

## Irish-medium Education Policy

### Considerations & recommendations for Parents and Guardians

#### 1. How could people be encouraged to choose Irish-medium education?

- A national awareness raising campaign (funded by the State) on the immersion education model and its benefits.
  - i. Information on how bilingual education effects the educational development of children at all three levels.
  - ii. Information and research on benefits at third level and in working life.
- Increase provision of naíonraí and Irish-medium schools to ensure that every family has the option to choose Irish-medium education in their local area or within a reasonable commute.
- Provide a solid foundation for naíonraí to ensure that they are viable and are the cornerstone of early immersion education
- Proper access to Irish-medium schools through a school establishment system that supports Irish-medium education
  - i. A new school establishment system that is favourable towards Irish-medium education and ensures that families have access to Irish-medium schools at every level
  - ii. Increase provision of Irish-medium post-primary schools and design and implement a long-term strategy to respond to existing gaps
- Full and equal opportunities for every student to continue with Irish-medium education through the levels
  - i. Recognise and support the importance of continuity from naíonra to Irish-medium primary school through the amendment of primary enrolment legislation
  - ii. See further recommendations at Question 2 below.
- Proper infrastructure for schools to attract pupils (resources, sports facilities, after-school opportunities, extra-curricular, etc.). Irish-medium provision must be of an equal standard to English-medium education on a national basis.
- Provide permanent sites and buildings for schools in a timely manner to ensure that parents can plan accordingly

#### 2. What could be done to encourage pupils from Irish-medium primary schools to continue their education in Irish-medium secondary schools?

- Develop awareness amongst parents of the benefits of continuity in immersion education
- Implementation of a strategy to support parents and primary school pupils who wish to choose Irish-medium post-primary schooling

- Provide suitable resources for children from Third Class onwards to support and encourage continuity to Irish-medium post-primary schools
- Increase provision of Irish-medium post-primary schools to ensure that children can continue from Irish-medium primary to post-primary school
- Proper infrastructure for/around schools to attract pupils (resources, sports facilities, after-school opportunities, extra-curricular, etc.). Irish-medium provision must be of the same standard as English-medium education on a national basis.
- Modern classroom resources for teachers and students that are of an equal standard to the supports available to schools through the medium of English
- Appropriate supports and resources for SEN
- A new system for the establishment of schools. The current system discriminates against those who want Irish-medium education.
- Independent schools only (as opposed to aonaid or sruthanna) for all new IME provision at the post-primary level to ensure that the full immersion education experience is available to every student who chooses Irish-medium education.
- Provide an effective transport system in rural areas so that families can access Irish-medium education
- Provide permanent sites and buildings for schools in a timely manner to ensure that parents can plan accordingly
- Remote teaching/learning by way of video-conferencing link with a Gaelcholáiste to assist in providing a wider range of subjects

### 3. What are the main challenges in providing a high standard of Irish-medium education?

- General provision of teachers
  - i. An appropriate system to ensure the provision of teachers with a high standard of Irish and who are proficient in immersion education at every level. A separate panel for substitute teachers in the Irish-medium system.
  - ii. An appropriate payscale and better conditions for naíonra teachers.
  - iii. That the State should reward teachers in Irish-medium schools for their additional work by providing better pay and recognition of the additional work required in the immersion education system
- Provide a policy that will help naíonraí/early years services to operate effectively and entirely through Irish. Establish a recognition scheme to be recognised as an Irish-medium naíonra that takes into account mandatory professional development.
- A supportive transition system between naíonraí and Irish-medium primary schools
  - i. Regulation that supports Irish-medium primary schools who wish to give preference to children who have attended a naíonra or pre-school service that operates through Irish
  - ii. Raise ECCE grant to provide naíonraí of a high standard to children
- A lack of opportunities for students to continue with Irish-medium education due to a lack of Irish-medium schools at post-primary level
- There is no clear policy or guideline from the inspectorate on early-immersion education (each school has a different approach on when the formal instruction of English commences.

#### 4. How do you think the provision of support for children and young people with SEN in Irish-medium settings can be improved?

- Awareness programme — the message and appropriate supports that shows that children with SEN can and do attend Irish-medium education and that the system can have potential advantages for them
- Research-based and up-to-date information for parents and students regarding the effect that bilingual education will have on their children's educational development
- Widespread availability of specialist training programmes (pre-training) that prepare teachers in naíonraí and Irish-medium schools to work in the area of SEN in the immersion education system (A dedicated undergraduate Course (B.Ed.); compulsory modules in the training colleges)
- Provide additional resources for the AIM Scheme in naíonraí
- Specialist support services through Irish for schools including occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists
- Development of a training course in Irish aimed at special educational needs assistants in Irish-medium schools
- Provide programmes, interventions, and suitable resources in Irish that take into account the language context of the children and young people
- More speech and language assessment and diagnostic tools for the immersion education context that take into account the bilingual context.
- Attractive digital resources for children with learning difficulties to support the learning process, including resources that can be used at home
- Appropriate guidelines and resources for SEN in naíonraí and Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools
- Comprehensive and wide-ranging CPD for teachers on early-immersion education and SEN and mandatory training on the immersion education context for all professionals who provide supports at the 3 levels.
- Provision of appropriate support services and evidence-based resources for SEN in Irish-medium education from NEPS and the NCSE.

#### 5. What do you think could be done to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in Irish-medium education?

- A national awareness-raising campaign for parents on the immersion education system and its benefits. This should be available in a range of languages.
- Appropriate choice and opportunities. Generally, parents will choose the local school; however, this is not the case in terms of Irish-medium education.
- Establishment a GTB Scheme — Múinteoir Gaeilge mar Theanga Bhreise [Teacher of Irish as an Additional Language Teacher] for students whose first language is not Irish. (based on the EAL support model)
- Raising awareness of the Irish-medium system in all communities.
- Appropriate supports for SEN in the Irish-medium context and awareness of the immersion education system and the supports required amongst staff in NEPS, the NCSE, and other organisations.

- Provision of appropriate guidance and support to Irish-medium DEIS schools in relation to the best practices of immersion education taking into account the school's DEIS status and the level of disadvantage of the area in which the school is situated.
- Provision of an appropriate support programme for parents of children in Irish-medium DEIS schools that takes into account the language context of the schools.
- Provision of Irish classes of various levels for parents to increase their confidence in actively participating in Irish-medium education

6. How could better links be created between Irish-medium education and the community in general in order to foster the use of Irish within the community?

- External services through Irish as support for the naíonra/school
- Clear policy and appropriate support for the promotion of Irish as a language of communication, fun and socialisation
- Appropriate State infrastructure that supports the creation and development of language communities around naíonraí and Irish-medium schools.
- Provide opportunities and grants for students to spend time in the Gaeltacht.