish-medium Education. The then Minister, Maria Eagle, accepted this

recommendation and initiated this Review to provide the basis for that policy. The Project Board was asked to take stock of the best way to facilitate continued and sustainable growth of Irish-medium Education for the next decade, ensuring the highest quality educational outcomes for pupils, particularly in light of the revised curriculum and the curriculum entitlement framework for all children in all sectors of education in the north of Ireland.

### **The stakeholders for the Review**

1.5) The core stakeholders were identified as:

- current and future pupils in Irish-medium Education schools, and their parents;
- teachers and other staff in Irish-medium Education schools
- relevant statutory, voluntary, community and professional organisations; and
- those with an interest in Irish language issues.

1.6) In addition, as pointed out in the Bain Report, "the education of children is one of the most important aspects of any society". This Review therefore impacts on a wider group of stakeholders, particularly in the field of education, but also in wider society, both locally and internationally.

### **Approach taken by the Project Board**

1.7) The approach to this Review (set out in detail along with the Terms of Reference in Appendix 1) can be broadly stated as:

- i. to review the development of Irish-medium Education to date;
- ii. to identify any challenges to be addressed; and
- iii. to recommend how to continue the development of Irish-medium Education to ensure high quality, sustainable provision and outcomes for all children in the sector.

1.8) The remainder of this Report follows this structure. In considering Point (i), the development of Irish-medium Education to date, the Report begins by setting out the legal framework within which development of the sector has taken place. A brief history of the development of Irish-medium Education is then given, followed by an analysis of current provision, including some comments on the

characteristics and aspirations of the sector. Finally a study of the outcomes of Government's financial investment in Irish-medium Education over the last five years is presented.

- 1.9) Addressing point (ii), identifying the challenges to be addressed, the Report first sets out the key educational changes facing all sectors. The Report then considers how Department of Education policies are implemented for the Irish-medium sector. In addition to these two analyses, this work draws on the work of the Advisory Group to the Review, parents and teachers in the sector. From across these sources were drawn together the challenges facing the sector that were considered by the Project Board.
- 1.10) These challenges set the scene for point (iii), which provides recommendations on how to continue the development of Irish-medium Education. The key elements of the evidence considered by the Project Board are set out when discussing the challenges and the way forward.

#### **Links between the Review and the Executive Programme for Government 2008–2011**

- 1.11) The majority of this Review was undertaken before the final Programme for Government (PfG) was published by the restored Executive. The Project Board noted that the work addressed in this document is supported by the elements of the PfG relating to education and developing our infrastructure. Included in the PfG, as part of Public Service Agreement (PSA) 10, is a commitment to Irish-medium Education and taking forward the work that is being developed by this Review. PSA 16 and PSA 19 also form part of the backdrop for this Review.

#### **PSA 10 Helping our Children and Young People to achieve through Education**

**Aim:** Encourage all our children to realise their potential by improving access to formal and non formal education and provision tailored to the needs of disadvantaged children and young people.

**Objective 4:** To maximise high-quality Irish-medium for those children whose parents wish it.

**Action:** A thriving Irish-medium sector fully integrated into all aspects of education support.

## **PSA 16 Investing in the Health and Education Estates**

**Aim:** To take forward a programme of investment to provide a modern fit-for-purpose health and education estate in line with best practice and ensuring value for money.

**Objective 4:** To provide modern school facilities which meet the needs for teaching and learning.

## **PSA 19 Raising Standards in our Schools**

**Aim:** To educate and develop our young people to the highest possible standards to deliver improved outcomes for all young people, including measurable reductions in the gap in educational outcomes between highest and lowest attainers.

- 1.12) The PfG sets an important strategic context within which the recommendations of this Review will be taken forward.

## **Equality and Evidence**

- 1.13) The members of the Project Board felt strongly that all sectors of education should have their current and future needs clearly identified and addressed, in support of equality in educational provision and outcomes. To support this approach the Project Board recognised the vital importance of considering evidence throughout this process. In identifying educational needs the Project Board considered the information contained in the Bain Report, particularly the areas of consensus identified by Sir George Bain that the education system, including the IME sector, should:
- i. Provide all pupils with high quality educational opportunities and experiences in terms of curriculum, learning and teaching, through which they achieve high standards in terms of their attainment, personal growth and social development and achieve their potential;
  - ii. Be vital to social and community well-being, contributing effectively and appropriately to broader social and economic goals and processes;

- iii. Accommodate reasonable parental choice in relation to the values and ethos of schools, with due regard to the use of public funds; and
  - iv. Provide equitable access for all pupils.
- 1.14) The Project Board recognised that equality of provision and outcomes, in line with the four principles detailed above, means making recommendations differentiated to take account of the needs of Irish-medium Education at this point in time.
- 1.15) Some recommendations will have resonances for the wider education community where the needs to be addressed are similar. The Project Board believes that it is vital that opportunities should be sought for experience to be shared and disseminated amongst all sectors of the educational system for their mutual benefit and in the interests of all children.
- 1.16) Other recommendations made by the Project Board respond to the particular needs of a new and growing sector. These recommendations need to be viewed as relating to a period of transition and reflect the needs of the sector at this time. The Project Board regards them as necessary steps as the sector evolves and is further embedded as an integral part of the education system. As the needs of Irish-medium Education change, the recommendations in this Report should be kept under scrutiny and updated regularly to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the sector at any given point in its development.





## Chapter 2

### Irish-medium Education: Legal Framework

- 2.1) The key relevant educational legislation is set out below. Other legislation, including equality legislation and other, general, Irish language legislation needs to taken account of where relevant, (see [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/northernireland/ni\\_legislation.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/northernireland/ni_legislation.htm)).
- 2.2) Education takes place within a legal framework designed to ensure that education is responsive to parental choice, while providing value for money. This is addressed under Article 44 of the Education and Libraries Order of 1986, which states the general principle that, so far is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils shall be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.
- 2.3) Supporting this basis of parental choice, the 1997 Education Order, Part III, provides legislation that underpins parents' right to express a preference for the school to which they wish their child to be admitted (the Open Enrolment policy). Nevertheless, this right is not absolute, and is restricted by the approved admissions and enrolment numbers within which schools must operate.
- 2.4) Following a commitment in the Good Friday Agreement, provisions in the 1998 Education Order placed a duty on the Department to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education. The Order also made provision for the Department to pay grants to a body to promote Irish-medium education and brought the funding arrangements for Irish-medium schools into line with those in other sectors.
- 2.5) The statutory definition of an Irish-medium school is in Article 3(2) of the 2006 Education Order, which says '... a school is an Irish speaking school if more than one half of the teaching of – (a) Religious Education; and (b) the minimum content of the areas of learning other than that called Language and Literacy, is conducted (wholly or partly) in Irish, and "school" includes part of a school.'

#### The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

- 2.6) DE also takes account of the fact that the UK is a signatory to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, see <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/148.htm>. The European Charter is an international convention designed to protect and promote regional

and minority languages. The Charter does not establish any individual or collective rights for the speakers of regional or minority languages. The Charter's overriding purpose is cultural. It is designed to protect and promote regional or minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe's cultural heritage.

- 2.7) The UK Government signed the Charter in 2000, and after ratification, it came into force on 1 July 2001. The Charter is binding upon each of the ratifying states. Here the Charter applies to Irish and Ulster-Scots, and therefore has implications for all government departments and associated bodies, Whitehall departments operating locally and for Local Government. The responsibilities placed on departments by Part III of the Charter are shown below. (Part III covers measures to promote the use of Regional or Minority Languages in public life, and includes pre-school, primary and post-primary education in Irish, while recognizing that there must be sufficient numbers requesting such provision to justify public funding.)

Table 2.1 Responsibility for implementing Part III (Articles 8– 14) locally

Part III Provision	Subject	Responsible Government Department
Article 8	Education	DE, DEL,
Article 9	Judicial authorities	DCAL
Article 10	Administrative authorities and public services	All departments
Article 11	Media	DCAL lead
Article 12	Cultural activities and facilities	DCAL lead
Article 13	Economic and social life	DCAL, DETI, DEL
Article 14	Transfrontier exchanges	NIO

## Chapter 3

### Irish-medium Education 1971–2008: Distinct Characteristics and Growth

#### Some distinct characteristics of Irish-medium Education

- 3.1) The Project Board felt that it was important when considering the growth of Irish-medium Education to reflect on the characteristics that make the sector distinct, and which, therefore have inspired parents to seek Irish-medium Education. This was not intended to impose a view on, or of, the sector, nor pre-empt any future sectoral development work on this issue.
- 3.2) The Project Board was also clear that each school, from whatever sector, has its own character and ethos, the main elements of which are found in all good schools. Irish-medium Education, in common with all sectors of education, has its main focus on the children under its care, to nurture their educational, social, physical, emotional, personal, linguistic, developmental, intellectual and spiritual needs.
- 3.3) Nevertheless, in addition to the elements listed above, there are linguistically and culturally distinctive characteristics and unique aspirations that can be found in Irish-medium Education. These can reflect the fact that schools' interactions often extend to them supporting, and being supported by, the wider existing and developing Irish-language community. This sets the children's development in a broader socio-linguistic environment, which is in turn conducive their Irish language and literacy acquisition. Such benefits are, of course, additional to the child-centred, high-quality educational focus outlined above, which aims to develop pupils who are bilingual and biliterate in Irish and English, capable of playing an effective role in society and the economy.

#### Irish-medium Education: Developing Bilingualism

- 3.4) Irish-medium Education develops bilingual pupils, proficient in both Irish and English. Immersion is a form of education to develop bilingualism, which occurs when a child whose first language is English is taught through the medium of Irish. Children in the same classroom who have Irish as their first language will also experience a bilingual education, leading to proficiency in Irish and English, though this will not be an immersion experience for those children.

3.5) 'Immersion education' is widespread across the world and exists in several different varieties. Common to all of them are the following characteristics:

- i. The 'immersion' language is not the students' first language.
- ii. The students not only learn the immersion language but also learn other important subject matter through the medium of the language.
- iii. The teacher is a highly fluent speaker of the language, and very often a native speaker.
- iv. The teacher provides the students with substantial exposure to the immersion language, through teaching and other interactions, giving a strong impetus to the development of students' comprehension skills.
- v. The teacher does not force the students to speak the language, and initially allows them to speak in their first language if they so wish.
- vi. Students' initial expressions using the immersion language tend to be through songs, poems, games, and phrases. Gradually, of their own volition, they develop spontaneous expression through the immersion language.

### **The Benefits of Bilingualism: An Analysis by the ETI**

3.6) The ETI undertook a study looking at the benefits of bilingualism. This study identified that all children can be bilingual even though they may never develop the proficiency of native speakers. ETI noted that bilingualism can be a sought after commodity, with cognitive benefits in:

- i. language acquisition;
- ii. cognitive and academic development;
- iii. the self-confidence and self-esteem of the children; and
- iv. problem-solving abilities, with children who are less afraid to get things wrong.

3.7) The vast majority of the research studied by the ETI substantiates that immersion education, dual language immersion, bilingual education (bilingualism) and content and language integrated learning (CLIL) are positive for the recipients/

learners in terms of both second language acquisition and overall cognitive development. Subject knowledge is absorbed at least as well in as in schooling through the first language.

- 3.8) Other beneficial spin-offs that can be developed are positive attitudes to multiculturalism, inclusivity, openness, tolerance and acceptance of 'otherness'. Language learning therefore benefits and develops children.
- 3.9) Being able to speak two languages improves a child's ability to use and learn language in general. Children can learn about something in one language and talk about it in another, and this process helps them to understand the subject better.
- 3.10) Language is the key intellectual tool and one that underpins our ability to be effective as individuals and members of society. Ellen Bialystock of York University, Canada<sup>1</sup> studied the different areas of the brain stimulated by language. She found that bilingual people are better at multitasking because they constantly exercise the part of the brain known as the pre-frontal cortex. This reinforces attentional processes. She also established that being bilingual exercises the brain and dramatically lessens age-related mental decline. Pre-school children who are bilingual are quicker to understand the symbolic function of letters and score twice as high as monolingual children in recognition tests of written characters. Bilingual children who have been exposed to literacy and stories in both languages are advantaged in learning to read.
- 3.11) Research by Jim Cummins<sup>2</sup> of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, shows that bilingual children perform better in school when the school teaches the mother tongue effectively and, where appropriate, develops literacy in that language. By contrast, when children are encouraged to reject their mother tongue and its development stagnates, their personal and conceptual foundation for learning is undermined. A balanced, harmonious approach is required to develop the best results.

### **Key Historical developments in Irish-medium Education since 1971**

- 3.12) Establishing a new school is not an easy process. It requires commitment as well as vision. The Project Board wishes to recognise the key contribution of those

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1 Lifespan Cognition: Mechanisms of Change by Ellen Bialystok (Editor), 2006

2 Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power, and pedagogy. Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters

who have played a role in establishing and supporting Irish-medium schools. It is also important to recognise the vital support provided by communities to developing the schools, and therefore increasing the availability of Irish-medium Education.

- 3.13) The first Irish-medium school of recent times, Bunscoil Phobal Feirste, was established on Shaw's Road, Belfast, in 1971, with nine children. The school owed its existence to a small group of Irish-speaking families that had established a Gaeltacht community in the area. These families wanted to raise their children in an Irish-speaking environment, and were determined to maintain this linguistic approach when their children were of school age. The families faced great difficulties in gaining recognition for this school and for some time were at risk of prosecution for conducting an 'unregistered school'.
- 3.14) After a long series of negotiations with the Department of Education and the Belfast Education and Library Board, Bunscoil Phobal Feirste was finally registered as an independent school in April 1979.
- 3.15) The parents wanted Irish-medium Education recognised from the outset as a sector distinct from the existing controlled and maintained schools.
- 3.16) Irish-medium pre-school provision, Naíscoil Breandáin, was added in 1978 and contributed to a significant increase the numbers attending the school, resulting in the need for more classrooms and teachers. The accommodation was poor but a general inspection of 1982 praised the standard of education provided. In 1984, the school first received Government funding after further lengthy discussions with the education authorities.
- 3.17) An attempt was made to set up a secondary school in Belfast in 1979, but this only lasted for two years. Some English-medium grammar schools, as a means of assisting the induction of children who transferred from Irish-medium primary schools, offered some provision through the medium of Irish.
- 3.18) In 1984 a second primary school, Gaelscoil na bhFál, was developed in Belfast to meet increased demand for Irish-medium education and was recognized for government funding in 1992. In Derry, in 1983, an Irish-medium unit of Steelstown Primary School received grant-aid, and it developed into a free-standing school in 1993 within the Catholic maintained sector. In Newry another Irish-medium school, established in 1987, was funded in 1997.

- 3.19) In 1991 another significant development took place with post-primary provision becoming available when Meánscoil Feirste (now Coláiste Feirste) was established: it received grant-aid in 1996. In 1994 Meánscoil Dhoire, an Irish-medium post-primary school in Derry, was established: it was grant-aided in September 2000, when it became a stream of St Brigid's College.
- 3.20) The first instance of Irish-medium provision in a dual-language context (now referred to as a unit or stream) was a unit established in Steelstown Primary School in Derry City in 1983, and was then referred to as Bunscoil Bhaile Stil.
- 3.21) Bunscoil Bhaile Stil opened the way for the subsequent creation of provision in Bunscoil Ard Mhacha in Armagh City in 1995, Bunscoil Eoin Baiste in Portadown in 1998, Bunscoil Naomh Bríd outside Maghera in 2000, Bunscoil Naomh Iosaf in Lurgan in 2000 and Coláiste Bhríde in Derry in 2000.
- 3.22) In September 1995 Bunscoil Bhaile Stil developed onto its own site and became a single-language Irish-medium primary school under the auspices of CCMS, and was renamed Bunscoil Cholm Cille.
- 3.23) In 2003 Coláiste Chaitríona, an IM stream in St Catherine's College Armagh, opened and was grant-aided immediately.

Table 3.1: The Development of Irish-medium Units and Streams

School	Attached to	Established
<b>PRIMARY SCHOOLS</b>		
Bunscoil Ard Mhacha	Christian Brothers PS, Armagh	1995
Bunscoil Eoin Baiste	St John the Baptist PS, Portadown	1998
Bunscoil Naomh Bríd	St Brigid's PS, Tirkane	2000
Bunscoil Naomh Prionsias	St Francis PS, Lurgan	2000
Bunscoil Naomh Pádraig	St Patrick's Boys' PS, Downpatrick	2001
Bunscoil Naomh Cainneach	St Canice's PS, Dungiven	2002
Gaelscoil Naomh Padraig	St Patrick's PS, Gortin	2002 (closed Aug 2007)
Bunscoil Naomh Colmcille	St Columbkille's PS, Carrickmore	2003
Gaelscoil Mhuire	St Mary's PS, Pomeroy	2003
Gaelscoil Phádraig Naofa	St Patrick's PS, Crossmaglen	2003
<b>POST-PRIMARY UNITS AND STREAMS</b>		
Coláiste Bhríde	St Brigid's College, Carnhill	2000
Meanscoil Chaitriona	St Catherine's College, Armagh	2002

- 3.24) GCSE Gaeilge was introduced by NISEAC (now part of CCEA) in 1993, for pupils in Irish-medium post-primary education, and for pupils in English-medium post-primary schools who had received their primary education in the IM sector.
- 3.25) During 1994-96, a research project was carried out to plan for Irish-medium Initial Teacher Education at St Mary's University College, Belfast. The Irish-medium PGCE course began in 1995. The following year, the first cohort of Irish-medium B.Ed. students commenced their four year specialist course. In 1998 An tÁisaonad Lán-Ghaeilge (Irish-medium Resource Unit) was established at the College.
- 3.26) The 1998 Education Order enabled the Department of Education to pay grants to any body appearing to the Department to have as an objective the encouragement of Irish-medium education: in August 2000 the Department of Education established the body Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta to encourage and



facilitate the strategic development of and provide guidance and advice to the Irish-medium sector.

- 3.27) The Irish-medium trust fund *Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta* was established by the Department of Education in March 2001. The Trust provides support for the development of the sector by establishing pre-school provision, awarding grants to independent schools and helping with capital costs for schools which have been approved for recurrent grant aid but are not yet eligible for capital grants.

### **Growth of Irish-medium Provision 1996–2007/08**

- 3.28) Data for the enrolment of pupils in IME provision from 1996 to 2007 is set out in Table 3.2. This shows that the number of pupils accessing their education through the medium of Irish has increased every year, despite an overall reduction in the number of pupils. Further information about this is given in Chapter 8, which looks at the challenges facing Irish-medium Education. Table 3.3 shows the number of children in free-standing schools, units and streams in 2007/08, when there were also 579 pupils in funded Irish-medium pre-school provision.

Table 3.2: School Population for Primary and Post-Primary Pupils in Irish-medium provision 1996/97–2007/08

Pupil Groups	1996/ 1997	1997/ 1998	1998/ 1999	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008
Year 1–7	870	1016	1127	1191	1407	1668	1864	2164	2259	2365	2598	2,653
IM as % of all Primary	0.47%	0.56%	0.63%	0.68%	0.82%	0.98%	1.11%	1.31%	1.38%	1.47%	1.63%	1.67%
Post-Primary pupils	179	231	268	308	388	395	425	480	521	570	611	632
IM as % of all Post-Primary	0.12%	0.15%	0.17%	0.20%	0.25%	0.25%	0.27%	0.31%	0.34%	0.38%	0.41%	0.43%

Source: NI School Census

Table 3.3: Number of children in grant aided  
Irish-medium schools and units 2007/08

	Irish-medium schools	Irish-medium units or streams	Total
Primary <sup>1</sup>	2,039	614	2,653
Post-primary	506	126	632

Source: NI school census

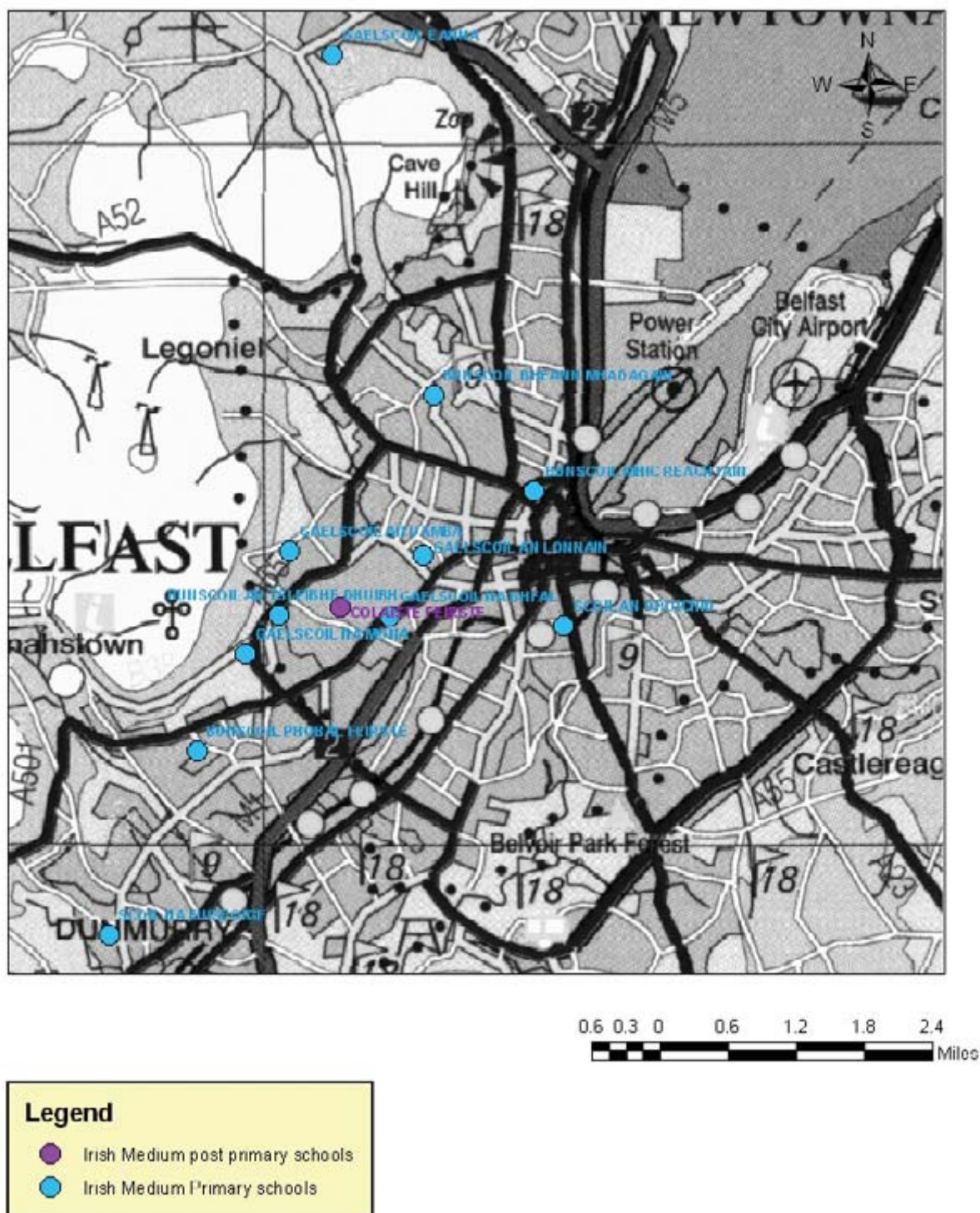
Note 1: Includes children in Year 1 – Year 7

### Current Models of Immersion used in Irish-medium Education

- 3.29) The school systems and immersion or bilingual methods adopted in other countries can be examined to inform the development of Irish-medium Education here. Effective practice in delivering Irish-medium Education has evolved using a range of approaches, which draw on and are informed by experience in other places, adapted to meet local circumstances. Currently those in place are:
- i. **Free-standing Irish-medium schools, both primary and post-primary.** These aim to provide a total-immersion setting for the children for whom Irish is not their first language, as they are educated, grow and develop.
  - ii. **Irish-medium Units at primary and post-primary schools.** These are attached to a host, English-medium, school, typically where there are insufficient pupils to establish a free-standing school. These also aim to provide an immersion experience for the children for whom Irish is not their first language, with all the teaching in the unit normally being conducted through the medium of Irish.
  - iii. **Irish-medium Streams at English-medium post-primary schools.** In this arrangement a group of pupils learn some of their subjects through the medium of Irish, and others through the medium of English. This is a partial-immersion approach for children for whom Irish is not their first language who transfer from Irish-medium primary provision.
- 3.30) As elsewhere in the world, these structures and approaches have arisen in response to demand, taking account of local circumstances. Again, as elsewhere

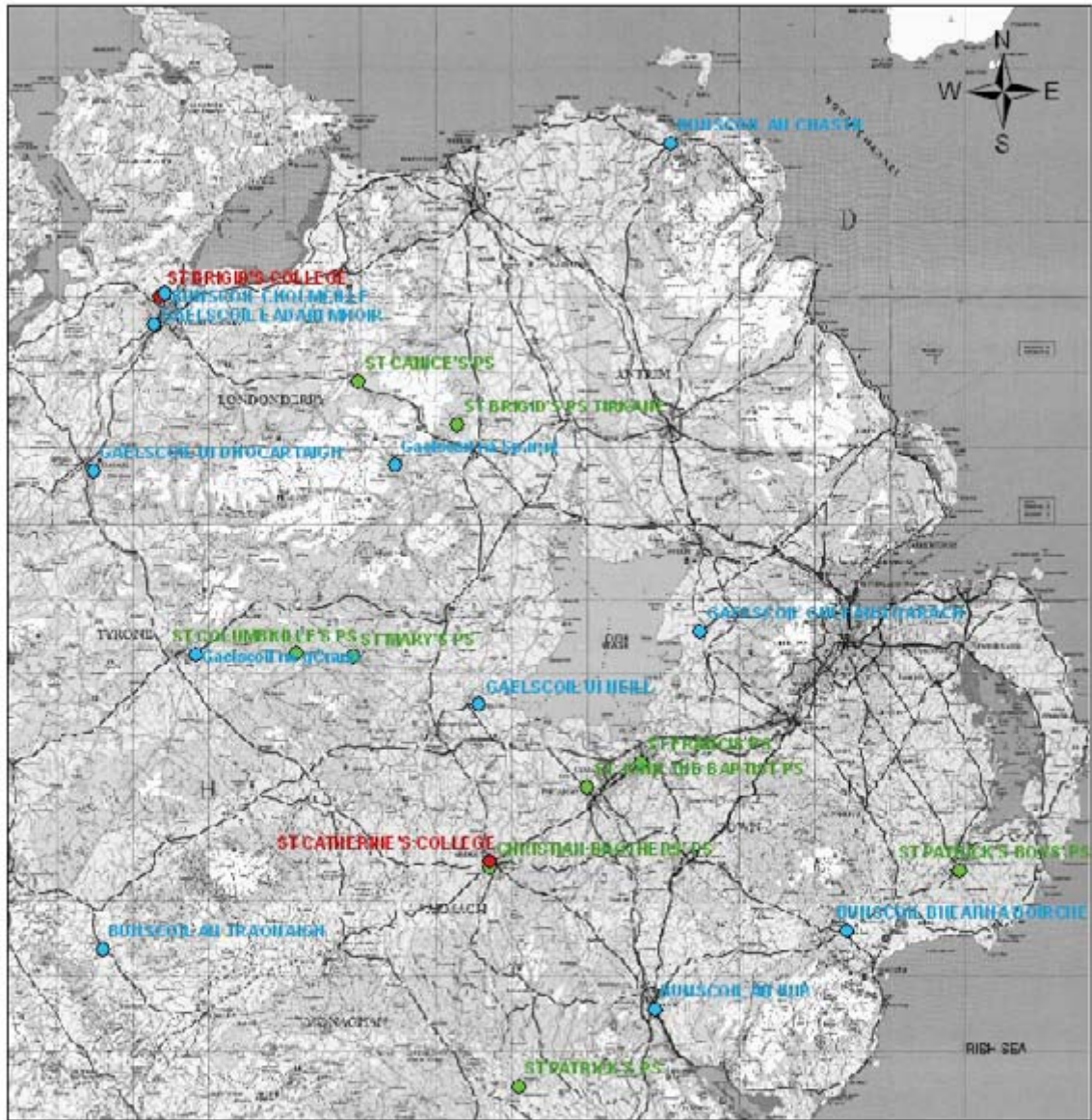
in the world, the evidence is that different structures and approaches can be effective and can provide high-quality education and develop bilingual children. All three existing practices can provide a high-standard of Irish and English and each has its own advocates and body of support. The particular practice that has evolved in a given area will be heavily influenced by the numbers of children seeking Irish-medium provision. Many in the Irish-medium sector recognise the need for a range of possible options when provision is being developed; the Project Board agreed that local circumstances require individual solutions, taking account of the geographical distribution of those seeking Irish-medium Education, not least when the sector as a whole is continuing to grow against the backdrop of an overall fall in pupil numbers in other sectors.

## Irish medium schools and units - Primary and Post primary schools - 2007/08





**Irish medium schools and units - Primary and Post primary schools - 2007/08**



### Legend

- Irish Medium primary schools
- Post primary schools with Irish Medium Units
- Primary schools with Irish Medium Units

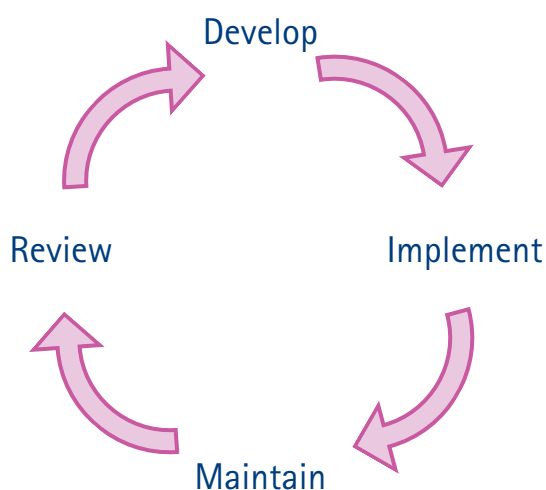


## Chapter 4

### Review of Irish-medium Education to Date: Development of Policies

#### Introduction

- 4.1) The Project Board considered an analysis of how the Department of Education's policies have developed and operated over the last five years with regard to pre-school, primary and post-primary education. The focus of this Chapter is on how the Department of Education has taken account of the needs of Irish-medium Education.
- 4.2) Policy development is an iterative and interactive process, often represented as a circle:



- 4.3) The education system is complex, and at any point in time there will be policies at each stage of this cycle. Typically, policies are refined as they are equality-assessed, implemented and reviewed, taking account of feedback from stakeholders in the education system.

- 4.4) To capture the full range of interactions between DE and Irish-medium Education a policy audit was carried out across DE to identify education policies and whether they:
- i) Applied to Irish-medium education only;
  - ii) Applied across the education system, with a differentiation in the policy for Irish-medium education; or
  - iii) Applied across the education system, with Irish-medium treated the same as everyone else.

### **Policies Applied to Irish-medium Education Only**

- 4.5). The over-arching policy that defines all of DE's interactions with Irish-medium education is the duty in the 1998 Education Order to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education. This is in line with the obligations that arise from the EU Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. In fulfilling this duty DE funds:
- i. Irish-medium provision for children in their immediate pre-school year through the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme;
  - ii. Irish-medium Education schools that are viable and sustainable, do not involve unreasonable public expenditure and meet specified criteria;
  - iii. an Irish-medium Education unit or stream where demand is insufficient for a new school.
  - iv. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.
- 4.6) One other policy area is unique to Irish-medium education: a fund to provide additional support for existing grant-aided Irish-medium units. This supports the employment of Irish-speaking classroom assistants.

### **Policies Applied Across the Education System, Differentiated for Irish-medium Education**

- 4.7) Three of the policies that are differentiated for Irish-medium Education have a strong impact on the development of the sector.
- i. First is school capital planning. The criteria for establishing new schools are the same for all sectors. However, in recent years only the Irish-medium and Integrated sectors have been expanding.



Taking account of this expansion, the Integrated sector has a borrowing arrangement to facilitate its expansion. Discussions have taken place to explore arrangements to support the expansion of the Irish-medium sector.

- ii. Second, the differentiation in policy for the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme (PSEEP). Irish-medium providers have been the priority in re-allocating funding for voluntary provision since September 2004, and when new providers are allowed into the funding scheme.
  - iii. Third, school transport policy impacts on the development of Irish-medium Education. ELBs have provisions to take account of the travel needs of pupils attending Irish-medium settings.
- 4.8) Other policies differentiated for Irish-medium include the Common Funding Formula. It has factors that take account of the additional needs of Irish-medium Education, including developing the curriculum, and administering units attached to English-medium schools.
- 4.9) The revised curriculum is differentiated for Irish-medium Education, through different requirements for Irish-medium schools in relation to Language and Literacy at Key Stage 3, as set out in the Education Order of 2007 (Curriculum Minimum Content).
- 4.10) The final policy area differentiated for the Irish-medium sector is the process to identify the number of places needed for the Initial Intake of Teachers. DE determines the number of teachers admitted to initial teacher education courses on an annual basis and in doing so seeks to maintain a reasonable balance between supply and the projected number of teaching vacancies in grant-aided schools. The specific needs of Irish-medium Education are considered as part of this process.

#### **Policies Applied the Same Across the Education System, Including for Irish-medium Education**

- 4.11) The remaining policies currently apply without differentiation. Some protect certain statutory or fundamental rights for children, such as their safety, or their access to a high-quality education. Others are universal policies that are often in the earlier stages of development or implementation, and which may evolve differentiations in response to the needs of Irish-medium Education, for example, as a result of this Review.



## Chapter 5

### Review of Irish-medium Education to Date: Outcomes of Investment in Irish-medium Education over the last five years

#### Introduction

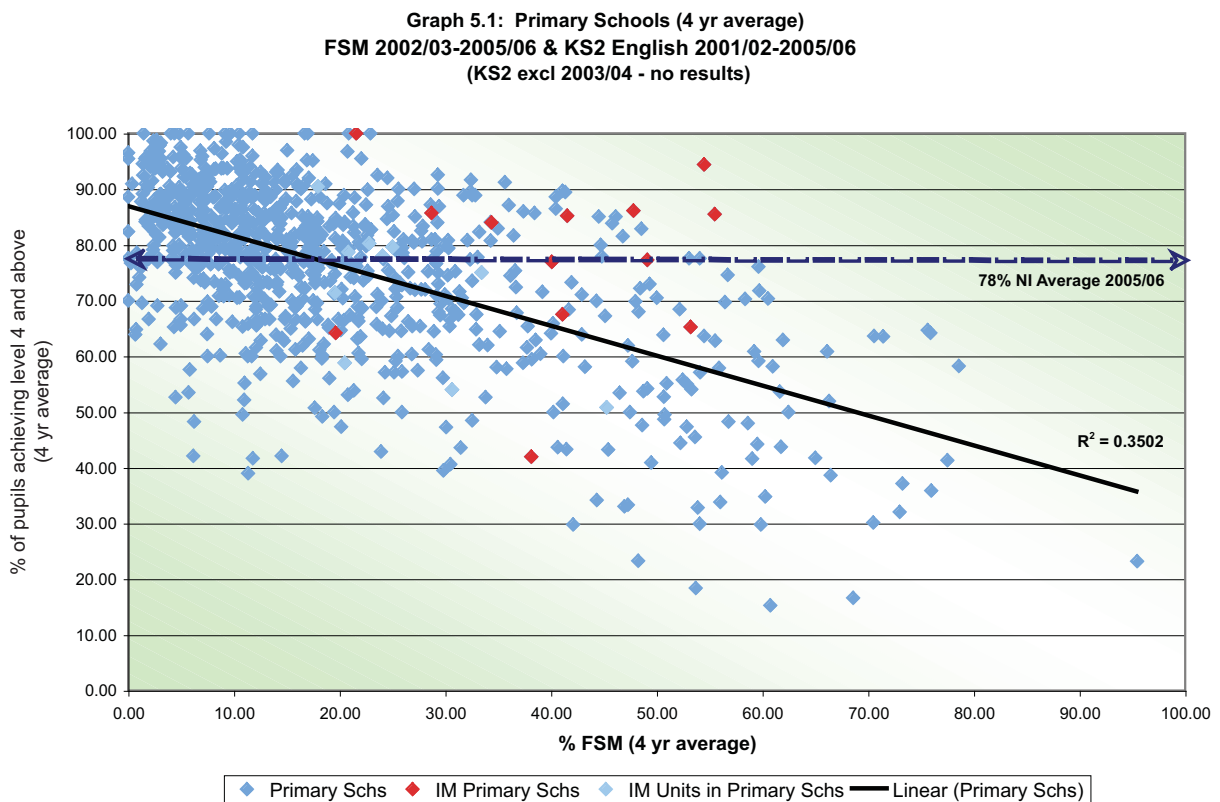
- 5.1) The final element examined by the Project Board in assessing the development of Irish-medium Education to date was a study of the outcomes of government's financial investment in Irish-medium Education over the last 5 years. Deloitte MCS Ltd (Deloitte) were commissioned to undertake this, and their key findings are summarised in this Chapter. The Deloitte study drew on the range of information available to the Review (mostly presented elsewhere in this Report), namely:
- i. Growing demand for Irish-medium Education, to date and projected into the future;
  - ii. ETI assessments of the educational attainment in Irish-medium schools;
  - iii. Assessments of the condition and viability of the Irish-medium schools' estate;
  - iv. Challenges facing the Irish-medium sector; and
  - v. Expenditure information.

#### Education Quality in Irish-medium Education

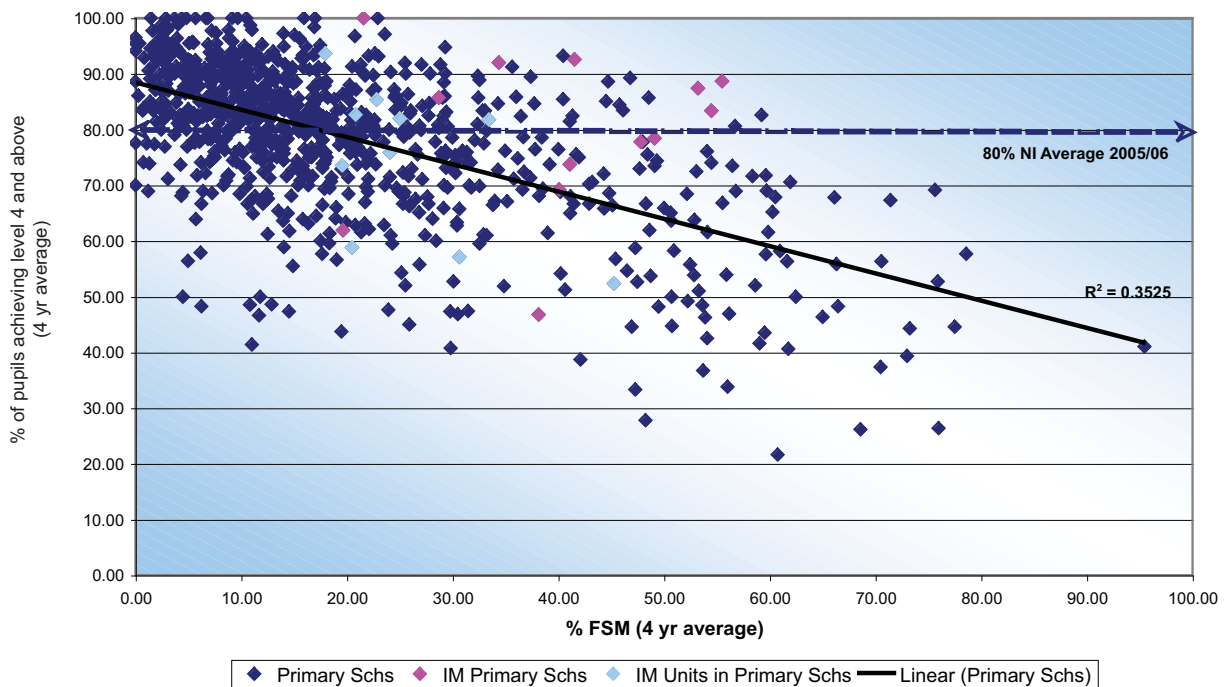
- 5.2) The ETI provided the Review with an assessment of educational quality in the Irish-medium sector, which is usefully read alongside their analysis of the benefits of bilingualism included earlier (paragraphs 3.6 to 3.11). The ETI noted that much has been achieved by, and in, the IM sector-in terms of infrastructure, including: the establishment of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, new school builds, teacher training courses, Curriculum Advisory and Support Services, and Special Educational Needs support.
- 5.3) The ETI acknowledged that the many unique features of the small Irish-medium sector make comparisons, benchmarking and target setting very difficult, for those working within the IM sector as well as for those examining the outcomes of the sector from the outside. For the primary phase, when compared to

schools of a similar size and with similar entitlements to Free School Meals, Irish-medium schools' performance is quite favourable. The percentage of children achieving level 4 or better in English and Maths at the end of Key stage 2 is generally good when school size or FSM index are taken into consideration, see Graphs 5.1 and 5.1. At post-primary level data is available only for one free-standing Irish-medium school, which does not allow a meaningful assessment to be made of the performance of the sector.

- 5.4) The ETI also undertook a qualitative assessment of the Irish-medium sector, drawing on information gathered by inspectors, who have visited every IM primary and post-primary provider here since September 2004 on at least one occasion. The ETI identified a range of challenges facing the Irish-medium schools, see paragraphs 7.9 to 7.11.



Graph 5.1: Primary Schools (4 yr average)  
FSM 2002/03-2005/06 & KS2 Maths 2001/02-2005/06  
(KS2 excl 2003/04 - no results)



## Expenditure

- 5.5) In considering Government expenditure Deloitte included the direct funding of pre-school, primary and post-primary education as well as other DE expenditure on encouraging and facilitating Irish-medium Education. Expenditure by DCAL and DEL associated with Irish-medium Education was also included for completeness.
- 5.6) Over the five-year period the total Government Expenditure across the three Departments on Irish-medium Education was £49.7m.
- 5.7) £42.7m of the £49.7m was spent by DE in Irish-medium schools in the 5 year period. Deloitte concluded that £41.0 of this £42.7m spent in schools (96%) would have been allocated to educate these children had they been taught through the medium of English. This reflects the fact that school funding largely 'follows' the pupil irrespective of what school they attend. There may have been some reduction in the amount of expenditure under these funding streams had there been fewer, larger schools to support. However, this could be said for all

school sectors, not just Irish-medium. Expenditure on schools specifically to support the Irish-medium approach totalled £1.7m in the last five years.

- 5.8) As £41.0m of the total £49.7m funding would have been spent regardless of the medium of instruction, Deloitte identified from the evidence available that Government expenditure of £8.7m was incurred in the last five years which can be entirely attributed to the education taking place through the medium of Irish. The table below gives details of all Government expenditure over the last 5 years.

Table 5.1: Government Expenditure on Irish-medium Education 2002/03–2006/07

Expenditure	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	Total
<b>1. Typical Schools Expenditure</b>						
LMS <sup>3</sup>	£2,778,148	£5,889,220	£6,513,889	£5,923,360	£6,508,967	£27,613,584
School Improvement	£52,220	£75,400	£228,954	£151,000	£234,000	£741,574
Extended Schools	-	-	-	-	£194,652	£194,652
Pre-School	£565,000	£605,406	£476,000	£530,302	£618,382	£2,795,090
Transport	£342,000	£410,644	£487,719	£353,857	£313,417	£1,907,637
Capital	£775,718	£1,589,219	£3,086,106	£2,056,874	£278,623	£7,786,540
Sub Total	£4,513,086	£8,569,889	£10,792,668	£9,015,393	£8,148,041	£41,039,077
<b>2. IME-Unique Schools Expenditure</b>						
IME Budgets	£83,000	£106,000	£164,000	£104,000	£108,000	£565,000
Curriculum Support	-	-	-	£239,000	£250,825	£489,825
Units	-	-	-	£304,811	£323,913	£628,724
Sub Total	£83,000	£106,000	£164,000	£647,811	£682,738	£1,683,549
<b>3. Other IME Expenditure</b>						
CnaG	£282,494	£422,700	£473,500	£524,000	£515,000	£2,217,694
InaG	£500,000	£450,000	£420,000	£75,000	£200,000	£1,645,000
C2k	-	£33,700	£477,452	£477,949	£423,823	£1,412,924
DCAL	-	£75,000	£80,000	£180,000	£582,239	£917,239
DEL	£73,605	£179,320	£154,591	£162,888	£186,713	£757,117
Sub Total	£856,099	£1,160,720	£1,605,543	£1,419,837	£1,907,775	£6,949,974
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£5,452,185</b>	<b>£9,836,609</b>	<b>£12,562,211</b>	<b>£11,083,041</b>	<b>£10,738,554</b>	<b>£49,672,600</b>

3 Curriculum Support and additional funding for IME units is shown separately from the overall LMS figure

## **Provision and Demand**

- 5.9) Existing IME provision is in small schools and units and streams attached to English-medium schools. The sector is characterised by small schools with high proportions of pupils qualifying for FSM and lower than average pupil-teacher ratios.
- 5.10) In response to forecasted growth in pupil numbers seeking Irish-medium Education, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta has, since 2002, been developing the process of area-based planning for the sector, although its projections do not currently reflect the minimum enrolment recommended by Bain for sustainable schools. Future provision of Irish-medium places must be within the context of the local area-based planning being developed for all schools.

## **Conclusions**

- 5.11) Deloitte concluded that:
- i. the level of identifiable additional expenditure on Irish-medium Education is a very small proportion of the total spend on education;
  - ii. for a limited amount of additional funding a range of educational, social and cultural benefits have been generated and reasonable educational outcomes obtained; and
  - iii. Local Area-based Planning will take account of changing demand across the schools system (including increasing demand for Irish-medium Education) and will facilitate more cost effective use of estate by planning for larger, more sustainable schools.





# Challenges Facing Irish-medium Education

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## Chapter 6

### Background to the Challenges to be Addressed: Changes in the numbers of pupils

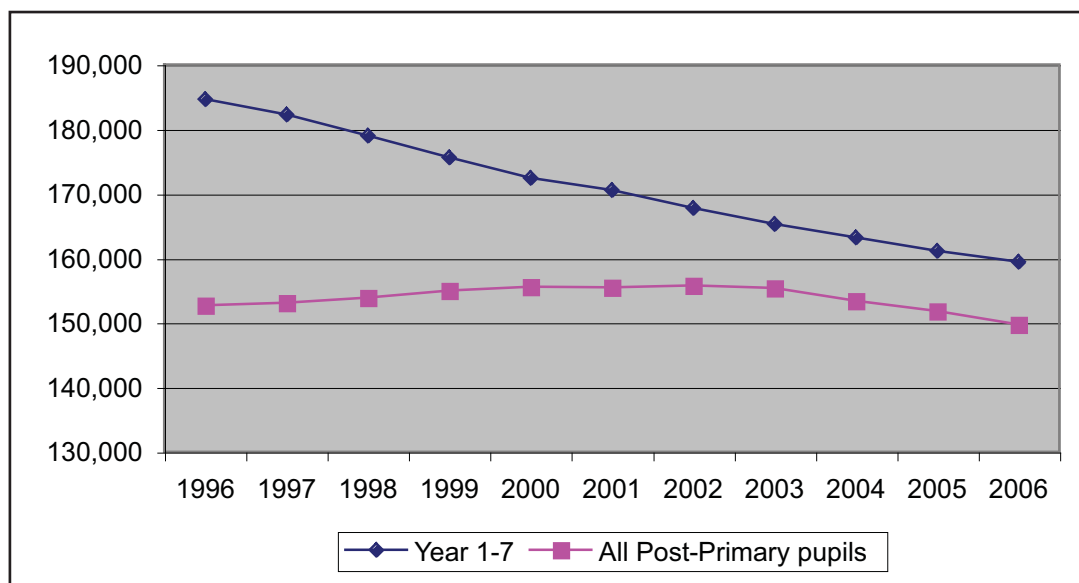
#### Introduction

- 6.1) This Chapter looks at changes in the school aged population as a whole (known as 'demographic trends'). There are two separate trends that are of importance to this Review. First is the change in overall pupil numbers. Second is the change in the numbers of pupils accessing Irish-medium Education. The analysis considers historical trends, and then projects these forward to help inform deliberations about future likely enrolments and the issues that might arise as a result.

#### Demographic Trends for the Total School-age Population in all sectors

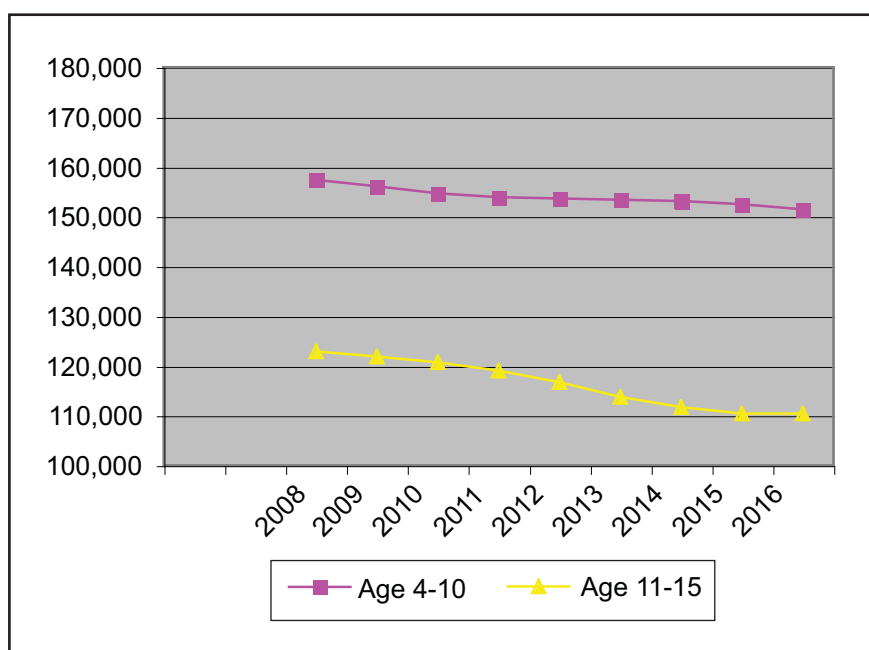
- 6.2) Demographic trends among the school-age population pose a challenge for the Irish-medium sector. Overall the school-age population has been declining: a trend that is expected to continue well into the future. Within this overall trend there will be localised areas where pupil numbers may grow, for example, as the result of a new housing development drawing families to an area. The Bain Review looked at the challenges arising from the overall decrease in pupil numbers to 2016. The primary school-aged population is predicted to decrease by almost 7%, while the post-primary school-aged population is expected to decrease by more than 12%. This provides a challenging backdrop for the future development of the Irish-medium sector, which is managing growth whilst the larger educational system is largely focusing on managing contraction.

Figure 6.1: School Population for all Primary and Post-Primary Pupils, 1996/97–2005/06



Source: NI School Census, cited in the Bain Report.

Figure 6.2: Projected School Population for all Primary and Post-Primary Pupils, 2008–2016

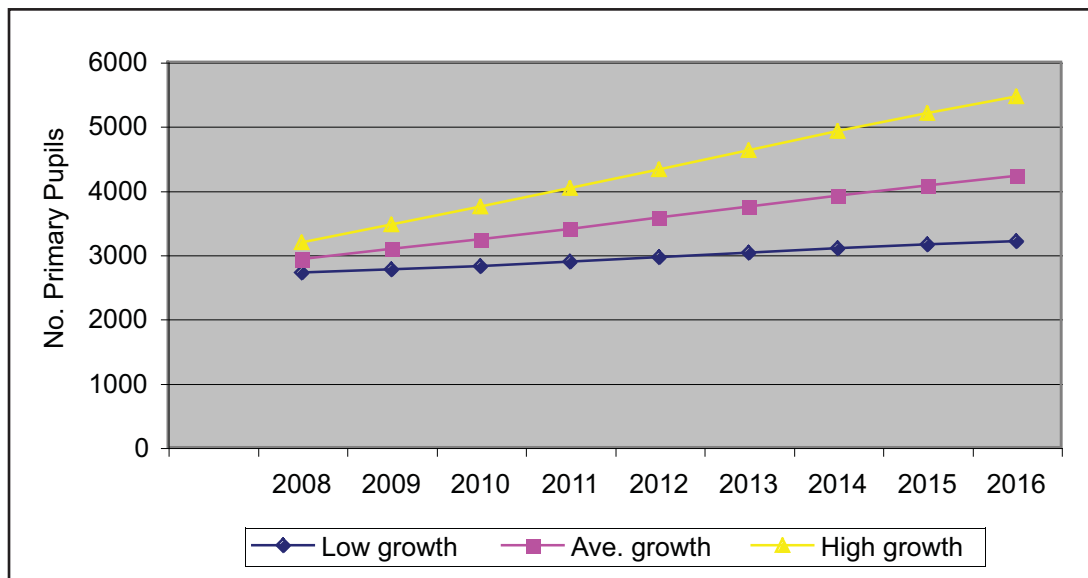


Source: NI School Census, cited in the Bain Report.

## Projected Demand for Irish Medium Primary Provision

- 6.3) Projections are, by their nature, inherently uncertain. This uncertainty can become more marked as we move from projections considering an entire school-age population, as in the Bain Report, to any sub-sector of the school age population, such as the Irish-medium school-age population.
- 6.4) Projections are, of course, indicative, and need to be used and interpreted with a degree of caution.
- 6.5) As set out in Chapter 3, the number of pupils in Irish-medium Education has been increasing. Demand for IME primary provision was projected based on this historical growth data, combined with the projections for all primary provision. The full range of actual year-on-year growth of the Irish-medium share of primary provision was used: "Low" is the smallest annual % growth (0.05%), "Ave," is the average annual % growth (0.12%), and "High" is the largest annual % growth (0.2%). Underpinning this approach is the assumption that growth in supply provides a good measure of growth in demand. The projections are charted in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3: Projected School Population for Irish-medium Primary Pupils, 2008–2016

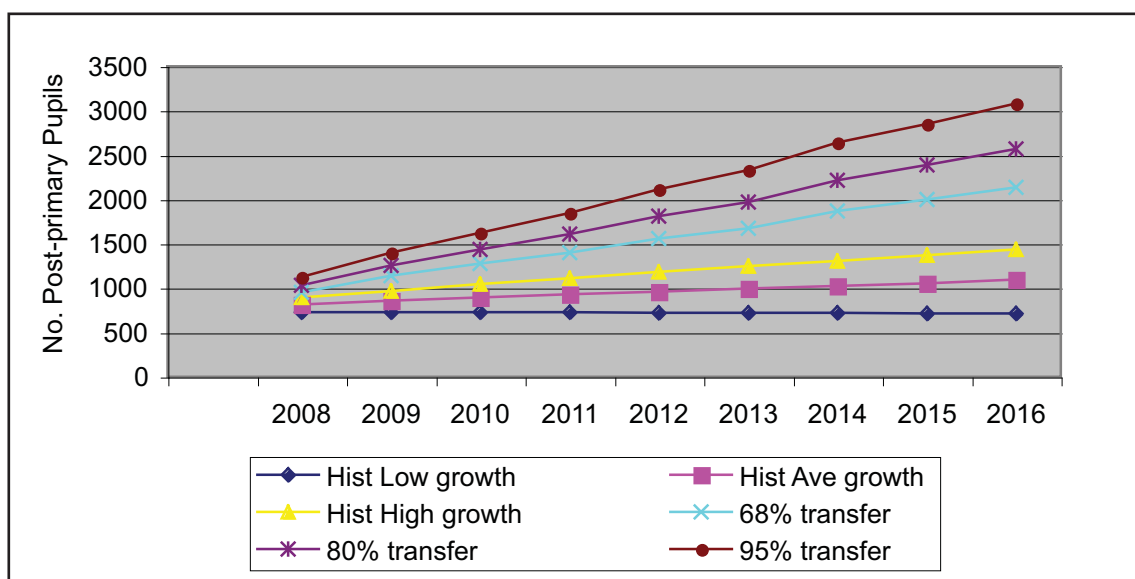


- 6.6) Despite the falling number of primary pupils, the projected growth in demand for IME means that even the lowest growth projection predicts an increased number of IME primary pupils.

### Projected Demand for Irish-medium Post-primary Provision

- 6.7) Projecting demand for post-primary provision was more complex than for primary. First projections were made as for primary, based on actual growth data for post-primary demand, using the smallest annual % growth ("Hist. Low", which equals 0.005%), the average annual % growth ("Hist. Ave.", which equals 0.03%), and the largest annual % growth ("Hist. High", which equals 0.05%).
- 6.8) The assumption that historical growth in supply provides a good measure of growth in demand may be less robust due to the more limited access to post-primary Irish-medium provision. Therefore additional projections were developed based on the actual transfer rates from primary to post-primary in Belfast (where growth in supply is likely to better reflect growth in demand). Again a range of actual annual transfer rates was used, based on data going back over 10 years; the lowest (68%), the average (80%) and the highest (95%). These gave average annual % growths in demand for post-primary IME provision of (0.1%), (0.13%) and (0.16%) respectively. These transfer rates were then applied to the entire IME primary population, to gauge possible total demand for post-primary IME provision. This provided 6 different projected post-primary populations by 2016, which are charted in Figure 6.4.

Figure 6.4: Projected School Population for Irish-medium Post-Primary Pupils, 2008–2016



- 6.9) The three lower projections show how the number of pupils in Irish-medium post-primary may change if no new provision is developed. The three higher projections show how the number of pupils in post-primary might change if additional provision was to be developed. An underpinning assumption is that the higher projections would require sufficient numbers of pupils in an area to create demand for viable provision, in a free-standing school, a unit or a stream.
- 6.10) The number of Irish-medium post-primary schools and units that that would be needed to meet these levels of demand was considered. It was recognised that increasing demand for Irish-medium Education could be met in a number of ways, dependant on such variables as geographical spread of demand and the capacity of existing or new provision to meet this demand. In addition, it was recognised that it will be important to ensure that, at a local level, provision is effective and sustainable.

## **Summary**

- 6.11) While projections and assumptions about growth rates can contribute to considerations of the future, the key message from the analysis of demographic trends is clear. The demand for Irish-medium Education is growing while other, English-medium sectors are contracting. Changes to the pattern of school provision are a feature of this contraction, and they understandably generate a lot of attention. Representatives of the Irish-medium sector highlight their concern that their needs may not get the attention they deserve when set against the often more visible needs of English-medium provision. Notwithstanding the growth of Irish-medium Education at a regional level, it will remain important to ensure provision at a local level provides a continuity of sustainable provision for the future.





## Chapter 7

# Background to the Challenges to be Addressed: Education Initiatives and Issues

### Introduction

- 7.1) The structures within which public services are delivered are changing. In addition, education policies, are changing substantially. The changes impact on almost every aspect of the educational landscape. This chapter briefly summarises the key changes, and draws out their implications for this Review. It also looks at the key educational challenges facing Irish-medium Education.

### Modernising the Educational Infrastructure

- 7.2) In the Investment Strategy for 2008-2018, the Executive outlines its plans to invest in developing the infrastructure that will help deliver better public services for all. For schools and youth services the Strategy commits investment of over £700m during the first three years, rising to a total of £3.5 billion over the ten year period. As well as the obvious opportunity these funds provide, challenges exist for the education sector to develop the effective strategic planning this investment requires. This will impact on every school sector throughout the next decade.

### The Review of Public Administration

- 7.3) The Review of Public Administration impacts on the education sector chiefly by altering the arrangements through which schools will be provided with support. A new body, The Education and Skills Authority, will replace the Education and Library Boards, the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, the Youth Council, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, and the front-line functions of the NI Council for Integrated Education and the Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. This will harmonise support for schools wherever they are located, and will provide a single focus for the support services to the Irish-medium sector. In addition, the Education and Skills Authority will be responsible for delivering the policy for local Area Based Planning, working with sectoral representative bodies, including representatives of the Irish-medium sector.

## **Changing Education Policies**

- 7.4) Education policies are also evolving. There is a revised curriculum, and a new Entitlement Framework is being introduced to provide pupils aged 14–19 with access to a wider range of academic and vocational courses. The arrangements for transfer from primary to post-primary school are being revised. Reviews of major policy areas, such as Early Years, school improvement, and how to support children with Additional Educational Needs, are in progress. The entire education system is undergoing major changes, and these changes provide a challenging backdrop which will need creative thinking and resolution to address.

## **Information and Communication Technology: Classroom 2000**

- 7.5) The Classroom 2000 (C2k) Project was established to put in place the infrastructure and services necessary to support the enhanced use of ICT in schools in support of learning, teaching, assessment and reporting. C2k provides every grant-aided school with networked computers, based on enrolment numbers. The system also provides administration and management systems for staff. C2K is a managed service, which includes the provision of hardware and all technical support, so that schools are freed to concentrate on the use of ICT in learning and teaching.
- 7.6) C2k provides access to a "virtual classroom" known as LearningNI (LNI), which links all school networks to an online data centre, providing broadband access to a wide range of digital resources as well as filtered access to the internet, e-mail and video-conferencing.
- 7.7) A programme to replace the existing ICT equipment in primary schools by 13,000 new computers, to improve network access and update software is nearing completion. In addition to this, 20,000 laptops are being provided across nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in the remainder of the 2007/08 school year. An additional 5,000 laptops were provided to primary schools to enable them to carry out computer-based assessment of pupils.
- 7.8) Historically, a small number of Irish-medium and integrated grant-aided schools have not been cabled for the C2k service due to being in unvested temporary accommodation. In some cases standalone (i.e. non-networked) systems were provided. Using ICT is now a statutory requirement in the revised curriculum. Primary schools are also required to complete computer-based diagnostic assessment of, by 2009/10, all pupils in Years 4 to 7 using the InCAS computer-based diagnostic assessment tool. The Department of Education is

therefore working to ensure that all schools receive a network connection and appropriate hardware.

### **Education and Training Inspectorate Analysis of Challenges**

- 7.9) The Education and Training Inspectorate analysed the challenges specific to teaching, leadership and management in the Irish-medium Education context, which included:
- i. the comparative youth and inexperience at all levels;
  - ii. around 90% of principals having been in post for seven years or less;
  - iii. 40% of teachers and 70% of principals having no specific Irish-medium element to their teaching qualification;
  - iv. 25% of primary teachers and principals having received post-primary teacher training;
  - v. very few teachers in the Irish-medium sector having been pupils in the sector themselves;
  - vi. very few teachers in the Irish-medium sector being native Irish speakers, with a minority who are not as competent in the language as one would like;
  - vii. very few parents have sufficient Irish to support their children's education through the medium of Irish;
  - viii. a large percentage of teaching principals; and
  - ix. a severe shortage of resources.
- 7.10) The Education and Training Inspectorate noted that those involved in Irish-medium Education recognise and accept these difficulties, seeing them as additional challenges to be addressed, and not as reasons for an unsatisfactory educational experience for children.

7.11) In addition to this analysis, the results of formal Inspection visits to Irish-medium settings identified other areas for attention:

- i. Child Protection arrangements;
- ii. Leadership and management, including the enhancement of School Development Planning with a focus on learning and teaching;
- iii. Access to and use of ICT;
- iv. Special Educational Needs support;
- v. The use of unqualified teachers; and
- vi. Governance support for schools as they develop.

### **Sustainability**

7.12) All the challenges facing the Irish-medium sector, outlined in this and the previous chapter, are drawn together in one key area: sustainability. The Bain Report dealt extensively with this issue, and recommended (p. xxxi, para 6):

"The policy for sustainable schools in NI should ensure that all schools are sustainable in terms of the quality of the educational experience of children, enrolment trends, financial position, school leadership and management, accessibility, and the strengths of their links to the community."

7.13) Bain went on to recommend minimum enrolments (p. xxxi, para 8 a):

"The minimum (not optimal) enrolments for new primary schools and for Years 8-12 in new post-primary schools should be (i) Primary: 140 pupils in urban areas, and 105 pupils in rural areas, and (ii) post-primary: 500 pupils. When the enrolment in an existing school falls below the relevant level, the future of the school should be reviewed."

7.14) The Project Board was of the opinion that, within the broader context discussed above, addressing sustainability and all its attendant issues was the underpinning challenge to be addressed for the Irish-medium sector. This has been used to inform all the considerations and recommendations that follow in this Report.

## Chapter 8

### Challenges to be Addressed: Issues Considered by the Review

- 8.1) The background to the challenges facing the Irish-medium sector has been explored in the previous Chapters. The Project Board then considered the specific issues arising from these challenges that face the Irish-medium sector. These specific issues were identified from a range of sources, including:
- i. The audit of DE policies;
  - ii. The knowledge of the Project Board and the Advisory Group;
  - iii. Meetings held with pupils, parents and teachers in the Irish-medium sector, in Armagh, Belfast, Cookstown, Derry, and Newry; and
  - iv. Correspondence submitted to the Review.
- 8.2) The issues are set out below. Like the recommendations they inspire, they range from the visionary to the every-day.

#### How Irish-medium Education is delivered

- 8.3) There has been much discussion throughout the Review about the most appropriate models of immersion and school structures for delivering Irish-medium Education. These were considered early in the decision-making phase of the Review, as recommendations on these issues have implications for much of what was considered subsequently. The topics debated included:
- i. The appropriateness of different models of teaching, with a strong focus on immersion models;
  - ii. Language use outside the classroom;
  - iii. Teaching reading in English in IME primary schools; and
  - iv. The most appropriate school structures (namely free-standing schools, units or streams) for delivering Irish-medium Education.

## **Developing Sustainable Irish-medium Provision**

- 8.4) The various phases of education, pre-school, primary and post-primary, were considered chronologically, beginning with pre-school. The discussions for pre-school included:
- i. Opening funded IM pre-school provision where existing pre-school places are available in English-medium settings;
  - ii. Essential Pre-school experience for children entering IM primary;
  - iii. The issues to do with voluntary and statutory pre-school provision for Irish-medium Education; and
  - iv. The need for research on the linguistic outcomes of pre-school Irish-medium Education.
- 8.5) Primary provision was considered next. Here the Project Project Board concentrated on addressing the challenges that arise in small schools, seeking solutions drawing on all the opportunities available to support teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The focus of the Review was on identifying a robust model for sustainable provision that would:
- i. Provide strong leadership for small schools; and
  - ii. Address the capital issues for future, as well as existing, provision.
- 8.6) The condition of the existing primary schools' estate was then considered by the Project Board.
- 8.7) Post-primary was then addressed. Here the key consideration was identifying how careful strategic planning could ensure Irish-medium provision can be developed over time to meet demand. A key challenge for all post-primary providers, Irish-medium and English-medium, is to adapt to provide the wider subject choice being introduced at ages 14-19 to deliver a high-quality, relevant, educational experience for all learners.
- 8.8) The next elements considered for developing sustainable Irish-medium schools were units and streams. These are established approaches, delivering sustainable Irish-medium provision. The Project Board considered options for further developing the process of establishing units/streams as an important part of the future of Irish-medium Education.

### **Support for Educators**

- 8.9) Educators in all sectors require appropriate support and training to assist them to deliver the high-quality education to which they aspire. The Project Board considered the specific needs of those in the Irish-medium sector, including for:
- i. Boards of Governors;
  - ii. Principals;
  - iii. Trainee, beginning and experienced teachers;
  - iv. Classroom Assistants;
  - v. Pre-school leaders and assistants; and
  - vi. Ancillary and other staff.

### **Educational Resources**

- 8.10) The availability of suitable educational resources supports effectiveness and high-quality in the education system. The Project Board considered:
- i. Curriculum support and classroom teaching resources in Irish;
  - ii. Support for children in Irish-medium settings with Special Educational Needs;
  - iii. Opportunities for informal learning through the medium of Irish;
  - iv. Irish-language support at home for children from English-speaking homes; and
  - v. Issues arising from the multiple translations of exam papers and pupils' answers for the Irish-medium sector.

### **Embedding Irish-medium Education in the Educational System**

- 8.11) This section of the Review considered how to ensure that Irish-medium Education:
- i. Has its needs addressed from the outset in policy development and delivery;
  - ii. Is appropriately considered through research; and
  - iii. Is available to all communities.

## **All-Ireland and Trans-Regional Opportunities for Irish-medium Education**

- 8.12) The final section of the Review examined the opportunities that could arise from co-operation across all of Ireland, east-west and beyond. The focus was on the benefits that could be gained for learners in all areas.



# Recommendations on the way forward for Irish-medium Education

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## Chapter 9

### How Irish-medium Education is Delivered

#### Introduction

- 9.1) This Chapter looks at two elements of how Irish-medium Education is delivered: possible models of bilingual education, focusing on immersion; and school structures within which immersion models may be delivered.
- 9.2) Bilingual and immersion education around the world was reviewed, looking at the models of immersion used and how they are delivered, before considering the implications of this evidence for Irish-medium Education here.

#### The Additive Bilingualism Enrichment Principle

- 9.3) Recent studies into Immersion Education tend to argue against the rigid separation of both languages and suggest that in gaining control over two language systems, the bilingual child has had to decipher much more language input than the monolingual child who has been exposed to only one language system. Thus, the bilingual child has had considerably more practice in analysing meanings than the monolingual child. It seems clear that the child who has mastered two languages has a linguistic advantage over the monolingual child. This conclusion suggests that educators in immersion programmes should be conscious of the potential for enhancing children's awareness of language by encouraging them to compare and contrast aspects of their two languages. This implies that the separation of languages that characterizes most immersion programmes should become less rigid as students progress through the primary school and into post-primary education. This is known as The Additive Bilingualism Enrichment Principle.

#### The Linguistic Interdependence Principle

- 9.4) Evaluations of bilingual programs in which students are instructed for all or part of the day through a minority language, consistently show that students, who may speak either the majority and/or the minority language at home, experience no long-term academic retardation in the majority language. This suggests that first and second language academic skills are interdependent, ie, manifestations of a common underlying proficiency. This is known as The Linguistic Interdependence Principle.

## **International Models of Bilingual Education**

- 9.5) There are many varieties of immersion language education, practised in different countries and other areas. These varieties of immersion education differ from each other mainly in relation to the starting point (early – delayed – late) and the extent (total or partial). Thus there can be 'early total', 'early partial', 'delayed total', 'delayed partial', 'late total' or 'late partial'.
- 9.6) The 'early' varieties tend to begin at pre-school level or at the start of primary education. This version is the prevalent model used here. The 'delayed' varieties tend to begin at some point between the ages of eight and fourteen and the 'late' varieties tend to begin after that, including with adults.
- 9.7) International models of immersion were considered by the Education and Training Inspectorate. Practices were identified for our closest neighbours, in the south of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Provision further afield was also examined, including the USA and Canada, France, Spain, Estonia and Japan.
- 9.8) It is important to recognise the difficulties inherent in comparing models from different countries, due to differences in local educational arrangements, in culture and in attitudes to languages and language diversity. A wide range of approaches is in place around the world, and some examples of key features are given below:
- i. Pre-school experience is common in Scotland, but less so in the south of Ireland;
  - ii. In Scotland a range of flexible approaches are used, including a 3-18 completely Scottish Gaelic-medium (GM) school in Glasgow (the only GM school in the city), GM units and classes and schools where one or more subjects are taught through Scottish Gaelic.
  - iii. In Wales, a network of 'forest schools', youth clubs and camping/sporting activities through Welsh is organized for schools. A series of competitions (through annual meetings organised by the youth organisation Urdd Gobaith Cymru) is a prestigious way of promoting Welsh language and culture for ages 7-12 at local, county and national level.
  - iv. A variety of bi-lingual programme models is used successfully on various sociolinguistic contexts. These models range from 100% minority language in the early grades, for example in Canada with French immersion, to 50/50 programmes throughout primary

school in some dual language programmes in the USA. Others simply using the minority language to teach content subjects (eg Geography) at post-primary level as in parts of Germany/UK.

- v. There is a variety of 'early partial immersion' models. In France, partial immersion education is 50/50 in approach for French/Breton and French/Basque programmes. International schools in Japan also adopt a 50/50 model.
- vi. In Estonia, Russian-speaking children are initially taught only through Estonian, with increasing amounts of Russian introduced as they progress through school.

- 9.9) These examples illustrate the variety of approaches that are used successfully throughout the world to develop children in a range of settings into highly competent bilinguals.

### **Parents' Views on Models of Immersion and Schools Structures**

- 9.10) Decisions taken by parents in choosing the school attended by their child are challenging, and require them to balance many factors: here we will touch only on those factors most directly affected by how the school chooses to provide Irish-medium Education. The Review secretariat's consultative meeting with a sample of parents found that all of them want their children to have high-quality education and to have the benefits of being bilingual in Irish and English. Some said that they are motivated to choose Irish-medium Education as they perceive it as a superior educational model; other parents stated a strong desire for their children to be able to play a part in establishing Irish-speaking communities. In addition parents placed a premium on their children developing their Irish language skills to the highest degree possible. These are not, of course, mutually exclusive motivations.
- 9.11) Some of the debate on approaches to delivering Irish-medium Education appears to be underpinned by beliefs in how effective the different approaches are in meeting these various aims. In developing Irish-speaking communities it is clearly desirable that children are willing to use their Irish outside school. Arguments in support of free-standing Irish-medium schools can be based on the belief that this approach will best support the maintenance of a stronger Irish-language environment in the school, and therefore better Irish-language acquisition and use in the wider community. Another argument made by some parents in support of free-standing schools is that they develop the Irish language skills of a larger proportion of their pupils to the highest quality.

- 9.12) Irish-medium Units and Streams are supported for a variety of reasons. Some parents believe that, compared to a newly-established free-standing school, a Unit or Stream attached to a well-established school provides a more stable environment for their children's education. They believe that the opportunities these approaches provide, for total or partial immersion, can give access to a wide range of opportunities for learning in good accommodation, including specialist facilities for example for science and physical education. There is a range of views among Irish-medium educators. Some believe that Units or Streams are the best option. Others believe that free-standing schools are the best option: among this group some regard Units and Streams as necessary transitional steps towards the continued growth of Irish-medium Education.
- 9.13) Research findings included in a review of research and other literature (Johnstone, 2002<sup>4</sup>) indicate that a language is more likely to be used in the community when there are a greater number of places where the language is spoken. So although there was no evidence either for or against the belief that free-standing schools are more likely to create Irish-speaking communities, developing additional arenas outside the school where Irish is spoken is likely to help develop Irish-language communities. This, in turn, is likely to help support children develop the proficiency of their spoken Irish.

### **The most appropriate Models of Immersion and School Structures for Irish-medium Education**

- 9.14) Having considered the information above, the stage of development of the sector, and the demographic and other challenges which the sector faces, the Project Board recommends that the Department of Education should be open to a range of models of immersion and school structures for the provision of Irish-medium Education (including those not currently available here). Parents and schools, with the benefit of objective professional assistance and advice, from within the IM sector and from other immersion and bi-lingual sectors, are best placed to develop options for Irish-medium schooling taking account of their appropriateness in meeting both local circumstances, and the needs of individual learners. The options that could be considered include others successfully employed elsewhere in the world, as well as the three currently employed here. This would give maximum flexibility for Irish-medium provision to develop in changing circumstances as the education landscape evolves, including in response to local Area Based Planning, developing sustainable schools,

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4 Johnstone, Richard. *Immersion in a Second or Additional Language at School: A Review of the International Research*, 2002. [www.scilt.stir.ac.uk](http://www.scilt.stir.ac.uk)

partnership working, and the communication, administrative and educational opportunities afforded by ICT. Other initiatives and developments in the Irish language in the community could be synchronised for mutual benefit with needs in the Irish-medium schools, Units and Streams to achieve added value in both educational and language community outcomes. In all of the approaches supported by the Department of Education, it would be important to include assessment of value for money and educational (including linguistic) outcomes.

- 9.15) The Project Board recognises the benefit to those becoming bilingual of having the maximum possible exposure to their second language. It also recognises that a range of approaches to language learning is necessary to support those who begin their language development at a later stage in their education. Other forms of language learning can develop the linguistic capabilities of learners, and increasing exposure to language can enable increasing linguistic achievements.
- 9.16) The Project Board believes that the approach a school takes to language use within the school environment, for example, by children in the playground, is a matter for the school to decide. The Project Board believes it is best practice for a school to agree this with parents and key stakeholders. All schools should communicate their approach clearly to parents and children.
- 9.17) The Project Board is content that schools are currently best placed to decide the approach they take to the teaching of English. This should be kept under review if new evidence becomes available. All schools should decide their own approach, and communicate it clearly to parents and children.
- 9.18) A development proposal is required for any significant change to the character of a school. The Project Board believes that a change in the model of immersion constitutes a significant change to the character of an Irish-medium school, and should be subject to the development proposal process. The Project Board believes it is best practice for a school to agree its model of immersion with parents and key stakeholders.

### **Recommendation 1: Models of Immersion and School Structures**

DE and all stakeholders of Irish-medium Education should be open to a range of:

- i. Models of immersions; and
- ii. School structures to deliver Irish-medium Education.

Interested parties should consider how to meet local needs on a case-by-case basis. A school's policy on immersion, considered where necessary through the development proposal process, is a matter for the school authorities and community, in the light of available Irish language resources of all kinds, and should be made clear to parents. The Project Board strongly believes it is best practice for a school to agree these issues with parents and key stakeholders.



## Chapter 10

### Developing Sustainable Irish-medium Pre-school Provision

#### Introduction

- 10.1) This Review considered Early Years provision for Irish-medium Education. As Early Years provision is being reviewed as part of the development of a comprehensive 0 – 6 strategy, and representatives of the Irish-medium sector are part of this process, the Review of Irish-medium Education concentrated on the issue of funded pre-school education provision. The Project Board also considered whether the funded pre-school provision should be delivered in a voluntary or statutory setting.
- 10.2) DE has an obligation arising from the EU Charter on Regional or Minority Languages to provide pre-school education through the medium of Irish, without prejudice to the teaching of the official language, where the number of children is considered sufficient. This obligation does not extend to any other educational sector. The Project Board considered carefully the impact of this obligation.

#### Existing Arrangements for Pre-school Provision

- 10.3) Currently one year of funded pre-school education is provided for those children whose parents wish it. The current policy prioritises providing a high-quality place for each child, with choice of provider being secondary.
- 10.4) One effect of this policy is that new settings are not funded where existing places remain unfilled. This means that new Irish-medium provision cannot enter the funding programme in areas where funded English-medium places remain available. In such areas Irish-medium settings already in the programme continue, of course, to receive funding.

#### Irish-medium Sector's Views on Pre-school Experience

- 10.5) The Project Board noted that practitioners in Irish-medium Education could not emphasise strongly enough the benefits that they believe accrue from a high-quality pre-school Irish-medium experience. In particular, a high-quality Irish-medium pre-school experience helps children from English-speaking homes access the curriculum from the beginning of Year 1, if they then attend an Irish-medium primary school.

- 10.6) Currently most children attending Irish-medium primary schools have attended Irish-medium pre-schools. Currently some Irish-medium primary schools apply the criterion that children must have had an Irish-medium pre-school experience.

### **International Research Evidence: is Early Immersion Essential?**

- 10.7) Experience and research findings from around the world indicate that it is possible to become bi-lingual and bi-literate through exposure to languages later in life.
- 10.8) In a review of international literature, Johnstone<sup>5</sup> identified the following 2 points on the effects of pre-school immersion provision:
- i. Immersion for young children (pre-school and primary) helps them make more rapid progress in developing an analytical approach to language (p.2, para 13) through developing their meta-linguistic awareness.
  - ii. "Although many immersion programmes begin 'early', this is not a condition of success". (p. 6, para 41). "Early" means pre-pubescent in this context, and so would include pre-school provision.
- 10.9) The evidence presented to the Review indicated that pre-school is likely to be beneficial for linguistic outcomes, but that it is not required for second language acquisition.

### **Implications of making Pre-school Irish-medium Education Compulsory**

- 10.10) The Project Board identified the potential consequences of requiring Irish-medium pre-school experience as a pre-requisite for Irish-medium primary education in the context of current education legislation and policy, and concluded that the following could occur:
- i. limits on parental choice;
  - ii. conflict with EU Charter obligations;

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5 Op cit

- iii. conflict with current Open Enrolment policy; and
  - iv. conflict with DE's duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education.
- 10.11) The limits on parental choice at (i) could arise, for example, from a parent wishing for their child to attend Irish-medium primary school when they had not attended Irish-medium pre-school. If attendance at pre-school was a pre-requisite, then the child would be excluded from Irish-medium primary provision. This would also directly conflict with the obligations under the EU Charter, point (ii) above. Current policy on access for pupils to schools (Open Enrolment policy) broadly states that pupils that apply to schools funded by DE must be admitted when there are unfilled places. Excluding pupils without pre-school experience would clearly violate this principle. Similarly, it would run the risk of being in conflict with DE's duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education (iv above). In essence, making pre-school experience a pre-requisite for Irish-medium Education could lead to a child of 4 years and 2 months being excluded from Irish-medium Education for the remainder of their educational career due to the missed pre-school learning: the implications of this possibility are serious in terms of access, growth of the sector, and meeting obligations towards the Irish language.

### **Pre-school Settings: Voluntary vs Statutory provision**

- 10.12) Funded pre-school provision is delivered in a partnership arrangement between statutory nursery schools or classes, and the voluntary sector. In the Irish-medium sector most of the growth in pre-school provision has been through voluntary provision. In 2007, 17% of children in Irish-medium pre-school education were in statutory provision (i.e., in statutory nursery units), while 70% of children in English-medium pre-school education were in statutory provision (i.e., in statutory nursery units and schools).
- 10.13) Representatives of the voluntary pre-school English and Irish-medium sectors highlight issues that they identify as inequalities between the support given to voluntary and statutory settings. These include levels of funding, and additional support, such as Special Educational Needs provision, provided to the settings.

- 10.14) A study of Effective Pre-school Provision (EPP) in the north of Ireland, found that good outcomes are obtained from all settings (<http://www.deni.gov.uk/researchreport41.pdf>). Nevertheless, in answer to the question, "Does type of pre-school matter?" the study concluded:

"There are significant differences between pre-school settings and their impact on children. Nursery schools/classes have the overall best outcomes, with good outcomes also for playgroups. Other types of pre-school produce benefits but to a lesser extent."

- 10.15) When looking at the effects of quality and specific "practices" in pre-school, the EPP study in the north of Ireland found:

- i. Higher quality pre-schooling is related to better intellectual and social/behavioural development for children.
- ii. Observed quality within pre-school settings was higher in nursery schools and classes.
- iii. Staff training and qualifications are associated with better quality of provision.

- 10.16) The EPP study in the north of Ireland examined the longer-term effects of pre-school experience by tracking children through the first four years of primary school. The study concluded that over this time period:

"Type of pre-school was related to longer-term effects, with effects most strong for nursery schools/classes, with playgroups closely following, and less long-lasting effects for other types of pre-school."

- 10.17) Although the EPP study in the north of Ireland did not examine Irish-medium pre-school settings specifically, it appears reasonable to assume that the outcomes detailed above would be the same for Irish-medium as in English medium provision. Beyond this assumption, further examination of the specific impact of pre-school setting on the development of verbal, pre-reading and reading skills may be beneficial. For children accessing their education through the medium of English, there were benefits in all these areas arising from a high-quality pre-school experience. While the degree of impact on these skills for children attending Irish-medium settings was not considered in the EPP study in the north of Ireland, the Project Board recognised the added challenges inherent in delivering the pre-school curriculum in an Irish-medium setting.

- 10.18) The Project Board recognises that a Review of Early Years provision is developing a 0-6 strategy. The Project Board recommends that the Early Years strategy looks at the issue of funding equality between the voluntary and statutory settings, as this is likely to have a particular impact on the Irish-medium sector, given the much higher proportion of Irish-medium children in voluntary settings. In addition, the range of support available to the voluntary and statutory settings should be reviewed, for the same reason.
- 10.19) This Project Board considered whether voluntary Irish-medium provision should be converted to statutory, to benefit children's educational outcomes. The Project Board took account of:
- i. The additional challenges faced by English-speaking children in Irish-medium pre-school settings;
  - ii. The opportunity for pre-school to develop high-quality Irish-language outcomes, as well as the other cognitive and social outcomes developed for English-medium pre-school children;
  - iii. The lack of specific evidence about whether children in Irish-medium settings from English-speaking homes would benefit more, due to the additional linguistic challenges they face, from a statutory pre-school setting;
  - iv. The evidence that high-quality provision can be found across all settings;
  - v. The evidence that statutory settings have the best overall outcomes, and that these outcomes remained strongest over time for statutory settings; and
  - vi. The marked difference in the proportion of Irish-medium children in statutory settings (17%) compared with English-medium children (70%).
- 10.20) This is clearly a complex issue. Further research on the outcomes for statutory and voluntary provision for Irish-language acquisition is necessary. This would provide tailored evidence to inform future developments. The Project Board recommends that such research is carried out.

### **Pre-school Provision: the way forward**

- 10.21) The Project Board considered that the unique combination of the obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and

the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education may not receive sufficient weight in the current pre-school arrangements. The non-sectoral approach did not adequately take account of the existing bilingual nature of the education system, and this has a detrimental impact on how the Department of Education meets its Charter obligations. In light of this the Project Board concluded that the current policy on funded pre-school provision should be revised to better meet the growing needs of the Irish-medium sector. The Project Board recommends that funding of high-quality Irish-medium provision should not be constrained by existing unfilled English-medium places, subject to there being sufficient numbers of children.

- 10.22) The Project Board also considered whether an Irish-medium pre-school experience should be compulsory for entry into Irish-medium primary school. Compulsory pre-school experience is in conflict with the obligations arising from the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages. No evidence was available to the Review that mitigated this conflict, and therefore the Project Board recommends that Irish-medium pre-school experience should not be a compulsory requirement for entry into an Irish-medium primary school.
- 10.23) Finally the Project Board considered the possibility of educational benefits arising from the provision of statutory rather than voluntary Irish-medium pre-school provision. Once again, definitive evidence was unavailable, and for this reason the Project Board considered that further research was necessary. As noted at the beginning of this Chapter, the issue of the different support provided to pre-school settings is under consideration as part of the Early Years Review.

### **Recommendation 2: Revising the Existing Policy on Funding for Pre-school Provision**

The existing policy on funded pre-school provision should be revised in light of the unique combination of the obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the recognised benefits of pre-school education and the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education, to allow registered, Irish-medium providers with sufficient children to enter the existing funding programme even where unfilled English-medium provision is available in the area.

### **Recommendation 3: Necessary Pre-school Experience**

The Project Board recognises the importance placed by the Irish-medium sector on Irish-medium pre-school Education. Nevertheless, it concluded

that Irish-medium pre-school experience should not be a compulsory requirement for entry into an Irish-medium primary school.

#### **Recommendation 4: Pre-school Settings – Voluntary vs Statutory**

The issues for Irish-medium pre-school provision should be considered as part of the Early Years' Review's deliberations on the levels of support provided to statutory and to voluntary settings.

#### **Recommendation 5: Research into the educational Outcomes of Irish-medium Pre-school Education**

Research on the educational outcomes, including linguistic outcomes, of different types of Irish-medium pre-school experience should be taken forward.

- 10.24) The Project Board recognises that pre-school provision is an issue that is important to all sectors, and that implementation of these recommendations may lead to the displacement of existing English-medium provision and voluntary Irish-medium provision. The potential for an adverse equality impact, and the implications of this, should be carefully considered.





## Chapter 11

# Developing Sustainable Irish-medium Primary Provision

### Introduction

- 11.1) This chapter considers how a continuum of sustainable, vibrant and high-quality Irish-medium primary school provision may be developed in response to parental demand, as an integral part of local Area Based Plans.
- 11.2) The Project Board concentrated on identifying a robust strategic policy framework for the development of the Irish-medium sector. The delivery mechanisms for developing schools are due to change with the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority. The Education and Skills Authority is likely to take some time to be fully effective in integrating the disparate services it will need to deliver, and transitional arrangements may need to be developed. The Project Board considered that the delivery mechanisms are less important than having a sound strategic vision of what is to be delivered, although the impact of coherent local Area Based Planning with appropriate sectoral involvement should improve outcomes for all sectors.
- 11.3) The Project Board identified strengthening and fostering sustainability as the main challenge facing the primary sector, both when developing new provision and consolidating what already exists. This, the Project Board contends, will require new provision to contribute coherently to the strategic development of the sector within the context of local Area Based Planning and a sustainable schools policy.
- 11.4) The challenges facing Irish-medium primary provision arise from two, often inter-related, causes. First is the small size of the schools in the sector, particularly for newly-established provision that can lead to a range of challenges, which are spelt out below. Second is the poor quality of the accommodation in which the schools are housed. Each cause exacerbates the other, as small schools are not yet eligible for new buildings, and yet it is harder to increase pupil numbers when accommodation is not of a high-quality.

### Existing Irish-medium Primary Provision

- 11.5) Currently, primary provision has been developed across a wider geographical area than post-primary, mainly as a consequence of the timescale and rate of growth in the primary sector, see Map 2 on page 40. The growth of high-quality primary provision has developed through units attached to English-medium schools and

in free-standing schools. These different approaches reflect the various views of parents as discussed in paragraphs 9.10 to 9.12.

- 11.6) All Irish-medium provision has been developed in response to parental demand: in some areas this demand has been highly localised, while in others it has spanned a wider area. Catchment areas for primary schools are smaller than for post-primary schools, and primary schools typically serve fewer pupils. Nevertheless, catchment areas for Irish-medium primary provision can be larger than for other sectors, particularly where Irish-medium provision in an area has not been extensively developed.
- 11.7) Outside the urban areas of Belfast and Derry, the population tends to be distributed more thinly, and this leads to a need for schools that serve smaller numbers of pupils. Table 11.1 shows the P1 intakes and current enrolments for free-standing Irish-medium primary schools.

Table 11.1: Actual and Minimum Target Year 1  
intakes to Irish-medium Primary Schools 2000-2007

School	Min Target Year 1 Intake	Year 1 Intakes (since 2000)								Total Enrolment Oct 2007
		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	
<b>Rural Schools</b>										
Gaelscoil Uí Néill	12	12	18	16	13	18	20	15	21	113
Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh	12	14	22	21	21	21	20	14	27	130
Bunscoil an Iúir	12	5	14	12	15	12	15	16	23	102
Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche	12			10	10	10	6	14	10	48
Bunscoil an Chaistil	12				12	11	19	15	15	75
Bunscoil an Traonaigh	12					12	8	6	6	27
Gaelscoil na Speiríní	12							12	5	23
Gaelscoil na gCrann	12							12	11	45
Gaelscoil Éanna	12								12	12
Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach	12								12	19
<b>Belfast/Derry Schools</b>										
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste	15	45	54	43	40	44	30	38	33	294
Gaelscoil Na bhFál	15	34	26	29	35	24	21	25	28	211
Bunscoil Cholmcille	15	24	20	18	27	30	13	21	22	159
Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh	15	26	24	28	24	24	23	25	23	168
Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin	15	18	19	18	15	24	23	21	11	119
Scoil Na Fúiseoige	15	18	25	20	23	15	17	20	13	133
Scoil an Droichid	15		14	15	14	20	16	13	27	103
Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir	15		12	20	23	23	22	12	25	135
Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain	15			15	11	6	13	17	8	71
Gaelscoil an Damba	15				17	8	7	5	6	29
Gaelscoil Na Móna	15					15	10	19	14	71
Gaelscoil an Lonnáin	15						15	15	11	44

- 11.8) The small size of the current primary schools creates a challenge to develop sustainability and safeguard the educational provision for children and the professional development of teachers.

### **Issues facing Small Irish-medium Primary Schools**

- 11.9) The Project Board considered the two main challenges facing small Irish-medium primary providers, as part of a developing sector, to be:
- i. Developing high-quality leadership; and
  - ii. Enrolling sufficient numbers of pupils to qualify for capital funding, which generally entitles the school to permanent, and therefore better-quality, accommodation.
- 11.10) Experienced and respected leadership is vital for every school, and especially for every newly established school, as is recognised in the "Every School a Good School" policy currently being finalised by the Department of Education. The predominance of small schools in the Irish-medium primary sector, the rapid expansion of the sector, and the relative lack of experienced teachers has meant that many principals, on appointment, have little or no prior experience of school leadership and management. The inexperience will of course lessen in time, but the other challenges of leading a small school will remain, and may inhibit the leadership development of the principals.
- 11.11) Teaching principals face a range of pressures in addition to their role in the classroom. The Bain Report cites an ETI finding that (para. 7.31, p89):
- "In a sample of small, rural primary schools, ETI found that although small school size had certain advantages, in terms of personal attention and focus on individual pupils, small schools struggled with a range of challenges. These included the demands of preparing a differentiated programme for classes with mixed-age groups, of ensuring adequate Special Educational Needs provision, and difficulties in securing substitute cover for teachers. Also reported was a higher administrative burden on teachers (including teaching principals), leaving them less time for the preparation of lessons. Small schools had more difficulties than their larger counterparts in recruiting and retaining principals, and overall, they experienced a considerable degree of financial pressure and uncertainty."
- 11.12) Due to the location of current and future demand, it can be anticipated that in the future Irish-medium Education is likely to require rural primary provision for small numbers of pupils in a given area. Small schools developed to meet this demand would face challenges such as those detailed above. As well as the challenges listed at paragraph 11.11, teaching principals in the Irish-medium sector, often inexperienced and without specific training for their role, face

additional challenges, which have already been set out by the Education and Training Inspectorate in paragraphs 7.9 to 7.11. Many relate to the demands presented by young and growing schools within an evolving sector.

- 11.13) Considering these challenges, a key conclusion of the Project Board is that principals of Irish-medium primary schools should not have teaching duties: for small Irish-medium schools this would support high-quality leadership, the first of the key challenges they face, see 11.9, point (i). The ability of a school to afford a non-teaching principal is dependent on its level of funding, which is largely dictated by pupil numbers, with the decision about whether a principal has teaching duties being taken by the Board of Governors.
- 11.14) The Project Board contends that a set of principles should underpin the strategy and planning for new Irish-medium primary provision including:
- i. The centrality of providing a high-quality educational (including linguistic) experience for learners;
  - ii. The need for strong leadership in the schools;
  - iii. The need to support teachers' ongoing development (including linguistic development) as part of a professional community;
  - iv. The clear identification of the benefits of any planned changes; and
  - v. The importance of transparent consultation, recognising the commitment of all key stakeholders.
- 11.15) The Project Board took account of how to deliver, sustainably, the principles above in light of the guidance on value for money and federation in the Bain Report. To achieve this, the Project Board believes that new small Irish-medium primary provision should be part of a federation involving two or more sites, with a single board of governors and strong shared leadership through a non-teaching principal. It is probable that an existing school will form part of the federation.

### **Recommendation 6: Sustainable Irish-medium Primary Education – Developing New Provision through Federation**

The Project Board recommends that the future development of Irish-medium primary education should be through a system of schools which enhances strong school leadership and the capacity for support for the professional development of teachers and staff, in order to ensure

high-quality education. The following factors are recommended to guide future development:

- i. Units should be developed where appropriate: the combined English and Irish-medium parts of the school must form a sustainable school.
- ii. New settings (other than units) providing Irish-medium primary education, should be developed as part of a federation, preferably with an existing school, with a single board of governors and principal; the process will require a Development Proposal and an Economic Appraisal.
- iii. At every site in the federated school the intake into Year 1 must be at least 12 pupils per year in rural areas, and 15 in urban.
- iv. The combined total enrolment across a federated Irish-medium primary school, and English-medium schools with Irish-medium units, should encompass sufficient pupils that the shared principal would not be required to have teaching duties.
- v. The development of new primary provision, in a federation, unit or stream, should be preceded by a protocol setting out how the provision will operate.
- vi. The Department of Education must ensure that the capital development needs of the Irish-medium Education sector are addressed.
- vii. ICT will play a key role in:
  - the learning, teaching, management and administration of the school;
  - maintaining the corporate identity of the federated school by enabling high-quality communication and sharing of resources;
  - supporting communication with parents; and
  - supporting communication with the education support services, other schools, and the wider community.

11.16) The smallest federations will encompass two sites. Each site is expected to have a minimum annual intake into Year 1 of at least 12 pupils (rural) or 15 pupils (urban). This means that the minimum Year 1 intake for the federation, encompassing the two sites, will be at least 24 pupils (rural) or 30 pupils (urban).

These intakes are above the threshold for capital funding [Year 1 intake of 15 pupils (rural) or 20 pupils (urban)] and so the federation will be eligible to have its capital needs met, providing:

- i. Each site maintains over three years annual intakes into Year 1 of at least 12 pupils (rural) or 15 pupils (urban); and
- ii. the proposal for capital funding is supported by an Economic Appraisal.

- 11.17) This addresses the second key challenge facing small schools, sufficient pupils for capital provision, see paragraph 11.9, point (ii).
- 11.18) The Project Board considered whether there is a maximum number of sites which would be practicable under these arrangements, and concluded that it would not be possible to give a figure as every situation will be unique. Factors such as geography, locations of existing schools, available transport facilities, the quality of management of the federated school, projected enrolments, and the prospect of one or more of the sites in the federation achieving free-standing status would all need to be taken into account. Federations between Irish-medium settings and English-medium settings could also be considered. It would also be necessary to allow for the possibility of local arrangements to reduce the number of sites in a federated school should enrolment trends and the educational needs of the children make this desirable, subject to the statutory development proposal process.
- 11.19) Providing for the capital needs of a site will ensure that learners are in a fit-for-purpose environment. This could be taken forward in a number of ways, for example by utilising existing vacant accommodation, or by providing new permanent or semi-permanent structures. ESA would deliver the policy framework set out here, and would be key to addressing such implementation issues on a case-by-case basis. The Department of Education should ensure federated schools are adequately resourced.
- 11.20) The federated model outlined above provides advantages similar to those identified by the Education and Training Inspectorate assessment on the benefits

of educating children in Irish-medium Units, rather than free-standing schools, when pupil numbers are small. These include:

- i. access to better quality accommodation (thus reducing the number of children being educated in temporary classrooms); greater access to learning resources (ICT, audio-visual and other expensive items) and equipment eg, for structured activities, not usually available in the early stages of the development of new free-standing schools which are not receiving immediate grant-aid/recurrent funding;
- ii. more efficient and effective management structures, practices and procedures, usually with an experienced principal; in new IM schools, there is a high proportion of beginning teachers, inexperienced principals and many teachers who have not completed their Early Professional Development;
- iii. the ready availability of professional expertise and joint whole-school planning already developed, with essential policies, (for example, child protection, pastoral care, SEN, school development plan (SDP) and associated action plans, assessment and marking), as well as a culture of self-evaluation leading to improvement and using target setting and benchmarking in a constructive manner; and
- iv. the recognition that the establishment of Irish-medium provision as part of a federation can be a stepping stone to the establishment of a free-standing school in that area, when the appropriate enrolment criteria have been met.

11.21) Under current arrangements there remains the option of establishing a free-standing school when the intake of pupils is sufficient for capital funding (a minimum annual Year 1 intake of at least 15 pupils per year in rural areas, 20 in urban). Schools with such pupil intakes would be highly unlikely to be able to afford a non-teaching principal. For the reasons set out above, the Project Board strongly recommends that it is not in the best interests of learners or school staff for new small schools with teaching principals to be established, and that, instead, federation should be the route for the future development of sustainable schools. The federated model provides compelling advantages, as set out in paragraph 11.20, which can lead to sustainable high-quality education, while providing improved flexibility for the development of the sector in fit-for-purpose accommodation.



## **Recommendation 7: Sustainable Irish-medium Primary Education – Centrality of Federation to Developing New Provision**

The Project Board recommends that, in establishing new Irish-medium primary provision, the federated model should not be set aside other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

- 11.22) If the guidance above is followed, schools could be created which had the capacity to meet the needs of the children, to become sustainable, to qualify for capital funding and to satisfy value-for-money assessments. In the future, sites of a federated school that grow sufficiently could consider, on a case-by-case basis, becoming a stand-alone school, as long as the number of pupils in the stand-alone school are sufficient to support a non-teaching principal, and that the remaining federation is robust and viable. Similarly, a unit or stream with sufficient pupils could be established as a stand-alone school. Establishing a stand-alone school would require careful consultation with key stakeholders, supported by an economic appraisal and development proposal. The Project Board considers it would be best practice, in advance of establishing a federation, unit or stream for all partners to agree future review arrangements of the relationship between the partners, including where necessary, establishing free-standing provision.
- 11.23) Other school sectors may wish to examine these recommendations which have the potential for supporting the sustainability of small schools in the English-medium sector. In reaching its conclusions, the Project Board took account of:
- i. the fact that demand for Irish-medium Education is growing in a time of falling numbers of pupils; and
  - ii. the commitments in the EU Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

### **Existing Irish-medium Primary Schools: Accommodation Issues**

- 11.24) The Project Board is firmly of the view that children in state-funded education should have accommodation appropriate to their learning needs and social and personal development. The Project Board recognises that local Area Based Planning, developed under the auspices of ESA in future and taking account of parental demand, should mean that new Irish-medium and English-medium provision, approved in the context of Area Based Plans, should be in suitable accommodation. This could be ensured by the provision of high-quality

temporary accommodation in the first instance, followed by permanent buildings once long-term viability, as set out in the Sustainable Schools Policy, has been established. The recommendation on federation provides a flexible mechanism for meeting the needs of Irish-medium Education within this framework.

- 11.25) The criteria for establishing new primary provision are the same for all school types, including the Irish-medium sector. However, only the Irish-medium and Integrated sectors have been expanding in the recent past, with other longer-established sectors more likely to have been dealing with falling rolls and rationalisation, including school closures. The impact of these circumstances was considered by the Project Board.
- 11.26) As part of its statutory duty under the 1998 Education Order to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium education, the Department of Education worked with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, to establish Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta, the Irish-medium Trust Fund, in March 2001. Iontaobhas is an independent charitable body that operates as a fundraising organisation for the Irish-medium sector. The Department of Education has provided funding to Iontaobhas since its establishment of €3.6m.
- 11.27) Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta provides support for the development of the sector by establishing pre-school provision, awarding grants to independent schools, and providing assistance with the capital cost of new Irish-medium schools until viability has been established and capital grants become available from DE. This arrangement has supported the growth of Irish-medium Education towards sustainability in the period before the Department of Education has provided capital funding, while managing the risks to the public purse, should a new school not prove viable in the long-term.
- 11.28) Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta has provided a means for parents, front-line providers and representatives of the the Irish-medium community to play a key part in the decision-making about the establishment of Irish-medium provision: in future this will continue to be available through local Area Based Planning, under ESA.
- 11.29) Although the total number of pupils in Irish-medium Education is increasing, in some schools the annual Year 1 intakes have not grown, as expected, to above the minimum capital threshold. In some, intakes can fall below the recurrent funding threshold. The result is that accommodation for children in Irish-medium primary schools can be below-standard: the Project Board noted that below-standard accommodation can be found in all sectors.

- 11.30) Poor-quality accommodation can make it more difficult for a school to attract pupils, and this is cited as a reason in explaining why, after establishment, Irish-medium primary schools sometimes face a challenge to meet the intake criterion for capital funding. In discussing the issue of the quality of accommodation with the Department of Education, in the context of the Review, some parents expressed the view that existing primary schools should be increasing their number of pupils, rather than expanding the number of schools in close proximity to each other: larger pupil intakes would help trigger capital funding, which would help address the condition of the school buildings.
- 11.31) The Project Board is of the view that the core issues are:
- i. That viable schools that have been recognised by the Department of Education for funding (recurrent or capital) should be in accommodation that is suitable for education in the twenty first century; and
  - ii. The ultimate responsibility for ensuring mechanisms are in place to provide suitable accommodation should rest with the Department of Education (the current mechanisms involve *lontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta* in the early years of the school, and in future ESA will have a role in ensuring accommodation is suitable).
- 11.32) Representatives of the sector believe that, where existing Irish-medium accommodation is inadequate, this needs to be addressed urgently: the Project Board endorses this fully.
- 11.33) The Project Board recognises that inadequate school accommodation will be a concern for all sectors, and that needs should be prioritised and addressed wherever they arise. In undertaking assessments of the condition of the schools' estate and the priority needs to be addressed, Irish-medium schools must be considered along with all other school types.
- 11.34) The proposals on federation set out above provide a mechanism that existing schools can explore to address their accommodation needs. Existing primary schools which at least satisfy the criteria for recurrent funding should be encouraged to federate in the interests of the pupils, the staff and the parents. Once the federation's combined enrolment is above the level consistent with the capital threshold, each site with annual Year 1 intakes above the minimum (see 11.16) will be entitled to have its capital needs met, supported by an economic appraisal.

- 11.35) DE must ensure that the needs of viable Irish-medium schools are taken account of when programmes of capital expenditure on the schools' estate are being developed and implemented. Where needs are most pressing, DE must work with the Irish-medium sector to identify a mechanism to provide suitable accommodation as a matter of urgency, for example through dedicated funding.

### **Recommendation 8: Existing Primary Schools' Accommodation Issues**

The Project Board recommends that:

- i. existing small Irish-medium primary schools should urgently consider federation, as a means of supporting their long-term viability in the interests of pupils and staff;
- ii. DE should ensure the accommodation needs of existing Irish-medium primary schools are clearly identified;
- iii. DE should ensure the needs of viable Irish-medium schools are taken into account in programmes of capital expenditure on the schools' estate; and
- iv. DE should work with the Irish-medium sector to identify a suitable mechanism to provide funding as a matter of urgency, to address the most pressing accommodation deficiencies in existing schools.

## Chapter 12

### Developing Sustainable Irish-medium Post-primary Provision

#### Post-primary Context

- 12.1) The Project Board considered the issues facing the development of post-primary Irish-medium Education. Post-primary provision is available in five locations in the north, and access is more limited than for the primary phase upon which it is building. In October 2007 it was available in one free-standing school in Belfast, in streams in Armagh and Derry, and also in Maghera and in an independent school in Cookstown.
- 12.2) In any education sector it is much more challenging to establish sustainable provision at post-primary level than at primary level, because of the required range of specialist subject provision and the associated needs for specialist accommodation, for example in Science and Technology. In addition, the education landscape is changing rapidly, making the early years of operation of a new school even more demanding for Governors, staff and parents as they seek to meet the educational needs of the children. The planning context for schools continues to evolve, for example, to take account of the requirements for sustainability, the entitlement framework, local area planning and initiatives to ensure that every school is a good school.
- 12.3) For new post-primary Irish-medium provision there are additional challenges to be addressed, particularly where the supply of specialist teachers and support services capable of working through the medium of Irish is limited.
- 12.4) The Project Board recognised that parents can have aspirations for different approaches to post-primary provision, for reasons that have been covered in paragraphs 9.11 and 9.12. These approaches can include:
- i. free-standing, full immersion provision;
  - ii. a unit, providing full immersion; or
  - iii. a stream providing partial immersion.
- 12.5) The Project Board recognises, respects and supports the valuable contribution that these various school structures make, and will continue to make, to Irish-medium Education: this is reflected in Recommendation 1, that a range of

school structures and models of immersion should be considered. The Project Board welcomes that the development of Irish-medium post-primary Education will continue through the flexibility these various school structures provide.

- 12.6) The Project Board considered how best to support those parents who aspire to viable, free-standing Irish-medium post-primary provision, given that settings need time to gain sufficient pupils to be educationally, socially and financially sustainable. Mapping the way forward, the Board concluded that, in the medium-term, an interim step will be needed. Over time, interim provision could be expected to develop into viable free-standing provision, perhaps as a part of a federation. The interim provision will be mainly through:
- i. Irish-medium units (providing total-immersion); or
  - ii. Irish-medium streams (providing partial-immersion).
- 12.7) Some parents may continue to prefer units and streams that do not intend to separate into free-standing schools. The Project Board supports the flexibility provided by having both approaches, and considers the issues relating to units and streams in the next Chapter.
- 12.8) The ethos of an Irish-medium school will be inextricably linked to the linguistic aspirations of the present school community, as part of the wider Irish-language community. This will include parents' views on which of the approaches listed above the school is currently implementing, as well as any aspirations that exist for a different approach in the future. Strong leadership and vision will be required to develop and protect the ethos of the school, in particular its linguistic aspirations, in the face of:
- i. the significant challenges facing any new school;
  - ii. the additional challenges facing an Irish-medium provider, particularly where teaching, curricular and support services are limited; and
  - iii. the views of all parents, particularly where some aspire to different school structure than those currently available.
- 12.9) The Project Board concluded that it is vital for post-primary providers to engage with parents and stakeholders, in order to:
- i. clearly communicate existing arrangements,
  - ii. understand the aspirations of parents and stakeholders for the future;

- iii. manage the expectations of all parties; and
- iv. set out any development goals for the post-primary provision, especially where there is a desire to develop free-standing provision.

### **Geographical Challenge for Irish-medium Post-primary Provision**

- 12.10) The Project Board considers that development of Irish-medium post-primary education faces a distinct geographical challenge, of ensuring that future provision is sited at the optimum location for its catchment area. It is to be expected that parents look carefully at educational quality in choosing a school for their children. At post-primary level the government policy on raising standards will require all schools in all sectors to identify and avail of opportunities for collaboration to support access to the entitlement framework. This will need to be taken forward in collaboration with ESA, which will be required to provide sectorally-sensitive support, and arrangements must optimise fit with existing support structures, such as school transport systems. It will be critical for Irish-medium provision that is new or still growing towards sustainability, to utilise fully the assistance of the Education and Skills Authority in drawing on existing facilities and services.
- 12.11) The Project Board believes that the strategic development of Irish-medium provision must be carefully planned, especially at post-primary level. Local parental demand, while an important driver, cannot be the sole factor in determining the location of any new provision. Parental demand must, of course, be taken into account, but balanced with identifying locations that maximise the potential sustainability of future provision. In all developments value for money must be considered in the interests of effective use of resources. Planning must also relate to and avail of the opportunities provided by C2K to support:
- i. the enhancement of teaching and learning;
  - ii. the delivery of the curriculum,
  - iii. effective management and administration;
  - iv. the continuing professional development of staff;
  - v. communication, with parents, other post-primary schools and the community; and
  - vi. collaboration with other schools, locally, nationally and internationally.

- 12.12) In light of the above, new post-primary Irish-medium provision must be developed carefully, and in full collaboration with:
- i. new and existing support service providers (ESA and the ELBs);
  - ii. other education partners, such as other schools and school sectors, further and higher education and training providers, to assist the development of subject choice;
  - iii. those developing local Area Based Plans; and
  - iv. existing Irish-medium providers, particularly potential feeder provision.
- 12.13) An analysis of potential future demand by area was undertaken by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta in developing their plans for the sector, drawing on data from the Census of Population. To take account of recent developments, these area plans must be re-visited to ensure they maximise coherence with other services. Wide consultation should take place, including with those listed at i. to iv. above, as a matter of urgency.
- 12.14) A variety of provision, therefore, located strategically in relation to geography, resources and support services, would ensure a sound foundation for further growth, and is an essential dimension of development. The approaches mentioned above are outlined below. These provide some options, which could be considered now or in the future.
- 12.15) **Approach 1: The single school, multi-site model ie a federated school.**

This approach is essentially the same as that recommended for primary provision. In this case a single multi-site federated school would serve the whole of the north of Ireland and any new provision at an additional site would form part of the single school. In due course growth at any one of the site could warrant its separation as a free-standing school although, more likely, growth would lead to two multi-site schools. Each multi-site school would be led by a single principal and would offer 11 –18 programmes to all its pupils, in collaboration with other Irish-medium post-primary schools, English-medium schools, further education colleges and training organisations. Protocols and criteria for approval for new provision would need to be agreed among the key stakeholders.



12.16) **Approach 2: A lead, free-standing, post-primary, Irish-medium school linked in a partnership/collective agreement with other Irish-medium units and streams.**

This approach is based on the principles of collegiality and mutual support, with the aim of realising added value in circumstances where, otherwise, provision/development would have major opportunity, as well as financial, costs. In due course as Irish-medium post-primary enrolments grew, a second free-standing post-primary school might be warranted. In such circumstances, the two free-standing schools could alternate in the lead role in the collective arrangement, for example for three year periods, or, alternatively, two collegial or associate groups could develop. In any case, collaboration and co-operation would be needed not only among the participants but also with other English-medium schools, colleges of further and higher education and training organisations. Protocols and criteria for approval for new provision would need to be agreed among the key stakeholders, along with formal agreements to develop and sustain the collaborative arrangements which would be necessary amongst the participating schools, units and streams.

12.17) **Approach 3: The continuation of existing approaches/arrangements but within protocols relating to co-operation and collaboration agreed among the key stakeholders.**

In this approach, any free-standing, post-primary provision should be encouraged to form links with other Irish-medium schools, units and streams. This would enable the sharing of expertise and other resources, the promotion of continuing professional development, for example, through short-term staff exchanges and shadowing, and the planning for changes in curriculum and pedagogy, within the context of the developing potential and experience of C2K and Learning NI.

12.18) All three approaches have common strands – communication, co-operation and collaboration both within and beyond the constituent members or sites. The approaches, in essence, are strategies to respond to demand and growth, to ensure stability and quality of provision in the interests of children and parents, to secure sustainability in the interests of all stakeholders and to contribute to the achievement of the vision of Irish-medium education as a vibrant element of the education system. The approaches arguably, are stages in a continuum of provision which addresses the needs of a new sector which is both small, yet

growing, and faces different challenges from the much larger English-medium sector which is experiencing contraction and structural change.

- 12.19) Approach 1 parallels the recommendation for primary Irish-medium provision. Approaches 2 and 3 would allow the development of new units and streams and the evolution of free-standing schools in locations which meet strategic criteria developed through local Area Based Planning, in consultation with stakeholders. One or more of the units and streams might grow to become free-standing schools, but until that was realized they would continue to access a range of services, both administrative and professional, in integral co-operation with the English-medium part of the school. The schools, units and streams would need to co-operate with each other and with English-medium schools, further education colleges and training organizations in accessing and sharing resources at all stages in their development, although the nature of that co-operation would change over time as their enrolments and professional capacities changed.

### **Recommendation 9: Developing Sustainable Post-primary Provision**

New post-primary provision, such as in the approaches outlined above, should be developed at the optimal geographical location within Local Area-Based Plans to draw on feeder primaries and integrate with other services, such as transport. Development should be preceded by a protocol setting out how the provision will operate, including how it will relate to other Irish-medium provision.

- 12.20) Irish-medium post-primary provision, whether in free-standing schools, in units or in streams, in collective arrangements or federated schools, must be based on a commitment to co-operation with other providers and with English-medium schools, further education and training providers. This co-operation should utilise the opportunities provided by the existing ICT infrastructure to maximise sharing of teaching resources, for example, through distance learning. Co-operation should also take place on an all-Ireland and an east-west basis.
- 12.21) The responsibility for delivering this policy, by identifying the optimal location for future post-primary Irish-medium provision should be for the Education and Skills Authority within an area-based planning process, in consultation with key stakeholders including the sectoral-support bodies, other schools and school sectors. A significant factor in identifying optimal locations should be existing nodes or hubs where other educational and related services are focused for example, other, English-medium post-primary schools, further and higher education institutions, training organisations, employment, professional support services, and transport links.

## Chapter 13

### Irish-medium Units<sup>6</sup> and Streams<sup>7</sup>

- 13.1) Units and streams are both established approaches, and were considered separately by the Review. Units and streams have supported the growth of high-quality Irish-medium provision and provide great flexibility when planning for Irish-medium Education. The issues arising from developing units and streams are likely to differ between the primary and post-primary phases: this section aims to identify a strategic approach within which any issues arising could be addressed.
- 13.2) The development of new units and streams needs to take account of the recommendations above on developing primary and post-primary Irish-medium provision. The Education and Skills Authority would be responsible for delivering this policy framework through Local Area-Based Planning.
- 13.3) The unit and stream models have worked to the satisfaction of most host-schools and parents. However, some parents have been concerned with how the relative needs of the Irish-medium and English-medium parts of the school have been balanced. The delegated budget received by a school is allocated by the Board of Governors taking account of the needs of the school. Some parents were concerned that the Irish-medium part of a school lost out compared to the English-medium part, while others were concerned that the opposite was the case.
- 13.4) The Project Board considers that a unit or stream enhances significantly the school to which it is attached. It provides a valuable resource that can enrich the academic, cultural and social fabric of a school. For example, at post-primary level, schools could consider the potential for a unit/stream to play a part in developing enhanced language provision for all pupils by forming part of the basis for achieving 'Specialist School' status.
- 13.5) The Project Board believes that units or streams should be developed with schools that can demonstrate they have the commitment to support and embrace the benefit they receive from the unit or stream. The establishment

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6 A Unit is a setting, attached to an English-medium school, where the curriculum is delivered through the medium of Irish.

7 A Stream is a setting, attached to an English-medium school, where the curriculum is delivered partly through Irish and partly through English.

of a unit/stream requires a development proposal, and as part of this process a agreement should be reached on how the following issues are addressed:

- i. representation on Boards of Governors;
- ii. funding;
- iii. enrolments;
- iv. proportion of the curriculum delivered through Irish;
- v. staff appointments; and
- vi. the potential for the unit/stream to develop into a free-standing school.

13.6) Units/streams should be considered for schools of all types, and may provide an opportunity to attract children from a range of community backgrounds. It should be acknowledged from the outset where a unit or stream is considered to have the potential to grow and eventually achieve free-standing status either as a free-standing school or as part of a federated school.

13.7) The Project Board considered the particular implications of streams in the post-primary phase of education. The Project Board believes that the development of dual-language streams in English-medium schools can be an appropriate approach to the development strategy of Irish-medium post-primary education. Although significant experience of this provision is limited to one location to date, the response of children and parents has been very positive. There are understandable reservations about this approach in the minds of those who see education through total immersion as the optimum way forward in growing and developing the Irish language community. But at a stage when provision for post-primary Irish-medium education is faced with many challenges, not least the scarcity of specialist teachers and learning resources, for example in science and vocational subjects, dual-language streams would allow development to proceed with enhanced protection for the breadth and quality of the children's education. Streams also offer the potential for gradual extension of Irish-medium provision in the stable context of a sustainable English-medium school.

13.8) Streams have the added advantage of being integral to the planning and development of the schools in which they are initiated. Thus the possibility of marginalisation in the agenda of the school is lessened.

13.9) Streams may prove to be a more feasible option for development of new provision in the short to medium-term, particularly in English-medium schools

where there is an existing focus on Irish language, culture and traditions and a strong languages department.

- 13.10) In drawing the above considerations together the Project Board sees the potential value of units/streams in the further development of Irish-medium Education, particularly over the medium-term.

### **Recommendation 10: Units and Streams**

The development proposal for establishing an Irish-medium unit or stream should be preceded by a protocol setting out an agreement on how the unit or stream and host-school will operate, recognising their mutual interdependence, to ensure that the needs of both parts of the school are considered, with a focus on achieving maximum joint benefit from their relationship.



## Chapter 14

### Support for Educators

- 14.1) The Project Board, as noted earlier, was aware that all schools are facing challenges as a number of key educational policy areas are developed and implemented. These challenges include implementing the revised curriculum, adapting to new transfer arrangements, supporting children with additional educational needs and addressing the infrastructure needs of the schools' estate in a time of demographic change. In addition, Irish-medium schools face challenges specific to teaching, leadership and management in their sector and to needs arising from growth, see the ETI analysis (7.9–7.11).
- 14.2) The Project Board considers that to address these challenges those leading, managing and working in Irish-medium Education must make best use of the training and support that is available. In addition, the training provided must be updated where necessary to provide the sectorally-sensitive support required for those working in Irish-medium Education, to ensure the challenges identified by the ETI are addressed as swiftly as possible in the interests of learners and educators.

#### Boards of Governors

- 14.3) Establishing and running a school is a substantial challenge that relies on the energy, dedication and commitment of the founding parents and governors: in the early years of the school's development they see it very much as their school. In the initial phase, governors will be closely involved in establishing the many practices and procedures necessary for running a new school. As the school matures and grows, it is important for the long-term viability of the school that the governors move away from this type of involvement and concentrate on their strategic oversight role. There is a need for a very clear understanding, by all involved, of the roles and responsibilities of the governors and the principal, as well as clear principles and procedures to guide how they work together for the benefit of the children and families they serve.
- 14.4) The Project Board strongly recommends that governors undertake the training that is available to support them in their roles. As part of each governor's commitment to the school, the Project Board would encourage them to avail of training and to ensure that their skills are updated on a regular basis. Governors should also assess their collective strengths and co-opt additional members to their Board as needs require. In addition, those charged with nominating

governors should strive to identify the requirements of the school, so they can best match the skills of their nominees with those of most benefit to the school.

### **Recommendation 11: Boards of Governors**

- i. Boards of Governors should ensure they develop and update their skills to enable them to meet their evolving responsibilities, co-opting members where necessary and availing of existing training programmes.
- ii. In delivering common support services in a sectorally-sensitive way, ESA should ensure that the particular needs of Irish-medium schools are addressed in the training for Governors.
- iii. Boards of Governors must ensure that their statutory duties are discharged effectively, including the duty to safeguard the welfare of children throughout the school, to secure Child Protection arrangements, and to undertake School Development Planning.

### **Principals and Teachers**

14.5) The Project Board also considered the needs of principals, teachers and classroom assistants and pre-school leaders and assistants in the Irish-medium sector. Specific challenges faced by the sector can impact on all phases of education, or affect pre-school, primary and post-primary differently. Challenges raised by representatives of the sector include:

- i. difficulties in sourcing available substitute teachers with high-quality Irish-language skills for work in primary and post-primary schools;
- ii. the lack of specialist teachers in some subjects, which in the post-primary phase may lead to teachers being asked to teach beyond their specialism;
- iii. the comparative youthfulness of teachers and principals. This can bring advantages such as enthusiasm, openness to new ideas and up-to-date knowledge and teaching skills along with disadvantages such as inexperience, not least in responding to external demands on the school from policy changes which affect curriculum, assessment, examinations, reporting, learning and teaching.



- iv. the training available to date has not always provided teachers with the most appropriate skills for the particular challenges they can face. Examples of this include those trained for post-primary education working in the primary phase, or teachers being appointed to an immersion setting without training in, or experience of, immersion education.
- v. the high proportion of teaching principals (a consequence of the small size of the schools).
- vi. the shortage of native Irish-speakers among teachers, and the issue of language development among teachers for whom Irish is a second language.
- vii. the challenges faced by those parents with insufficient Irish to support, with confidence, their children's education (though the evidence is that this is not having an undue impact on overall standards of educational achievement).
- viii. the lack of appropriately qualified fluent Irish speakers for employment as leaders and assistants in Irish medium pre-school centres.

14.6) These challenges, some of which will also apply to English-medium settings, can lead to a range of undesirable consequences, including:

- i. Principals being distracted from important tasks because of insufficient secretarial support to deal with administrative and clerical tasks;
- ii. The needs of beginning teachers being overlooked because of more visible pressures, a particular risk in small schools with teaching principals;
- iii. School Development Planning in which the focus on learning and teaching is insufficiently developed; and
- iv. inadequate monitoring and evaluation arrangements which are not sufficiently developed to ensure an appropriate focus on improving provision and raising standards.

14.7) The Project Board considered how those working in the Irish-medium sector should be supported in addressing these additional challenges. The objective was to identify how to support the sector to provide high-quality educational outcomes.

- 14.8) The Project Board identified short-term and longer-term issues to be addressed. In the short-term, the scope of any short-fall in subject specialists in post-primary Irish medium education, and for substitute cover, should be agreed between DE and the sector. More generally, this information is essential to the planning of provision to train and develop the right number teachers for work in the Irish-medium sector. There is an opportunity for careers advice at school and further and higher education levels to respond to the need, eg in Science, Technology, Engineering or Maths (STEM subjects). The recent announcement of a course in St Mary's University College to train teachers qualified in specific subjects to work in Irish-medium post-primary education will help to address this issue.
- 14.9) Collaboration between Irish-medium and English-medium schools, colleges of further and higher education, and training organisations should be developed wherever possible. The purposes of this would be to share expertise in each sector and build capacity. For example, the language expertise of the Irish-medium sector could be drawn on to strengthen the language provision in English-medium schools; and in future a range of Irish-speaking subject specialists in the English-medium sector could be deployed, perhaps on a shared or seconded basis or through the use of ICT. ICT offers the tools to assist in addressing these initiatives, through, for example, video conferencing and distance learning.
- 14.10) Leadership development and support is available for all sectors from the Regional Training Unit (RTU): work is in progress to take account of the needs of Irish-medium educators, building bespoke provision where possible, such as the use of native Irish speakers as assessors for PQH. This is an area where all-Ireland work, which is already being explored, could clearly be of great benefit to educators in both parts of Ireland. The Project Board recognises that teachers must be supported in their own professional development, although this can be difficult to arrange in smaller schools particularly where appropriate substitute cover is not available. In time it would be expected that the availability of suitable teachers to provide substitute cover will increase, and so this difficulty should ease. Nevertheless, at present, with the aid of ICT, it is possible to provide professional development support for teachers at any time or place. The Irish-medium sector should exploit the opportunities for professional development offered by C2K, in particular the LNI element, in association with higher and further education. There is a unique opportunity for the sector to take a lead in developing ICT as the means of delivery of professional development and an environment for learning for staff.

- 14.11) The Project Board recognises the importance, in support of educational outcomes, of teachers and other staff developing as much strength and flexibility in their language as possible. Best practice in acquiring such high-quality language skills should be adopted including, where possible, time spent in suitably tailored courses with native speakers of the language.
- 14.12) The Project Board finds it unacceptable that any learner, in any sector of education in the north of Ireland, should be taught for a sustained period by an unqualified teacher. A strategy, action plan and programme to address this issue needs to be established to ensure the availability of a fully qualified workforce for Irish-medium Education as soon as possible.
- 14.13) The Project Board identifies the following as key recommendations relating to teacher education at initial, early professional development and continuing professional development stages.

#### **Recommendation 12: Leadership Training**

- i. Principals and aspiring principals should undertake available leadership training and, using ICT and other approaches, share best practice within the sector and beyond.
- ii. The needs of Irish-medium Educators should be taken into account in delivering common leadership training and support services in a sectorally-sensitive way.

#### **Recommendation 13: Initial Teacher Education**

- i. The Department of Education should ensure that sufficient teacher training places are provided to meet the needs of the: statutory pre-school, primary, and post-primary Irish-medium sector.
- ii. Opportunities for conversion training for those in the English-medium sector should be identified and incentives offered as a means of encouraging uptake.
- iii. Irish-language skills should be developed during Irish-medium initial teacher education, with experience in the Gaeltacht strongly recommended as an integral part of this development;
- iv. Unqualified teachers should be given a specific time period within which to gain a teaching qualification, after which schools should be prohibited from employing them further, within the parameters of the relevant legislation.

### **Recommendation 14: Teachers' Continuing Professional Development**

- i. All principals and teachers, including those in Irish-medium, should make best use of the available opportunities for training, and should receive common support services from ESA in a sectorally-sensitive way, to help them prioritise their continuing professional development.
- ii. Introduction to, and development of, best practice in teaching across the range of Irish-medium settings should be part of Early Professional Development and Continuing Professional Development.
- iii. Teachers should seek to develop their Irish-language skills during Early Professional Development and Continuing Professional Development, for example, by spending time in the Gaeltacht, having support for placements in Irish-medium schools in the south, or through in-house language courses and through C2K.
- iv. Irish-medium Education providers should develop opportunities and a forum to disseminate best practice and to share teachers among institutions.
- v. Exchanges and development opportunities should be developed, on an all-Ireland and east-west basis.
- vi. Sharing of best practice in immersion education should be maximised (using ICT) on an all-Ireland and east-west basis. This process should be supported by communication technologies now available to schools generally, and should be informed by developing practice in the English-medium sector.

### **Classroom Assistants and Pre-school Educators**

- 14.14) Classroom Assistants and pre-school educators play a valuable educational role that help learners benefit to the full from their learning experiences. In a bilingual setting classroom assistants with high-quality Irish-language skills can make a major contribution to supporting children's learning of, and through, Irish.

### **Recommendation 15: Classroom Assistants and Pre-school Educators**

- i. Classroom assistants should also develop their classroom skills and their language skills through means such as those listed above tailored to their particular needs.

- ii. Pre-school leaders and assistants: Professional staff in pre-school centres should have opportunities for Initial Professional Development and Continuing Professional Development through courses adapted and developed to match their particular needs in immersion education for young children.
- iii. Ancillary staff in all pre-school, primary and post-primary Irish-medium provision should be encouraged and supported to develop their language skills through, for example, new courses developed in further and higher education.



## Chapter 15: Educational Resources

### Curriculum support and Classroom teaching resources in Irish

- 15.1) There is a consensus that there is a shortage of resources available in Irish for the Irish-medium sector. There is a need to address the shortage of staff with the necessary subject specialisms and high-quality language skills available to the institutions supporting the sector. Addressing this shortfall will allow for the development of teaching resources and the provision of professional support. There is work going on to address some of the needs for example, CCEA's work to provide more materials for Irish-medium education and the development of a bespoke tool for diagnostic assessment in literacy in Irish-medium education at primary level. Such developments are welcome and there is an opportunity and need for key resource-providing agencies to share skills and expertise in the interests of addressing the urgent needs in Irish-medium education.
- 15.2) The Project Board recognised that resourceful teachers and schools in all sectors do much to develop their own resources. Within the Irish-medium sector, in an environment where there is a shortage of Irish-medium materials, the pressure for resources to be developed has been particularly challenging. Whilst teachers will continue to develop materials, it is important that the demands do not take up too large a proportion of teachers' time. For Irish-medium educators, sharing the resources already created has the potential to alleviate this problem, and support the raising of educational standards. In addition, the Irish-medium sector could consider how to harness the resourcefulness of the individuals with the necessary skills in a way that benefits the whole sector in addition to individual schools.

### **Recommendation 16: Curriculum and Teaching Resources**

- i. The needs of the Irish-medium sector should be factored in from the start when curriculum and other classroom resources are developed within the education system.
- ii. For certain subjects/curriculum areas, high priority should be given to developing teachers' resources in Irish where there are specific technical vocabulary issues which relate directly to specialist content, in order to support consistency and raising standards.

- iii. Outstanding needs in respect of teaching resources, including ICT resources, should be identified and addressed, including on an all-Ireland and east-west basis.
- iv. Existing classroom resources, such as those developed by teachers in the sector, should be identified and shared by ESA in support of good practice and raising educational standards.
- v. The Irish-medium sector should explore how to harness the resourcefulness of the individuals with the necessary skills to develop curriculum and teaching resources in a way that benefits the whole sector.
- vi. ICT should be used, through C2k, to support the development and dissemination of resources.

### **Supporting children with Special Educational Needs**

- 15.3) Two ongoing reviews link into this area: the DE review of SEN and the DE funded research being carried out by POBAL on SEN in Irish-medium Education. The outcomes of both will need to be taken into account when they report.
- 15.4) Irish-medium Education is an integral part of the education system, and the children in IME must have proper support for their needs. ESA will need to provide sectorally-sensitive support in response to the needs of the sector.
- 15.5) The recommendation to ensure that IME is considered from the outset in policy development (Recommendation 21, below) should result in appropriate priority being given to Irish-medium SEN support, where, for example, simply translating an assessment tool is not linguistically suitable.
- 15.6) Across the Irish-medium sector there is a need to build a greater capacity amongst all staff to support children with additional educational needs. This is also reported as a need in the English-medium sector. Future developments in this area should take account of these needs.
- 15.7) Due to the relative inexperience of staff in Irish-medium Education, the support for the sector could include experienced specialists in SEN who could visit schools to help develop their capacity to support children's needs. These specialists should not be restricted to experience of the Irish-medium sector only, but should also be deployed in English-medium provision, to maintain the breadth of their own personal and professional development, including their ICT skills, and refresh their knowledge of best practice: rather than one



full-time support specialist for Irish-medium Education, two specialists deployed part-time in Irish and English-medium Education would be preferable. The inter-relationship of Irish-medium Education with English-medium obliges those involved in development of the support for both sectors to take an inclusive view of provision and ensure applicability of developments to needs in both sectors.

- 15.8) The Project Board recognised that there is good practice already existing among many English-speaking SEN support staff that work with children learning through the medium of Irish. This should be drawn upon and disseminated to become common practice.

### **Recommendation 17: Support for Special Educational Needs**

- i. The Education and Skills Authority should develop the capacity to meet the special educational needs (SEN) of children through the medium of Irish where possible, with a particular emphasis on those needs that are most acute. This would require appropriately skilled SEN support staff with high-quality Irish-language skills, which could be developed, for example, through bursaries.
- ii. The Project Board recommends that, where SEN support is not available through the medium of Irish, children should receive as much support as possible through the medium of English, making full use of the C2K infrastructure and other resources to optimise the availability and specificity of the support. In these circumstances the Education and Skills Authority should ensure that the support is sensitive to the needs of the children learning through Irish. Best practice should be disseminated, including taking account of the specific context and issues relevant to Irish-medium Education, and engaging with schools and teachers on these issues.
- iii. Teachers in Irish-medium Education must make best use of the available support for SEN, and should be supported through the sharing of existing best practice in SEN; examples from immersion education contexts, and particularly from the Irish-medium sector, should be included. This should be promoted and assisted by the Education and Skills Authority and other support agencies, using ICT as appropriate, drawing on sources on an all-Ireland and east-west basis from English-medium settings as well as immersion language contexts. ICT will have a key role to play in the realisation of the available benefits for pupils and their teachers.

- iv. The development of high-level diagnostic tools for the Irish-medium sector should be investigated, informed by experiences within Ireland and Britain on both an all-Ireland and east-west basis.

### **Opportunities for Informal learning through Irish**

- 15.9) The use of Irish outside the classroom could be expected to support language acquisition along with personal and social development, with a consequent positive impact on academic achievement.
- 15.10) Under Part III of the EU Charter a number of government departments have a role to play when considering the use of Irish outside schools, see Chapter 2. Development should be as coherent as possible, and on-line opportunities should be fully explored for links across the north as well as on an all-Ireland and east-west basis.

#### **Recommendation 18: Informal learning through Irish**

The Department of Education should encourage and support informal opportunities for learning through the medium of Irish in the youth sector, and through the extended schools approach. The use of ICT will be an essential part of the development and delivery of opportunities for learning.

- 15.11) The Project Board also recognised the positive role the Department of Education could play through co-operation with other government departments and agencies, both statutory and voluntary, which have responsibilities under the EU Charter, to maximise opportunities for learning beyond the classroom in cultural, leisure and recreational activities.

### **Home support for children learning through the medium of Irish**

- 15.12) The majority of children attending Irish-medium Education come from English-speaking homes. The evidence of educational standards in the Irish-medium sector presented to this Review (see Chapter 5) indicates that children can reach very high standards of academic and linguistic achievement in Irish-medium schools without Irish being spoken in their home. Nevertheless, the opportunity for children to experience Irish at home is desirable, not least in reinforcing their learning. It would also serve to strengthen the use of Irish in the community.

- 15.13) On-line support should be developed, using both parent-friendly and pupil-friendly materials that underpin high-quality educational outcomes. C2K should be approached to establish what developments of this kind have been initiated for the English-medium sector and to engage with the Irish-medium sector in adapting these or initiating development for the Irish-medium sector which should also meet needs in the English-medium sector.
- 15.14) DE should ensure that any of its policies delivered outside schools should also take account of the needs of Irish-medium Education, for example Sure Start.

### **Recommendation 19: Irish-language support for children at home**

The Project Board recommends that:

- i. The Department of Education should ensure that its policies that are delivered in settings outside school take account of Irish-medium Education;
- ii. Stakeholders across the Irish-speaking community should seek opportunities to share best practice in language development and support with a particular focus on children in English-speaking homes; and
- iii. The use of ICT is essential in delivering this support, and schools should utilise developments for the benefit of learners.

### **Multiple Translations of Examinations taken in Irish**

- 15.15) A concern arising from multiple translations of examinations and assessments was highlighted to the Project Board, with papers translated from English to Irish to be answered in Irish, followed by pupils' answers being translated from Irish to English to be marked. The issue of whether additional marks should be awarded to children for exams taken in Irish was also considered by the Project Board.
- 15.16) Multiple translations of this type are clearly unwieldy and undesirable, and are symptoms of an underlying problem: they reflect a lack of capacity in the education system, including among the Irish-medium sector, to administer the examination system in Irish. There was no evidence presented to identify whether these translations either disadvantaged or advantaged the pupils affected. In principle the Project Board viewed additional marks as unnecessary. The underlying problem, lack of capacity, is the real issue, and over time, including through the recommendations in this Report, should be addressed.

In the meantime the Project Board believed that seeking to access subject specialists with appropriate Irish-language skills should be explored on an all-Ireland basis. This issue could be revisited if new evidence becomes available.

**Recommendation 20: Multiple Translations of Examinations taken in Irish**

- i. Efforts should be made to access subject specialists with the necessary language skills, including on an all-Ireland basis, to remove the need for multiple translations in the assessment and examination process for children in Irish-medium Education.
- ii. The impact on students of the current regime of multiple-translations should be assessed.

## Chapter 16

# Embedding Irish-medium Education in the Educational System

### Policy Development and Delivery

- 16.1) It is essential that the needs of the Irish-medium sector are considered early in the policy development process and so avoid the sector being a 'bolt-on' to policies that suit only the English-medium sector. To ensure the needs of the Irish-medium sector are addressed during policy delivery, the Education and Skills Authority will be accountable to the Department of Education for developing sectorally-sensitive support for Irish-medium Education. A sectoral support body will also be established, to represent the views and concerns of Irish-medium provider. Research programmes, undertaken by or on behalf of the Department of Education should also consider whether it would be appropriate to include consideration of the Irish-medium sector.

#### **Recommendation 21: Policy Development and Delivery**

- i. The Department of Education must ensure that Irish-medium Education is considered systemically throughout policy development.
- ii. The Department of Education must ensure that appropriate support is provided for all existing and new schools, subject to their meeting agreed sustainability criteria, and that the needs of Irish-medium Education are addressed in a fully integrated way by the Education and Skills Authority in the delivery of its services.

#### **Recommendation 22: Research**

The needs of Irish-medium Education should be taken into account appropriately in the research strategies of DE and educational partner bodies. Opportunities for all-Ireland research co-operation should be maximised.

### Increasing Access to Irish-medium Education

- 16.2) The Project Board recognises the aspiration articulated by representatives of the sector for Irish-medium to be accessed across all of society here, and to develop and maintain strong links across these islands and beyond. The evidence available to the Project Board identifies that Irish-medium Education is not yet

accessed throughout the community in keeping with this aspiration. The Project Board took the view that, while the Irish language has a unique place on this island, it is now one element in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual society.

### **Recommendation 23: Increasing Access to Irish-medium Education**

Outreach to those not currently accessing Irish-medium Education should be taken forward through a staged approach, reflecting shared linguistic heritage across these islands, on an east – west and an all-Ireland basis. In particular the affinity of Irish with Scottish Gaelic should be emphasised, exemplified and employed as a motivation for the further development of the Irish language across communities.

## Chapter 17

### All-Ireland and Trans-Regional Opportunities for Irish-medium Education

- 17.1) The Project Board was conscious of the status of Irish as an historic indigenous European language, with links throughout these islands, and indeed beyond. The recommendations considered throughout this Report are wide ranging, and many elements identify the opportunities for all-Ireland and trans-regional (ie east-west and beyond) developments. This theme runs throughout the Review, and the key elements are summarised here.
- 17.2) The potential for all-Ireland and trans-regional co-operation is significant. It was within this wider context that the Review sought to identify opportunities for beneficial future working. The Project Board considered that effective, coordinated, joint working could enhance the educational achievement of learners in all the areas involved. The opportunities touch on:
- i. Linguistic links and commonalities, which are particularly strong for Irish throughout this island, and with Scottish Gaelic on an east-west basis; and
  - ii. Educational methodology links, including immersion methodology and pedagogy, drawing on the experience in other places regardless of the languages involved.
- 17.3) There are particular benefits to be gained by drawing on the pool of pupils and staff engaged in Irish-medium Education in the south, with great potential for sharing existing curricular materials. There are also considerable benefits to be realised from interactions with native speakers of Irish.
- 17.4) To fully benefit from co-operation, particularly from resources developed in the future, Governments should consider pooling resources, for example, when developing curricular materials.
- 17.5) The main benefits that can accrue from all-Ireland and trans-regional working are:
- i. to harness better economies of scale in preparing resources, and so provide better value for money;
  - ii. to share experiences for mutual benefit;

- iii. to maintain and enhance long-standing cultural and linguistic links; and
  - iv. to outreach beyond current linguistic communities, and enhance the accessibility of minority languages across these islands, and beyond.
- 17.6) As would be expected, these benefits are linked to the areas identified in the Review as potential opportunities for enhanced all-Ireland and trans-regional working. The following paragraph draws together the key recommended areas for collaborative working identified by the Review:
- i. Development of resources of all types, in support of high-quality educational experiences for learners;
  - ii. Development of ICT, to support the improvement of learning and teaching;
  - iii. Sharing experiences of, and best practice in, delivering bilingual education;
  - iv. Supporting teachers' development and language skills;
  - v. Developing diagnostic and assessment tools and support resources to meet the needs of children, including those with Special Educational Needs;
  - vi. Supporting informal learning through opportunities for learners to interact through the Irish-language;
  - vii. Maximising the opportunities for mutually beneficial research work;
  - viii. Supporting standards of Irish by drawing on the resources of other language communities, including gaeltacht areas, and native speakers; and
  - ix. Using ICT to create a 'virtual' Irish-language community for the benefit of Irish speakers of all ages and stages of fluency.
- 17.7) In light of the above, the Project Board recommends enhanced co-operation on an all-Ireland, and east-west basis, to support learning and teaching, and to secure enhanced outcomes for learners in all areas.



**Recommendation 24: All-Ireland and Trans-regional opportunities for Irish-medium Education**

The Department of Education should identify development opportunities for co-operation with other areas in support of Irish-medium Education, particularly on an all-Ireland basis.



## Appendix

### Details of the Review

#### Project Objectives and Terms of Reference

- A.1) The objectives of this project can be broadly stated as: to review the development of Irish-medium Education to date; to identify any issues to be addressed; and to recommend how to continue the development of Irish-medium Education to ensure high quality provision and outcomes for all children in the sector. These objectives are dealt with through the Terms of Reference for the Review which were as follows:
- i. an analysis of past and likely future demography and demand (see Chapters 3 and 6);
  - ii. an analysis of how DE's policy has developed and operated over the last five years with regard to pre-school, primary and post-primary education (see Chapter 4);
  - iii. a consideration of the current approaches of Irish-medium schools, units and streams (see Chapter 3);
  - iv. a review of Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta (InaG) and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta's (CnaG) development plans, particularly in light of the Bain Review (see Chapter 5);
  - v. through ETI, an evaluation of quality and standards across IME provision (see Chapter 5);
  - vi. a study of the outcomes of Government's financial investment in IME over the last five years (see Chapter 5);
  - vii. an analysis of the challenges and issues facing the IME sector (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8);
  - viii. a gathering of information on how such provision is developed and operated elsewhere (see Chapter 9);
  - ix. an analysis of the implications of "A Shared Future" for IME provision (see Chapter 16);
  - x. a consideration of future policy towards the provision of IME (see Chapters 9 to 17); and
  - xi. an investigation and analysis of how all-Ireland approaches in the development of IME might enhance provision (see Chapter 17).

## Scope of the Review

- A.2) The Review took account of other strategic developments, including the debate on an Irish Language Act; the revised Curriculum in the north of Ireland and, in particular, the Entitlement Framework; the Children's Strategy; DE's commitments on equality and other relevant reforms and changes. FE and training organisations were also considered as part of the Review.

## Approach to the Review

- A.3) The project structures were designed to ensure that key stakeholders were actively involved in all stages of developing the strategy. This approach recognised the need for involvement of a multi-disciplinary team from a wide range of sectors. A Project Board was established drawing on members with experience in education generally, Irish-medium Education specifically, and also Irish language and cultural issues. The Chairperson of the Project Board was Louise Warde Hunter, the Senior Responsible Officer for the Review. Members of the Project Board are detailed below:

<i>Lisa Boal</i>	<i>Seán MacCorraidh</i>	<i>Máire Nic Giolla Cearra</i>
<i>Fionntán de Brún</i>	<i>Joe Martin</i>	<i>Eugene Rooney</i>
<i>Kevin Burke</i>	<i>Pilib Mistéil</i>	<i>Tom Shaw</i>
<i>Adeline Dinsmore</i>	<i>Jacqueline Ní Fhearghusa</i>	<i>Philip Sheerin</i>
<i>Gerry Lundy</i>	<i>Áine Ní hÍr</i>	<i>Charlie Sproule</i>
<i>Paul McAlister</i>		

- A.4) An Advisory Group helped inform the work of the Review Board, and provided a sounding board for its work. This ensured the Project Board benefited from the views of a wide range of representatives from the Irish-medium sector and wider education sectors. The Chairperson of the Advisory Group was Chris Hughes, the Project Manager for the Review. Members of the Advisory Group are detailed below:

<i>Áine Andrews</i>	<i>Aodán MacPólin</i>	<i>Aedín Ní Ghadhra</i>
<i>Mary Cahillane</i>	<i>Jake MacSiacaís</i>	<i>Gabrielle Nig Uidhir</i>
<i>Marian Dorman</i>	<i>Shiela McCaul</i> <sup>8</sup>	<i>Seán Ó Coinn</i>
<i>Mario Gribbon</i>	<i>Colma McKee</i>	<i>Pilib Ó Ruanaí</i>
<i>Tom Hesketh</i>	<i>Calum Morrison</i>	<i>Maighréad Uí Mháirtín</i>
<i>Paddy Mackey</i>		

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- A.5) The Education and Training Inspectorate, in particular Sean Ward and Joe Ó Labhraí, provided uniquely important contributions to the Review, through existing information and by bespoke input. This helped inform the evidence base used by the Project Board and Advisory Group throughout the Review.
- A.7) The secretariat to the Review was provided by the Irish-medium and Integrated Education Branch in DE: Linda Martin, Bryan Laverty, Martin Smith, Rebecca Jermy and Craig Boyd.
- A.8) The early stages of the Review also benefited from information provided by officials of other Civil Service departments, namely Bernie O'Hare (DEL) and Brian Smart (DCAL).