

**Area Planning
Recommendations
for Irish-medium
Primary Provision
in Derry City**



COMHAIRLE
NA GAELSCOLAÍOCHTA

CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 CONTEXT	2
2.1 Irish-medium Education	2
2.1.1 <i>Academic Achievement</i>	2
2.1.2 <i>Learning Further Languages with Greater Ease</i>	3
2.1.3 <i>English Language Achievement</i>	3
2.1.4 <i>Greater Tolerance of Other Cultures</i>	3
2.1.5 <i>The Best Way to Learn a Language</i>	3
2.1.6 <i>Faster Readers</i>	4
2.1.7 <i>Societal & Community Benefits</i>	4
2.1.8 <i>Health Benefits</i>	4
2.1.9 <i>Economic Benefits</i>	5
2.1.10 <i>Employment Benefits</i>	5
2.2 The Statutory Duty	5
2.3 Area Planning	7
2.3.1 <i>The Bain Report (2006)</i>	7
2.3.2 <i>Review of Irish-medium Education (2009)</i>	8
2.3.3 <i>Sustainable Schools Policy - Schools for the Future</i>	9
2.3.4 <i>Northern Ireland Audit Office Report (2015)</i>	11
2.3.5 <i>Providing Pathways (2017)</i>	13
2.3.6 <i>Outline of the Area Planning Process</i>	14
2.4 The IME Sector in the North	15
2.4.1 <i>Historic and Projected Growth of the Sector</i>	15
2.4.2 <i>Building Sustainable Enrolments within the sector</i>	18
3.0 DERRY CITY	21
3.1 Socio-economic Background	21
3.2 Expansion of the Housing Stock	23
3.3 Irish-medium Sector in the city	24
3.4 The IME Schools 'Estate' in Derry	26
3.5 Derry's Unfulfilled Potential in IME	27
3.6 Geographical Coverage & growth of IME	30
4.0 IME SCHOOLS IN DERRY	32
4.1 Introduction	32
4.2 Bunscoil Cholmcille	33
4.2.1 <i>School Description</i>	33

4.2.2	<i>Admissions & Enrolments</i>	34
4.2.3	<i>Socio-economic Context</i>	34
4.2.4	<i>Site & Accommodation Profile</i>	36
4.2.5	<i>Sustainability Schools Criteria</i>	37
4.2.6	<i>Overall Sustainability Assessment</i>	39
4.2.7	<i>Challenges facing Bunscoil Cholmcille</i>	39
4.3	<i>Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir</i>	40
4.3.1	<i>School Description</i>	40
4.3.2	<i>Admissions & Enrolments</i>	41
4.3.3	<i>Socio-economic Context</i>	41
4.3.4	<i>Site & Accommodation Profile</i>	44
4.3.5	<i>Sustainability Schools Criteria</i>	46
4.3.6	<i>Overall Sustainability Assessment</i>	47
4.3.7	<i>Challenges facing Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir</i>	47
4.4	<i>Gaelscoil na Daróige</i>	48
4.4.1	<i>School Description</i>	48
4.4.2	<i>Admissions & Enrolment</i>	49
4.4.3	<i>Socio-economic Context</i>	50
4.4.4	<i>Site & Accommodation Profile</i>	51
4.4.5	<i>Sustainability Schools Criteria</i>	52
4.4.6	<i>Overall Sustainability Assessment</i>	54
4.4.7	<i>Challenges facing Gaelscoil na Daróige</i>	54
5.0	OPTIONS APPRAISAL	56
5.1	Options Defined	56
5.2	Options Consideration	56
5.2.1	<i>Option 1: Status Quo</i>	57
5.2.2	<i>Option 2: Amalgamation</i>	59
5.2.2.1	<i>Solution via Amalgamation</i>	60
5.2.3	<i>Option 3: Three School Solution</i>	62
6.0	CONCLUSION	64
6.1	Bunscoil Cholmcille	64
6.2	Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir	65
6.3	Gaelscoil na Daróige	66
6.4	Establishment of Dedicated Action Plan Working Group for Irish-medium Education in Derry City	67

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to set out the background to Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta's (CnaG) recommendations for the development of a network of sustainable schools at primary level in Derry City which will provide for the growing needs of Irish-medium Education (IME) now and into the future. The paper considers the past and current trends in IME and sets out the most appropriate and deliverable approach to the development of the sector within the City.

This document will inform the Area Planning process for IME in Derry city. It also represents the considered advices of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta to the Department of Education, setting out the recommended approach for the Department to deliver its statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education within the City (as it is empowered to do under article 89 of the Education (NI) Order 1998).

This document will initially set out the context of the growth in IME generally and look at the particular challenges that are presented to the sector at a city-wide level. It will outline the historic and current growth trends in IME and use this to assess the needs of the sector in the coming years.

It will outline the local context for each of the schools, giving consideration to the schools' estate, school performance and enrolment trends, and will consider each of the schools against the criteria for sustainable schools.

It will then outline the range of options considered for the delivery of a sustainable IME sector within the city and consider the deliverability of each of these options.

Finally, this paper will outline CnaG's recommendations to the Department of Education, the Education Authority and other interested parties (including the individual schools) for the delivery of a sustainable IME sector within the city.

2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 Irish-medium Education

Irish-medium Education is a form of instruction which adopts an ‘immersion’ approach to enable children’s acquisition of the target language i.e. Irish. This involves the natural acquisition of the language by children where Irish is the primary language of instruction and communication in Irish-medium schools. All curricular subjects are taught through the medium of Irish and children reach a high standard of fluency in both English and Irish.

Immersion education is practised throughout the world, notably in Canada, Wales and Scotland, where parents wish their children to become bilingual, and this approach is recognised as the most effective way of acquiring another language.

Irish-medium Education in the North started when a group of young Belfast families in the 1960s decided to develop Irish as a family and community language by setting up a local Irish-speaking nucleus. A natural development was the setting up of an education system which would provide Irish-medium Education for their children, in the absence of such provision by the state. By 1971, there were 9 children living in the community who were of school age and a bunscoil (primary school) was founded.

Despite significant challenges faced by this community, the bunscoil achieved voluntary maintained primary school status in 1984, which entitled it to financial backing. There are currently 6,519 children in the North being educated through the medium of Irish, in 67 schools and units, from pre-school to post-primary.

There is a range of cognitive and societal benefits relating to Irish-medium education and bilingualism, substantiated by international research, including:

2.1.1 Academic achievement

From the standpoint of academic achievement, over three decades of studies consistently show that on average, immersion students achieve as well as or better than non-immersion peers on standardized measures of verbal and mathematics skills administered in English (Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan 2000; Genesee 1987). In addition the children have acquired a second language to a very high level of fluency and in the process improved their cognitive skills in a range of other areas.

A research briefing published by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland indicated that former pupils of Irish-medium schools attained a higher academic standard than might be expected among the general population of the same age group (Gallagher & Hanna 2002).

2.1.2 Learning further languages with greater ease

Research from European countries would suggest that children in Irish-medium schools, on average are more successful at acquiring additional languages.

One such study carried out in the Basque country found that bilingual students displayed greater facility in learning an additional foreign language (Cenoz & Valencia 1994).

2.1.3 English language achievement

Research consistently finds that the immersion experience actually enhances English language development (Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan 2000).

Research findings from French Immersion Programmes in Canada indicate that “children in early immersion education programmes on average perform better than children in regular programmes on several aspects of English achievement” (Baker & Hornberger 2001).

2.1.4 Greater tolerance of other cultures

Research commissioned by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland indicated that past pupils of Irish-medium schools had a very positive attitude to the educational and cultural experience they received. There was also an indication that, due to the cultural enrichment these children experienced, on the whole, they were more positive towards cultural diversity (Gallagher & Hanna 2002).

2.1.5 The best way to learn a language

Immersion education is regarded by many as the most effective means of learning a second language.

Most immersion students can be expected to reach significantly higher levels of second language proficiency than students in other school-based language programmes (Met 1998).

2.1.6 Faster Readers

A study by researchers at York University in Toronto shows that, on average, children who are bilingual learn to read more rapidly than their monolingual peers (Bialystok *et al.* 2005).

2.1.7 Societal & community benefits

Irish-medium schools have their origins in parental and community initiative and retain strong links with their communities. This tradition of parental involvement is often strengthened through joint learning and acquisition of the Irish language, which is more frequent in families involved in Irish-medium education.

The Irish language and Irish-medium education provide substantial benefits to the communities in which they are located. These communities frequently exhibit a strong sense of belonging and community cohesion that comes from a shared identity and valuing the Irish language and Irish-medium education. The concept of connection to the local community prevalent in Irish-medium school communities is exemplified in the quality indicators cited in the Department of Education's *Every School a Good School* policy for school improvement:

“Good relationships that facilitate engagement and communication between the school and its parents and the wider community that it serves”.

“The school and its teachers are held in respect by parents and the local community who in turn actively support the work of the school”.

“The school uses its involvement in particular programmes (for example Extended Schools or Specialist Schools) effectively in meeting the needs of the community and nearby schools”.

2.1.8 Health Benefits

Canadian scientists have proved that the lifelong use of two languages can help delay the onset of dementia symptoms by up to four years, compared to people who are monolingual. The study follows on the heels of previous published reports showing that bilingualism enhances attention and cognitive control in both children and older adults. (*Bialystok, Craik, Freedman, 2006*)

2.1.9 Economic Benefits

A study carried out in the United States on life-chances of monolingual and bilingual young people concluded that there were significant effects of bilingualism on three socio-economic outcomes: decreasing the odds of dropping out of high school, increasing occupational status and earnings. (Rumbaut 2014)

2.1.10 Employment Benefits

Fast growing fields such as international business, tourism, journalism and translation put great value on the ability to speak multiple languages. Employers are looking for additional qualifications that will make an applicant *stand out from the crowd* - being bilingual is one of those qualifications. This is particularly true in Ireland where more and more jobs are becoming available in the burgeoning Irish language sector, and also in the European Union, where Irish has been upgraded to a full working language of the European institutions, bringing with it many and varied opportunities.

2.2 The Statutory Duty

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (Comhairle / CnaG) is the organisation responsible for providing advice pertaining to the development and provision of Irish-medium Education (IME) to the Department of Education. The Belfast Agreement, also known as the Good Friday Agreement, placed a statutory duty upon DE “*to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium education*”. Article 89 of the 1998 Education (NI) Order that followed contained provision to allow DE to pay grants to any “*body appearing to the Department to have as an objective the encouragement or promotion of IME*”. In 2000, DE established Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta to carry out this function.

The Department of Education originally considered its duty to encourage and facilitate IM education to be aspirational under article 89 of the Education Order. This position was challenged in relation to the provision of school transport for IME in the Judicial Review case of McKee V Department of Education. In his ruling of 2011, Justice Treacy clarified that this statutory duty is “not merely aspirational” but “***has and is intended to have practical consequences and legislative significance***”. This effectively empowers and obliges the Minister to fulfil the statutory duty and provide additional financial or other support if this is required to encourage and facilitate IME. Justice Treacy also clarified that that this can be done without creating precedents for other sectors.

According to a judgement by Justice Treacy in 2014 in the case of an application for Judicial Review by Drumragh Integrated College in Omagh, further clarification has been given in relation to the definition of the statutory duty (which applies to both the Irish-medium and Integrated sectors). This case is particularly relevant to the current process of area planning and the fact the Area Planning process does not assume growth in the integrated or IM sectors. The Drumragh decision specifically identified the limitations of the needs model in Area Planning when it comes to the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate. Hence in that case the court directed that the DE must be “**alive**” to its duty to encourage and facilitate “**at all levels including the strategic level**” (Treacy J).

From the Drumragh decision it is clear that the area-based planning approach is not tailored to facilitate and encourage the development of either the Integrated or the IM sectors. In particular, Justice Treacy ruled that the application of thresholds formulated on the basis of the traditional, established sector represents an obstacle to the development of the integrated sector (and by implication the IM sector).

As noted in Judge Keegan’s findings in the judicial review case related to Gaelscoil an Lonnáin¹ in Belfast, the Education Order’s Article 89 sets out a positive statutory duty which has legislative force. Gaelscoil an Lonnáin is a small school in the Fall Road area of West Belfast, housed in poor accommodation, on an inadequate site. A Development Proposal from the school’s Board of Governors which sought to relocate the school to a new site with modern facilities was rejected by the then Minister for Education. In quashing the decision to refuse the relocation of the school, Judge Keegan stated:

‘The applicant’s case is encapsulated in what is described as a “catch 22” situation (in) that the school cannot expand within the current premises to meet the sustainability targets. There is a clear connection between the current school situation and the facilitation and development of Irish Medium education. I consider that this is a valid argument and as it is not properly addressed in the decision making process. I cannot be satisfied that the Article 89 duty is discharged’.

Again referencing Justice Treacy’s 2011 ruling in respect of Coláiste Feirste, Judge Keegan went on to say:

¹ This case was overturned on appeal

“Article 89 sets out a positive statutory duty. The context of promoting education in the Irish language Medium finds its imprimatur in statute. Treacy J observed in McKee’s Application [2011] NIQB 98 that this duty does not apply to other sectors and it is not merely aspirational. As I have said this duty has legislative force and is reiterated in policy. There is also the requirement placed upon the Department by virtue of Article 44 of the Education and Libraries Order to educate pupils in accordance with the wishes of parents within the parameters of reasonable public expenditure.”

The statutory duty requirements clearly have a direct relevance to the consideration of provision for Irish-medium Education in Derry City where all three primary schools suffer from poor, inadequate sites and accommodation to provide for future sustainable provision.

2.3 Area Planning

Before formally considering the Area Planning process, it is important to consider the policy documents that have brought about the process in order to better understand its function and purpose. It is important to consider these policy documents within the context of Irish-medium Education and how well (or otherwise) these policies address the needs and aspirations of Irish-medium Education. The Bain Report of 2006 represented one of the first important milestones in the evolution of the process of Area Planning.

2.3.1 The Bain Report 2006

This document sets the context for the entire Area Planning process and the importance of planning for IME. In particular, the importance of planning for anticipated rather than demonstrated demand for IME (& Integrated Education). This review was announced in March 2006 with the following terms of reference:

“To examine funding of the education system, in particular the strategic planning and organisation of the schools’ estate, taking account of the curriculum changes, including the wider provision for 14-19 year olds, and also demographic trends.”

‘Bain’ is very useful in setting out the parameters of a high-quality education system and emphasizes the importance of the quality of the “educational experience” in its broadest sense. The Bain report places a particular emphasis on the inter-relationship between the community and the education system in delivering a successful school. Bain proposes minimum long-term enrolment figures for schools at primary level (105 in rural

areas and 140 in urban areas) and secondary level (500). The report advises that a sustainability policy should be developed that sets out the parameters for sustainability of schools going forward, with a strong focus on educational experience and sustainability.

*“Planning should take account of Schools for the Future: Funding, Strategy, Sharing the projected needs of all sectors based on a **consistent approach to estimating long-term enrolments (LTE)**. This means planning for anticipated rather than demonstrated demand in the Integrated and Irish-medium sectors. Forecasts should consider all the relevant determinants of demand to the greatest practicable extent, including demographics, pupil movements, population shifts, economic development, parental choice and changes in school performance and sustainability.” P 116 para 9.11” (Bold is CnaG emphasis).*

Bain recommended a review of Irish-medium Education to clarify and develop a range of issues associated with IME, including projecting demand into the future to help to plan for the future needs of the sector. Bain clearly recognised the complexities of the IM sector and the need for a significant body of further work to be undertaken in relation to the sector, due to its unique needs and aspirations

These issues were subsequently considered and consulted upon and published in a document entitled *Review of Irish-medium Education*, in 2009.

2.3.2. Review of Irish-medium education – Published 2009

The review considered a wide range of development needs for the sector and importantly, from an Area Planning perspective, the need to forecast growth within the IM sector. It proposed a growth model for the sector using historic and current demand and growth trends to project future demand. The report went on to consider a growth model for the sector as set out in the following section.

Current Area Planning has moved away from a “needs model” approach in favour of pupil population projections. However, since the IM sector only forms a small percentage of the overall schools sector (2%), this approach is of little use in projecting potential need within the IM sector. The capacity of the overall schools sector to expand is directly related to the numbers of children in the wider population of school age. However, the capacity of the IM sector to expand into the remaining 98% of the

upcoming school population is massive in percentage terms. As a result the needs model proposed in the Review of Irish-medium Education is entirely appropriate for the sector.

The 2009 Review of Irish-Medium Education remains the most recent and valid departmental policy document in relation to assessing the needs of the Irish-medium Education sector. The review clearly sets out a methodology for a “needs model” within the IME sector which CnaG’s 2016 IME Sector Development Plan has adopted. The IME Sector Development Plan is currently being reviewed by CnaG. Indeed, the 2016 projections in CnaG’s Plan have been tested with the passage of time and have been shown to be entirely valid.

This paper bases its approach to Area Planning on the approach proposed by the Review of IME, and on CnaG’s 2016 IME Sector Development Plan and considers a range of growth scenarios using historical growth trends to inform future projections at a general level within the city.

2.3.3 Sustainable Schools Policy - Schools for the Future:

This policy sets out the context for the current area-planning process. The document’s purpose is summarised in three points (1.10-1.12):

“1.10 This document examines the issues relevant to achieving sustainability of schools which should be central to the planning of future school provision. It considers the issue of sustainable schools in the Bain Report context and sets out criteria and indicators for use by the Department; the Education Authority; Boards of Governors and the wider community, to help assess whether a school may be considered fit for purpose, or whether action is required to address emerging problems of viability. The objective is to improve the quality of education offered to pupils of all ages and backgrounds. The criteria should also have a role in helping a school to monitor and self-review its current position and to consider how it might be strengthened and improved.

1.11 Too often, concerns about a school’s viability are addressed only when enrolments have already declined over a period of years to an untenable position, and rationalisation is the only option remaining. The criteria set out in this document are much broader than enrolment thresholds and are intended to

provide a framework for earlier consideration and action as necessary, so that options can be considered which best meet the educational needs of the local community. The criteria will also ensure transparency, consistency and equity in decision-making on sustainability across schools and sectors.

1.12 In examining these issues, this document also considers the importance of sharing and collaboration and how the education sector can contribute to that by meeting the need for sustainable schools. The policy is relevant to all of our grant-aided schools.”

The policy sets out the indicators of a sustainable school and as such, the framework within which shape and planning for current and future provision should be viewed. The document goes on to mention the Integrated and IME sectors and acknowledges simply that it has to respond positively to parental demand for IME and Integrated education, without acknowledging the need to consider a needs model or plan for these growing sectors. The document speaks of dealing with the needs of each case, rather than taking a strategic view on projecting the needs of the sectors. It does not refer to the proposed approach suggested by Bain, developed by the Review of Irish-medium Education.

The Sustainable Schools document summarises the basis for the process of area planning, which is clear in its suggestion that area-based planning be carried out on a whole system basis, taking into account impacts within and across areas and across sectors.

The sustainable schools policy outlines a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators of a sustainable school:

- Quality Educational Experience
- Stable Enrolment Trends
- Sound Financial Position
- Strong Leadership and Management by Boards of Governors and Principals
- Accessibility
- Strong links with the Community

It also sets out the quantitative criterion and endorses Bain’s proposed minimum long-term enrolment figures;

- Minimum Year 1 intake of 15 for recurrent funding in urban primary schools, with a minimum of 20 pupils over 3 years to ensure capital funding (140 pupils over 7 years)
- Minimum Year 1 intake of 12 for recurrent funding in rural primary schools, with a minimum of 15 pupils per year over 3 years to ensure capital funding (105 pupils over 7 years)
- Post-primary schools would be expected to have a minimum annual intake of 100. Minimum enrolment for new Sixth Forms will be 100. For new post-primary schools, the minimum intake to qualify initially for recurrent funding will be 50 but, to retain recurrent funding, this would be expected to increase to 80 in the second year and then 100 in the third year in anticipation that a minimum enrolment of 500 for Years 8-12 would be achieved.

2.3.4 Northern Ireland Audit Office Report 2015 – “NIAO Department of Education Sustainability of Schools 30th June 2015”

This report considered the progress of the implementation of the Sustainable Schools Policy. There are a number of strategically important points raised within this report that have particular relevance to Irish-medium Education;

Recommendation 1 - Definition of the qualitative criterion for sustainable schools.

This recommends that the DE/EA review their approach to considering the three qualitative indicators in the Sustainable Schools Policy, namely; strong leadership; accessibility and strong links to the community. There are important qualitative aspects to IME that feature strongly within the sector. In particular, IME is often key to delivering many other wider community benefits, including broader community learning/ involvement in language development, youth work, social cohesion, social engagement etc. Indeed the sector delivers other additional educational benefits directly to pupils, including *additive bilingualism and biliteracy*, where fluency in a second language is delivered, additional to the full curriculum delivery provided by monolingual schools.

Recommendation 2 - Calculation of capacity of schools & surplus places

The NIAO report outlined its concerns about the approach to the calculation of approved enrolments, ergo the number of surplus places within the system.

NIAO felt that the current basis of calculating approved enrolment was not based on current standards and that the number of surplus places may be over-estimated.

Recommendation 2 states *“It is vital that the Department has accurate information on school capacity in order to be able to establish a robust baseline for the Area-Planning process. We recommend that the Department urgently reviews the way it calculates school capacity and, as a result, surplus places.”*

The NIAO report refers to the DE school handbook as a basis for assessing the capacity of schools. CnaG would concur with this, particularly in relation to Irish-medium education, where schools have experienced significant growth over the past decade and where they are often located on sites that are not suitable for the needs of their current or projected enrolments. This point is dealt with in more detail within section 1.4.3 of this report.

Recommendation 5 – Exceptional circumstances for small schools.

The NIAO report indicates that there was no evidence that the additional funding of small schools demonstrated higher educational attainment and therefore value for money for the Department. However, this may not necessarily be the case for smaller IM schools, which have to deliver an additional curricular subject.

A disproportionate number of IM schools are small compared to the EM sector - the average size of Irish-medium primary schools is 104 pupils compared to the average size of 203 pupils across all other schools.

CnaG concurs with the enrolment thresholds set out in the Sustainable Schools Policy and will be seeking to build enrolment in all schools so that they reach the target enrolment threshold. However, CnaG also sees the potential necessity for a small number of smaller schools in areas where there is limited accessibility for parents.

Recommendation no. 5 suggested that the Department should “as a matter of urgency, work with the planning and managing authorities to identify exceptional circumstances in

which an otherwise unsustainable small school could be considered for retention and additional financial support.” CnaG would seek to be involved in this process.

Recommendation 8 – More pro-active help to schools that are failing.

The report advises that steps should be taken to be more proactive regarding the appropriate mechanism to provide advice, support and assistance to those schools that require help. The NIAO recommends that clear lines of communication should be established for such circumstances, and a specialist advice and support group considered. This is all the more important to IME due to the diverse nature of the sector, and the fact that schools are independent and there is no formal responsible authority for overseeing the management of schools. CnaG believes that it is vitally important that assistance is given to any and all schools or units that have issues in relation to their sustainability, so that they are provided with support and assistance to help them address these concerns, if possible.

The Department has since considered the NIAO report and has pledged to enact all recommendations contained therein and are currently finalising proposals in this regard.

2.3.5 Providing Pathways 2017

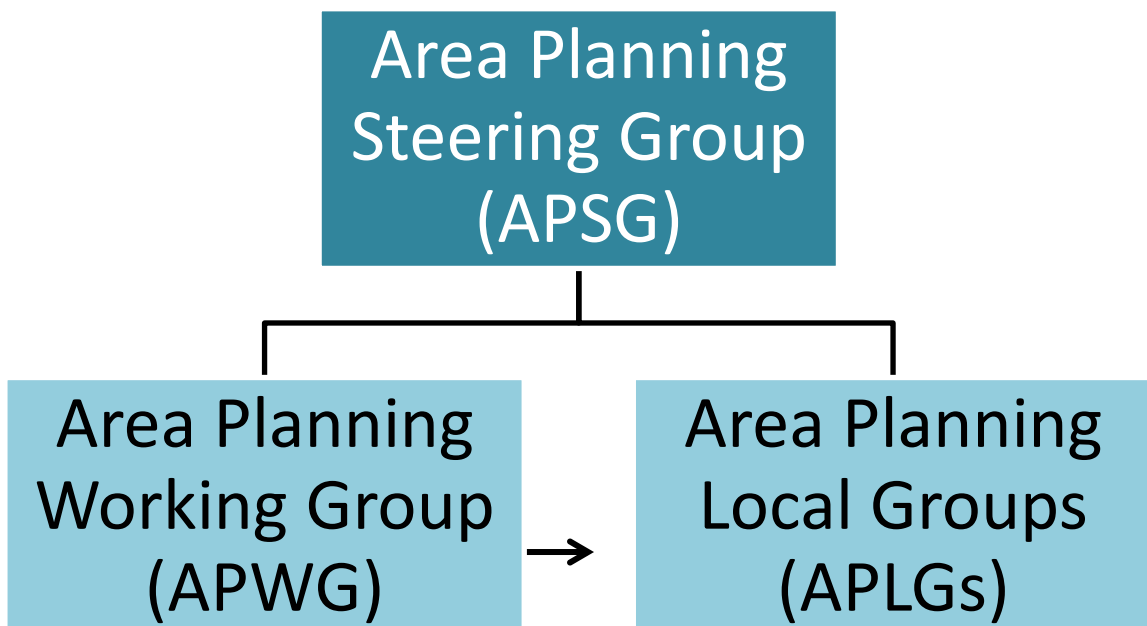
Published in April 2017, the EA’s *Providing Pathways* is the first region-wide strategic area plan for education provision, replacing the regional plans drawn up under the (former) Education and Library Boards. It is envisaged that this document will shape proposed changes to educational provision for the period 2017 – 2020. The need to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education is identified as a key theme within the document at both primary and post-primary level.

Within the document, APWG identifies the following key areas within Primary and Post-Primary Sectors:

Primary Sector	Post-Primary
Reduce the number of available places in schools	Reduce the number of available places in schools
Match provision to population trends.	Address school provision which is not sustainable
Address school provision which is not sustainable.	Configure school provision to provide equitable access for students to Entitlement Framework pathways
Further improve the quality of provision.	Match provision to population trends
Need to encourage, facilitate and promote 'Shared Education'.	Further improve the quality of provision
Duty to encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the Integrated and Irish-medium Sectors	Need to encourage, facilitate and promote Shared Education
-	Duty to encourage and facilitate the development of sustainable provision in the Integrated and Irish-medium Sectors

2.3.6 Outline of the Area Planning Process

The Area Planning process as implemented by the Department is organised in a three-year cycle. The aim of the cycle is to provide clarity for schools, parents and wider community on the nature, scope and timing of proposals being planned for an area. Along with a three-year Strategic Area Plan, Annual Action Plans are produced to effect the actions contained within the high-level Strategic Area Plan. Annual Area Profiles continue to be produced. With a governance structure composing of three groupings, the following bodies are involved: Education Authority, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, CSCC, Governing Bodies Association, NICIE, Catholic Schools' Trustee Service and Dept. of Economy.



Area Planning Steering Group

The role of the APSG is to support DE in the implementation of policy and ministerial priorities and in doing so, further embed the process of Area Planning. The APSG has an important role in ensuring a singular and consistent approach to Area Planning and its implementation, scrutinising actions arising from Area Plans, identifying priority areas for action, and to identify policy misalignments or gaps for DE's consideration.

Area Planning Working Group

The role of the APWG is to bring together the planning authorities and the sectoral bodies who are involved with the operational aspects of Area Planning. The APWG's approach is consistent with the 11 Local Government Districts. Issues and challenges facing each district are discussed and agreed by each of the APLGs.

Area Planning Local Groups

The role of the APLGs is to bring together the local stakeholders and sectoral bodies with the planning authorities along with any other relevant interests (including Further Education). The APLGs discuss issues at a local level and review existing Area Plans; take into account local needs ensuring that plans accurately reflect the current and future needs of pupils within that locality, and where necessary, bring relevant issues of wider interest for resolution or referral to APSG.

CnaG is represented on the three levels within the Area Planning structures.

2.4 The IME Sector in the North

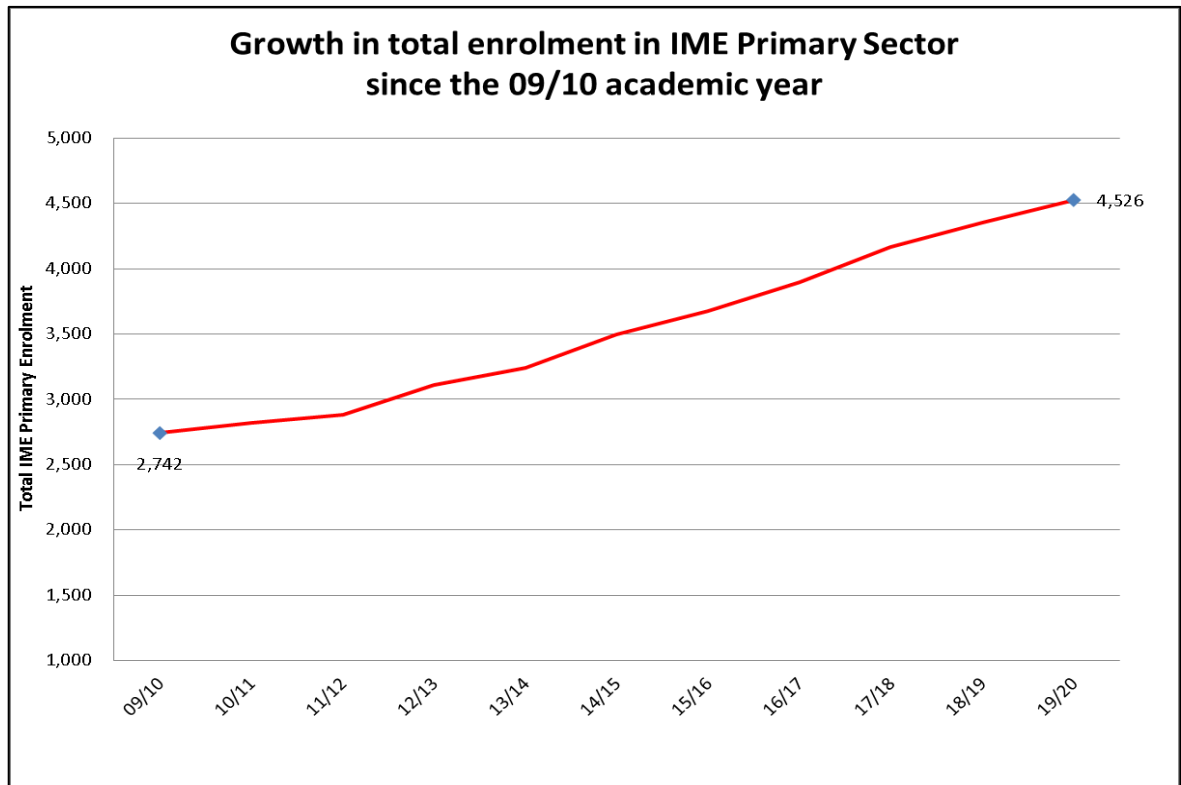
The IME sector in the North started with the setting up of an independent Irish-medium primary school "Bunscoil Feirste" in 1971 and has grown significantly over the last 45 years. IME still only makes up a relatively small proportion of the education sector (2%) but this fact means that the sector's potential to expand is significant.

2.4.1 Historic and projected growth of the sector

Whilst growth within the sector has been steady over the past 45 years, the last ten years in particular have seen the speed of this expansion increase. This has meant that overall enrolments in the primary sector increased from 2,742 in September 2009 to a projected 4526 in September 2019. This represents a growth of approximately 65% in the sector over the decade. During the same timeframe, intakes into the sector have

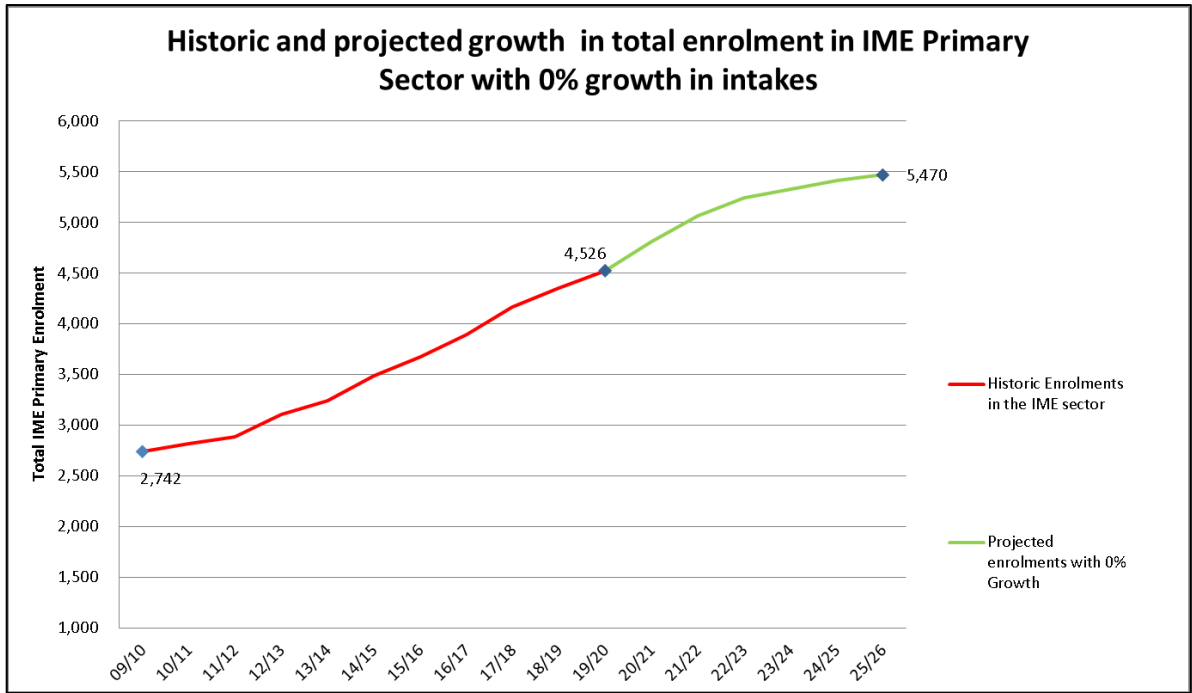
increased by almost 80% from 393 pupils in 2009 to an estimated 706 in September 2019.

The growth in the sector has been both rapid and steady and the following graph demonstrates the growth trend over the last 10 years:



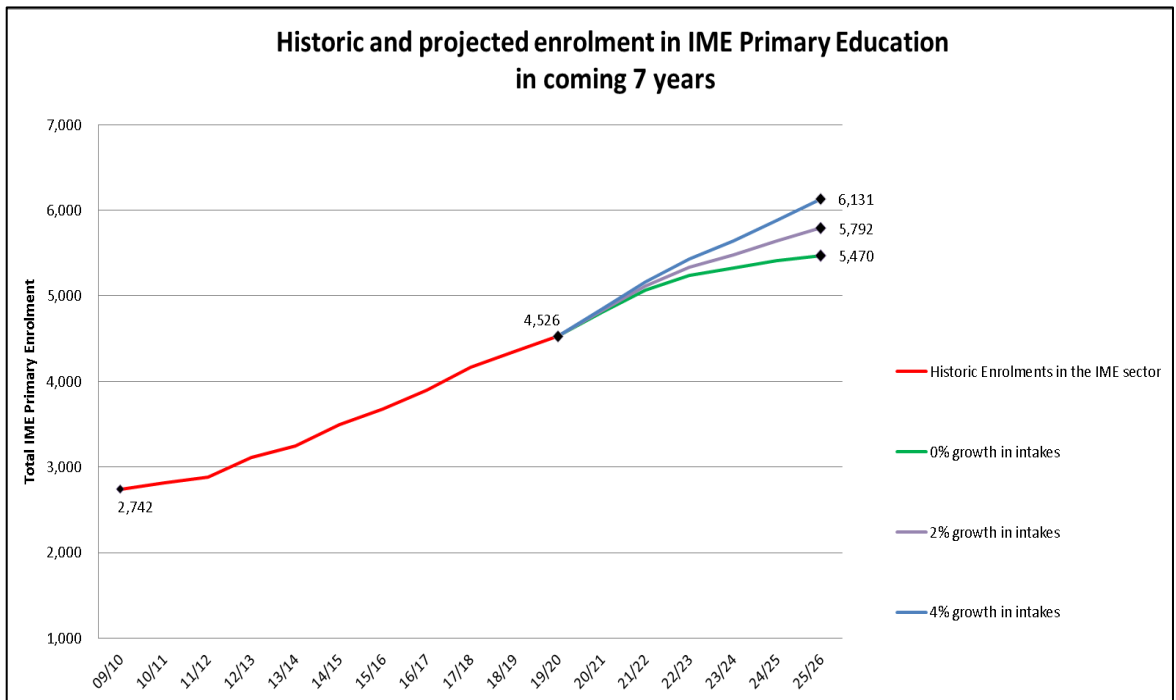
** Estimated for 2019 based on 1st Preference Applications*

This growth means that the school demography within the IME sector is skewed towards the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The implication of this demography is that even if there is 0% growth in the annual intakes to the sector, the total numbers of children within IME would increase significantly as shown on the following graph.



* Estimated for 2019 based on 1st Preference Applications

The above graph demonstrates that if enrolments were to remain static at 2018/19 levels for the coming 7 years, the overall primary enrolment within the sector would increase to 5470 in 7-years' time. This would equate to a total increase of 1,118 pupils from the current year (2018/19) or 26% in the overall size of the sector – with up to 25% more resources, more teachers, more classrooms etc. required.



* Estimated for 2019 based on 1st Preference Applications

If we consider alternative scenarios of an additional, relatively modest 2% and 4% increases in admissions, over the coming years, this would cause an increase of 33% and 41% respectively in the overall enrolment of the sector in the coming 7 years.

Catering for this latent demand, together with the expected growth in enrolments within the sector, will necessitate additional teachers, additional accommodation and significant additional provision at post-primary level, which all must be planned for. When one considers the already poor state of many of the buildings within the IM sector, this will further increase the pressure on already stretched resources. This illustrates an urgent need to have a range of strategies for school buildings, teacher training, resource development and bespoke support for the sector.

It is vitally important to strategically plan to support improvement of existing provision and to accommodate future growth. It is absolutely essential to analyse the trends in relation to these growing enrolments across the sector and to make predictions that will help the sector plan for this growth. This will help in a wide range of areas including the need for additional teachers, teaching resources and new accommodation etc.

2.4.2 Building Sustainable Enrolments within the Sector

Over the last five years CnaG has adopted a strategy of consolidation within the sector in order to increase the sustainability of existing schools. CnaG has not prioritised the setting up of new IM primary provision and has instead supported existing schools to build admissions and enrolment to improve their sustainability. This is illustrated by considering the average size of Primary 1 intakes which have increased from 14 pupils per class in 2009 to 20 pupils in 2018/19 – a growth of 43%.

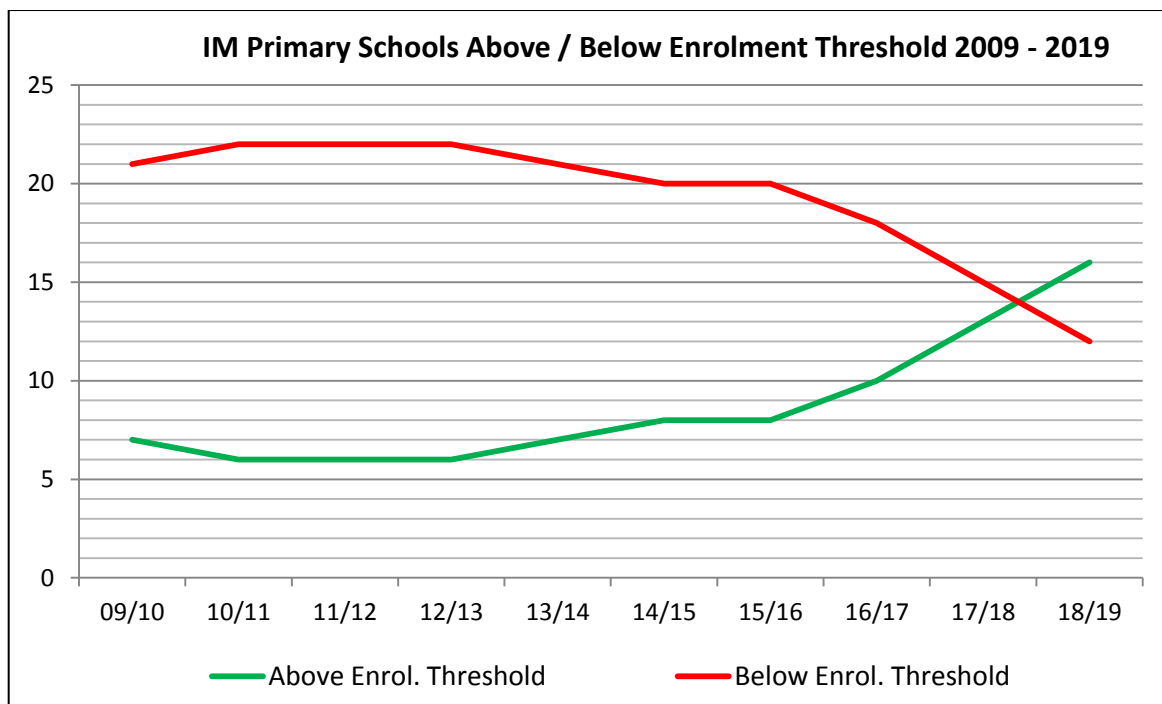
CnaG has been focussing on supporting schools to become sustainable, both in terms of the qualitative and the quantitative criteria and has been concentrating resources on schools and areas that have specific challenges or those have not yet met the target long-term enrolment threshold. CnaG's focus is to build a sustainable admissions pattern within schools that will, over the longer term, meet and surpass the minimum enrolment figures proposed.

CnaG is of the view that a school should not necessarily have to pass the total enrolment threshold (i.e., 105 in rural areas and 140 in urban areas) to be considered

to have met this particular quantitative criterion. Rather, it should demonstrate that it is capable of securing an admissions pattern that will eventually lead to it surpassing this threshold. This effectively means an average admissions pattern of 15+ p.a. in a rural primary school and 20+ p.a. in an urban primary.

A vitally important part of this process, (as identified by Justice Keegan in the Gaelscoil an Lonnáin Judicial Review) is the delivery of the required buildings, sites and resources to provide a high quality learning environment to accommodate this level of admissions. Poor facilities, dilapidated buildings and lack of space to accommodate new pupils, create major obstacles to a school being able to build its admissions and have the opposite effect of encouraging and facilitating Irish-medium Education.

Considerable progress has been made on building enrolments and admissions over the last 5 years insofar as, the number of IM schools with enrolments below the SSP minimum enrolment thresholds has fallen sharply from 21 in 2009 to 12 in the 2018/19 academic year; this represents a fall from 75% to 43% of IM Primary Schools. The results of this approach are illustrated in the below graph.



Irish-medium Primary Schools Above / Below Enrolment Threshold 2009 - 2019										
	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Above Threshold	7	6	6	6	7	8	8	10	13	16
Below Threshold	21	22	22	22	21	20	20	18	15	12
% Above	25%	21%	21%	21%	25%	29%	29%	36%	46%	57%
% Below	75%	79%	79%	79%	75%	71%	71%	64%	54%	43%

If one looks at current admissions numbers, taking the average of the last three years intakes, the figures demonstrate that, in reality, with the passage of time and without any additional increase in intakes, no more than six schools will be below the threshold within the coming five years.

Unfortunately, growing the enrolments of these remaining schools presents a significant challenge to CnaG, and the schools themselves, since most of them have significant physical constraints in terms of the inadequacy of the sites and/ or poor quality accommodation. Indeed, the issue of inadequate and sub-standard accommodation affects all of the IM schools within Derry City.

3.0 DERRY CITY

It is important to place IME in Derry within the general socio-economic context of the city before looking at the background and context of each of the individual schools.

3.1 Socio-economic Background

Derry City is the economic and cultural capital of the north-west, with an estimated population in 2017 of over 110,000 (NISRA).

Traditionally, it has suffered severe economic and social disadvantage in comparison to the rest of the North. This is partly as a result of its geographical distance from Belfast. The Derry City region has poor transport linkages to Belfast compared to the main other large conurbations such as Newry, Ballymena, Coleraine, Lisburn and Larne.

The city often suffered as a result of sectarianism and political violence during the troubles and has traditionally been marred by poor housing, systemic unemployment and inter-generational social and economic deprivation.

In more recent times there has been considerable improvement in the infrastructure of the city, with much improved public-sector housing development as well as affordable private sector housing, with further development of some 5,000 more houses planned for over the coming years. The education sector has also seen significant investment with new-build schools across the city in a range of (English-Medium) sectors at both primary and post-primary levels.

The city however continues to be considerably economically and socially disadvantaged as shown in the range of socio-demographic indicators produced by NISRA (Census & NINIS,) outlined in the below table.

Socio-Demographic Statistics Derry City		
	Derry (LGD)	North
Estimated Population 2017	110,202	1,870,834
Median Age	35	37
Catholic Background	74.8%	45.1%
Protestant Background	22.3%	48.4%
British	23.5%	48.4%
Irish	55.0%	28.4%
Northern Irish	24.6%	29.4%
Other Background	2.8%	6.5%
Ability in Irish in age group 3+	14.1%	10.7%
Owner Occupied Housing	57.3%	66.9%
Owned Outright	24.1%	32.1%
Rented	39.9%	30.0%
Lone parent Households with dependent children	14.1%	9.1%
Households without access to a car or Van	31.5%	22.7%
Degree Qualification or higher	21.8%	23.7%
Without qualifications or with basic qualifications	44.3%	40.6%
Economically active population	60.5%	66.2%
Economically inactive	39.5%	33.8%
Employed	48.8%	57.6%
Unemployed	7.5%	4.96%
Long Term unemployed as percentage of Unemployed	46.7%	31.3%

The above table highlights a number of points of note as follows:

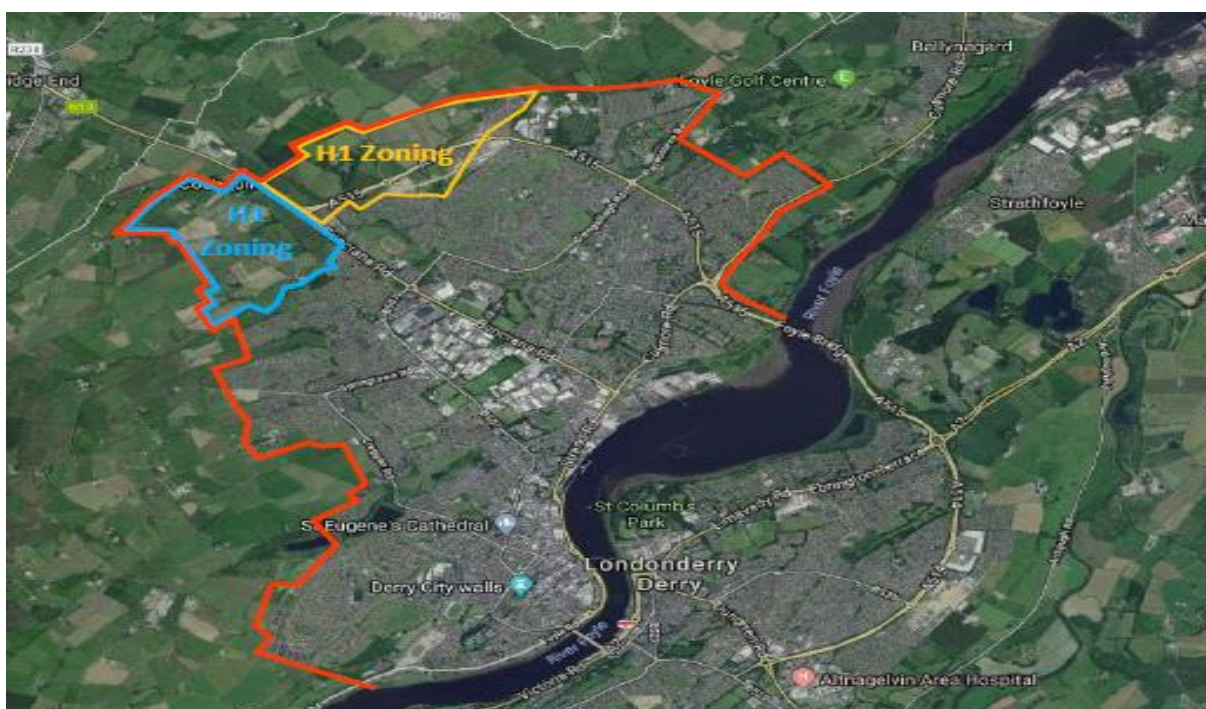
- Relatively young population in the city with median age 2 years below the average.
- Almost three quarters of the population are from a Catholic background.
- 55% of the population identify as “Irish” with a further 25% identifying as “Northern Irish”.
- Ability in Irish at over 14.1% is significantly higher than the regional average of 10.7%.
- Significantly lower levels of owner occupation and higher levels of rented housing.
- The numbers of single parent households with dependent children at 14.1% of the total is almost 55% higher than the regional average.
- Over 31% of households have no access to a car or a van compared to the regional average of 22.7%
- The population exhibits significantly lower qualifications than the regional average.
- There are very high rates of economic inactivity and both the highest regional level of unemployment and long-term unemployed.

The City experiences very high levels of deprivation. According to the 2017 Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM), 17 Super Output Areas (SOA) in the city fall within the top 10% (89) most deprived SOAs across the north. Despite representing less than 6% of the regional population, Derry accounts for almost 20% of the most deprived SOAs.

3.2 Expansion of the Housing Stock

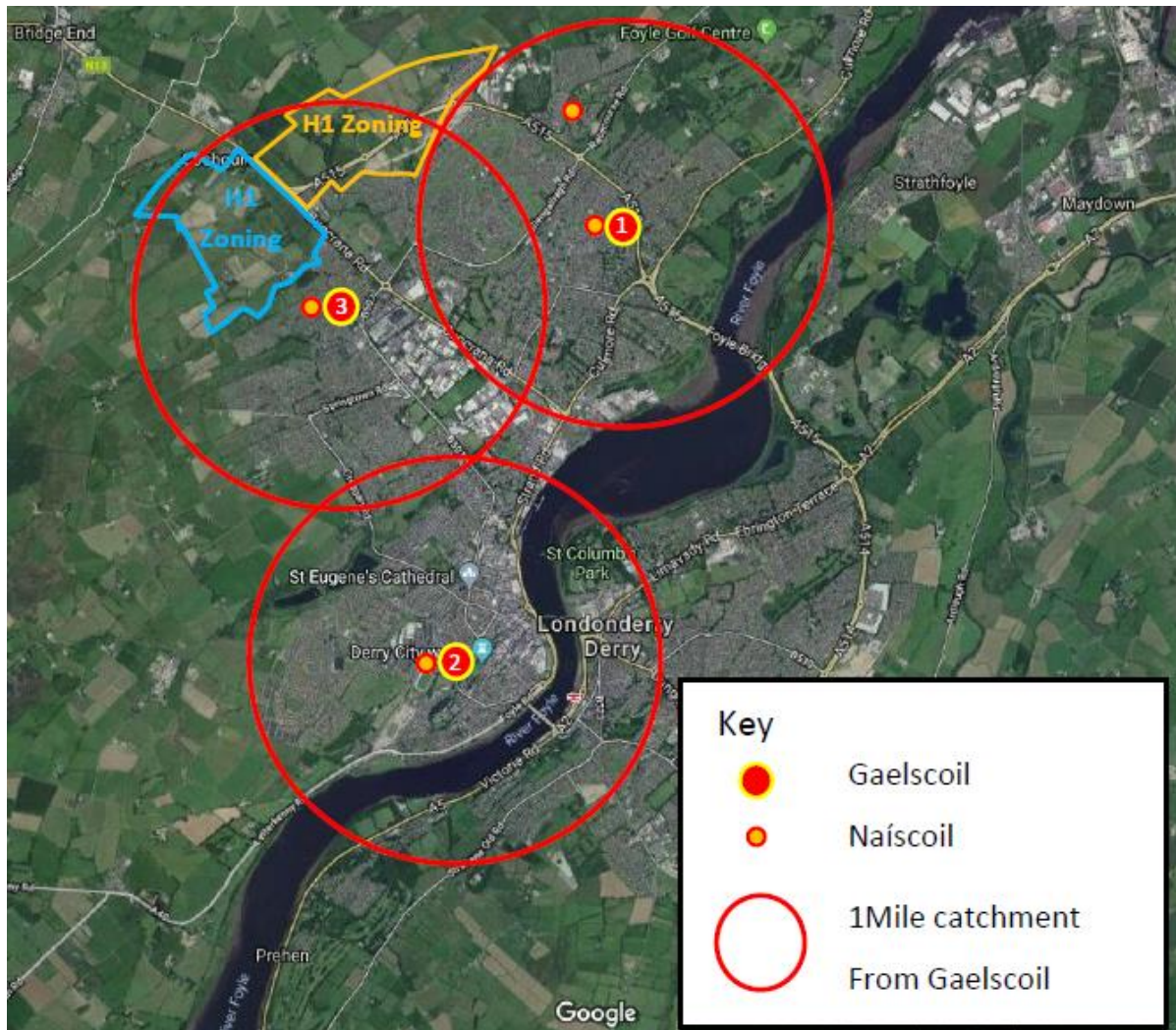
With a population of over 100,000 people, Derry City is a large urban area which has seen great change over recent decades. This is especially the case in relation to the housing sector. There is a long-term trend towards smaller household sizes and the housing stock has seen much growth and expansion in the last ten years. There remains a significant need for housing within the city and much of this need will be met within the areas directly adjacent to the two existing Irish-medium schools in the north of the city. The Housing Executive, in a recent publication (Derry City & Strabane Housing Investment Plan Annual Update 2018) outlined the need for a total of 2,561 new social housing units alone in the city for the period 2017-2022, with 2,160 of these being within the Cityside area of the city.

The development boundary of the Cityside is very tightly constrained with very little scope for new housing other than towards the north-west of the city. The H1 (Glengalliagh) and H2 (Buncrana Road West) Zonings are shown on the map below and they will meet the vast majority of this short term need of 2,100+ houses on the Cityside. This area will, over the coming 10 years, see the development of over 5,000 new homes, along with provision for schools, shops and community services. The H1 Zone has planning provision for a seven-class school and H2 Zone requires either a fourteen-class school or 2 x seven-class schools.



3.3 Irish-medium Sector in the city

There are currently three IM primary schools and four IM pre-schools as shown on the map below.

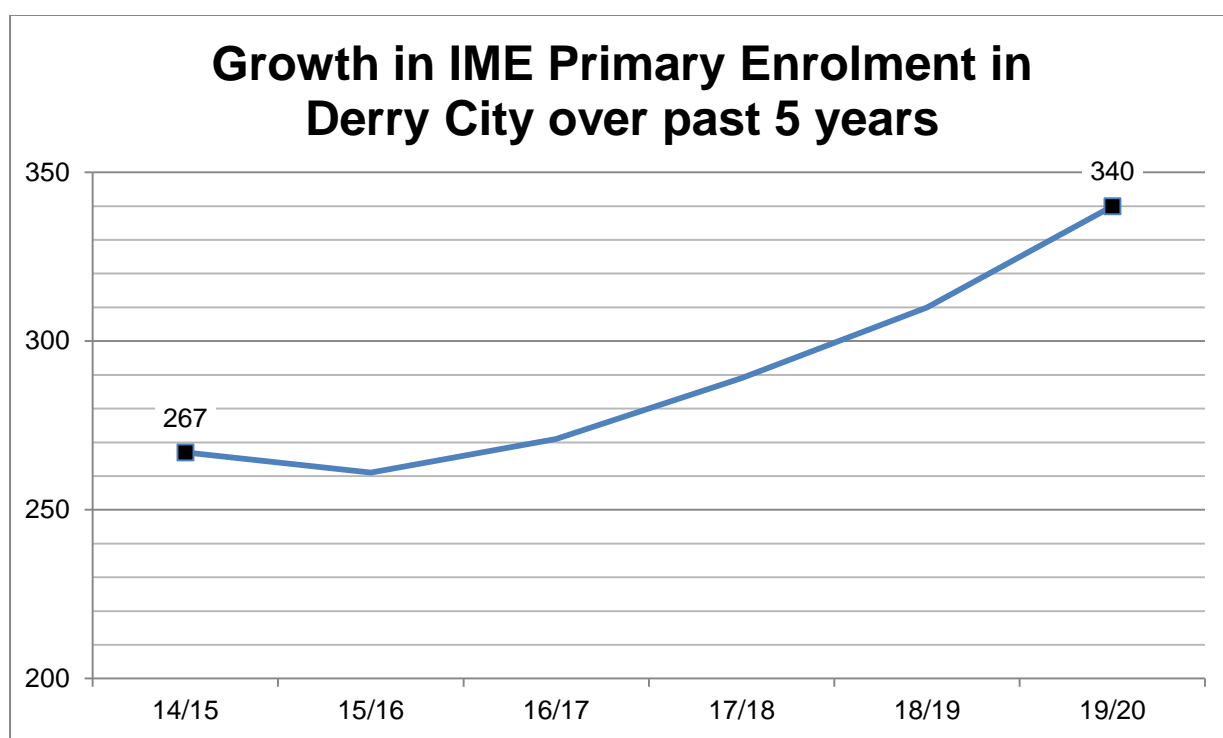


Irish-medium Education (IME) was first established in the city in 1983 in the form of an IM Unit at Steelstown Primary School. The unit flourished over the course of the next decade and subsequently, Bunscoil Cholmcille (numbered “1” On the above map) was formed as a freestanding CCMS school in 1993.

Five years later, they were joined by Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir (numbered “2” on the above map) which opened with six children in 1998. Initially located in Creggan, the school has been situated at the Gasyard since 2001. A third IM school, Gaelscoil na Daróige opened in 2005 (numbered “3” on the above map) which was established as a result of demand from parents at Naíscoil Mhaol Íosa in Ballymagroarty. At pre-school level, there are four providers within the city:

- Two statutory nursery units within Bunscoil Cholmcille (Naíscóil Dhoire) and Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir (Naíscóil Éadain Mhóir)
- Two voluntary pre-schools, Naíscóil na Daróige (Ballymagroarty) and Naíscóil Cholmcille (Skeoge)

Whilst the total enrolment in IME has remained relatively steady from 2005 to 2015, the efforts of CnaG, working with the schools have helped total admissions to rise steadily over the last few years. The following graph illustrates this modest yet significant growth in terms of the total enrolments at all schools within the city in the past 5 years - from 265 to 310 pupils.



* Estimated for 2019 based on 1st Preference Applications

The following tables detail the admissions pattern and the total enrolment of the schools over the past five years.

Annual IM Primary Admissions in Derry City (2014 - 2019)						
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*
Bunscoil Cholmcille	11	11	14	18	20	15
Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir	20	22	27	34	27	23
Gaelscoil na Daróige	12	7	11	10	16	20
Total	43	40	52	62	63	58

Total IM Primary Enrolment in Derry City (2014 - 2019)						
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*
Bunscoil Cholmcille	88	84	82	86	88	95
Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir	110	108	123	136	146	158
Gaelscoil na Daróige	69	69	66	67	76	87
Total	267	261	271	289	310	340

**2019/20 based upon 1st Preference Applications*

The above tables demonstrate that admissions have grown 34% and total enrolments have shown a 17% increase since 2014. Indeed, one of the schools has demonstrated admissions in excess of the target sustainability threshold for the last five years and the other two have demonstrated meeting this admissions threshold in one out of the last two years. This is despite all schools operating within very constrained sites, with many of the school buildings in very poor condition.

3.4 The IME Schools 'Estate' in Derry

CnaG believes that the current state of school buildings within the IME sector is a highly negative factor that has had, and continues to have, a strongly negative effect on the ability of the sector within the city to grow.

The current state of the IME school estate in the city is very poor and none of schools has a single permanent classroom building with many of their mobile classrooms in a poor state of repair. None of the IM schools has the required ancillary accommodation to efficiently run and manage the school and to provide an attractive environment that would encourage parents to send their children to IME.

The standard of accommodation housing the IME sector in the city lies in stark contrast to the majority of schools within the English-medium sector. Whilst none of the IME schools has a single permanent building, all English-medium schools deliver the majority of their classes within permanent, purpose-built school buildings, many of which have seen significant investment over the last 10 years.

This has created a major disparity in the quality of the school environment which is not lost on parents considering sending their children to an IM school. This is a major obstacle to encouraging and facilitating the development of the IME sector within the city which needs to be addressed as a matter of extreme urgency.

This position is compounded by the high levels of deprivation within the immediate catchment areas of these schools. The majority of pupils attending IM schools in Derry are in receipt of free school meals (50.8%). This is more than 73% higher than the regional average of 29.3%. The significant social and economic disadvantage suffered by children within these areas is being compounded by over-crowding, lack of facilities, dilapidated buildings and general lack of investment in the physical infrastructure of the schools.

The needs of children from areas of significant social and economic disadvantage who have had to endure these conditions during their education, place an additional responsibility on the Department to redress this situation. With an effective majority of IME children in the City being in receipt of free school meals and, by definition, disadvantaged, this responsibility goes beyond the statutory duty to IME and raises potential questions in relation to equality of educational provision.

3.5 Derry's Unfulfilled Potential in IME

It is important to base Area Planning objectives on current uptake and trends and not to make unrealistic growth projections based on possible uptake that may not be deliverable. However, it is worth looking at the experience of other areas that are broadly comparable to Derry to consider how the city is performing in comparison to these areas and to investigate its potential to expand provision to a level that has already been achieved in other areas.

Whilst Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta would like to see IME being attended by a broad cross-section of the community, the current reality is that the vast majority of IME pupils are drawn from Catholic/Nationalist communities. Many other Catholic/Nationalist communities have seen a significant surge in IME that has not been delivered in Derry. Whilst there was an initial surge of interest with the opening of the first Gaelscoil, the growth in IME in Derry suffered a long period of stagnation and is only in recent years starting to demonstrate the propensity for growth and expansion.

In population terms the socio-demographic, religious and political/ national affiliations within Derry city are closely comparable to West Belfast. However, whilst the growth in IME in West Belfast was continuous since the early 1980s, the stagnation in the growth of the sector during this period in Derry has left the city lagging well behind the current levels of IME uptake in West Belfast. To some extent, a lag would be expected since IME in W. Belfast commenced over 10 years before it did in Derry. However, it is clear that Derry City

has been very significantly underperforming in terms of the percentage of uptake in IME for many years and only in recent years has the sector experienced a notable growth in intakes.

The following table compares the two areas in terms of the religious and national profile and the numbers of children educated in the medium of Irish.

Socio-Demographic Statistics Derry City – (Source NISRA & D.E.)				
	Derry (LGD)		W. Belfast	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Estimated Population 2017	110,202	-	94,620	-
Median Age	35	-	33	-
Catholic Background	80,991	74.8%	70,442	74.6%
Protestant Background	25,544	22.3%	20,326	21.5%
Other Background	3,134	2.8%	3,650	3.9%
British	25,560	23.7%	20,208	21.5%
Irish	59,367	55.0%	55,615	59.2%
Northern Irish	26,528	24.6%	21,095	22.4%
Ability in Irish in age group 3+	14,605	14.1%	18,853	21.0%
Total School age Population	8,828		9,463	
Total Number of Children in IME & Percentage of total School age Population	310	3.5%	994	10.5%

The above figures demonstrate that West Belfast and Derry city are broadly comparable to each other, both in terms of numbers and percentages in relation to their religious and cultural/ national identity affiliations, yet Derry City lags far behind W. Belfast in terms of the levels of Irish generally and the level of uptake of IME within the city. There has been a lag in the development of interest in Irish in Derry compared to West Belfast and indeed to most other Catholic/Nationalist areas.

The most recent chapter in the Irish-language revival started in Belfast can be traced back to the 1960s with the setting up of Cumann Chluain Ard, an Irish-language club, and Belfast's first Irish-medium primary school was set up in 1971. Belfast's Cultúrlann was set up in 1991 and it, together with a range of other cultural organisations, is promoting the language widely within the west of the city.

Derry's language revival has followed a similar evolutionary path as Belfast, but it started significantly later and has not built up the same level of momentum in the intervening period. Its first IM primary provision (a unit within an English-medium school) was set up in 1983 and its cultúrlann (Cultúrlann Uí Chianáin) has only been in existence since 2009. Since its establishment, Cultúrlann Uí Chianáin has done immense work in promoting the language and is well on its way to developing a Ceathrú Gaeltachta or Irish-language Quarter within

the city, building awareness of and interest in the language throughout the wider population. With the help of the Cultúrlann, we have witnessed a significant increase in interest in the learning of Irish, which has undoubtedly helped contribute to the recent increase in admissions into IME.

The proximity of the H1 and H2 zonings to the two smaller schools within the city also provides a major opportunity for the sector to redress this unfulfilled potential over the coming years.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta believes that the city has been under-performing over two decades in terms of the level of admissions to IME. Based on the experience in W. Belfast and the significant efforts that are underway for the wider promotion of the language and the combined efforts of the schools, CnaG believes that there is unfulfilled potential to facilitate and encourage a growing interest in IME within the city.

It is clear that, given the right circumstances, there is significant potential to increase the levels of IM uptake in Derry City. If the sector grows to a comparable level that exists in West Belfast it would treble the numbers of children in the IME primary sector from 310 to around 930.

CnaG appreciates that it is not realistic to base any Area Planning decision on what is a very crude measure of potential uptake. However, there is strong evidence to suggest that a growth trend is already happening based on the growth in intakes in the last few years. The average intake over the past three years is 61 pupils demonstrating that the IME sector is already attracting around 4.8% of total primary admissions. The implication of this is that without any growth, the sector is expected to grow from 310 pupils to 427 over the coming four years. If intakes are increased to even 7.5% of primary admissions (which is still well short of W. Belfast's 10.5%) it would increase the annual admissions to just fewer than 100 children per year.

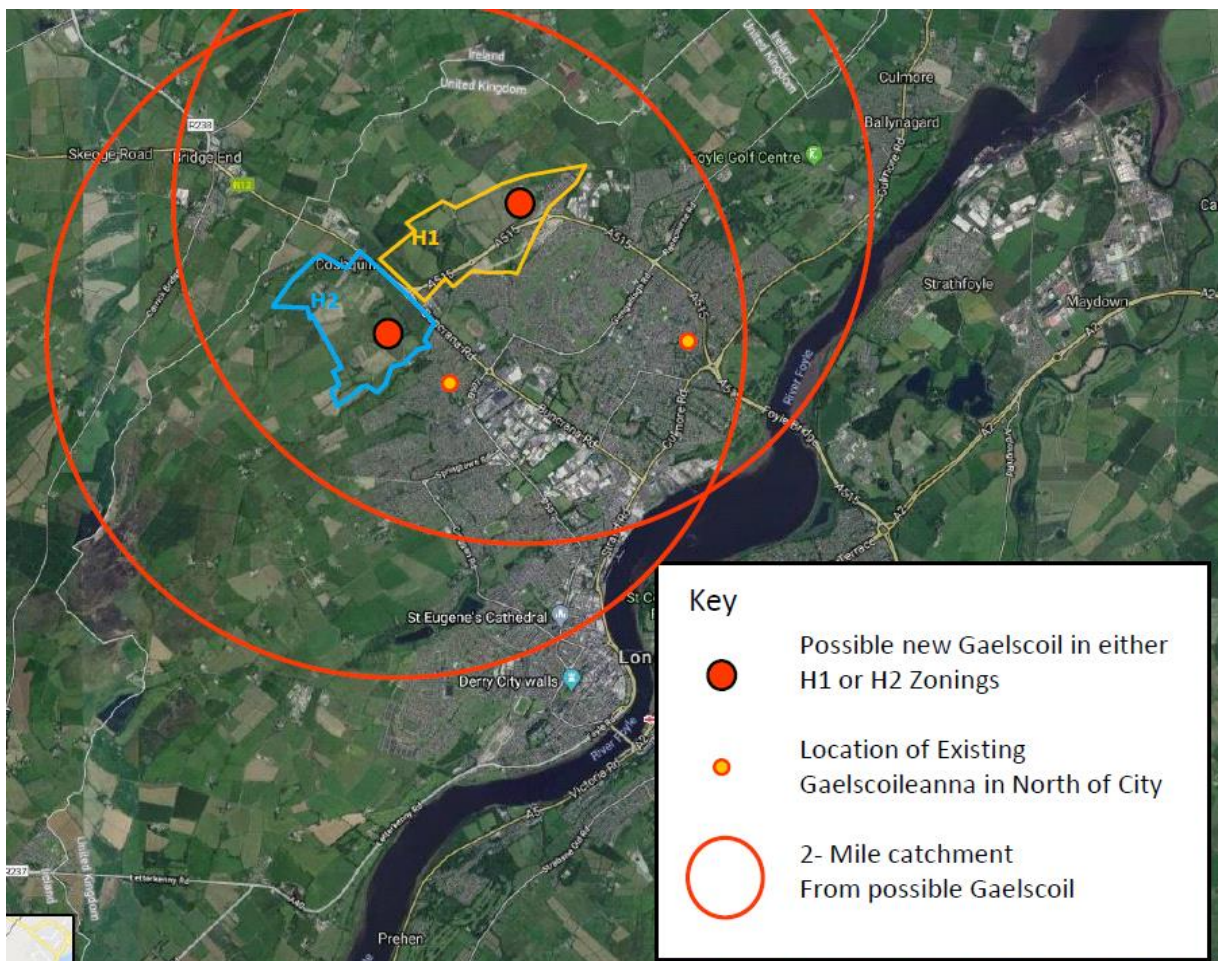
Whilst CnaG believes that this level of admissions is potentially deliverable over the medium timeframe, it is appreciated that this cannot be used as a basis for a current Area Planning decision. However, all three schools have demonstrated an intake that meets the sustainable intake of 20 pupils and have demonstrated that they are very close to sustainable enrolments. This is despite the major disadvantage of the very poor accommodation and facilities within which they operate and juxtaposed to the quality of

facilities within the majority of the English-medium provision locally. These issues will be outlined in greater detail later in this report.

3.6 Geographical Coverage & growth of IME

Accessibility of IME is a key consideration in promoting and encouraging the development of the sector. CnaG carried out a consultation with all three schools in relation to the way forward in Area Planning and in growing and developing IME within the city. One of the primary areas of this consultation was in relation to the possibility of enjoining two schools in the north of the city to create one larger school. CnaG explored whether it could be advantageous to combine the existing two schools in a range of areas and if this combined school could eventually occupy a single site – perhaps one of the designated sites in the H1 or H2 Zonings.

However, during this process it became clear that accessibility to local provision, especially for children of parents who come from socially disadvantaged areas, was a significant concern. The following map shows the possible location of the schools with an approximate 2-mile catchment shown around each.



Whilst the rules for school transport relate to a travel distance of 2 miles, not an absolute distance of 2 miles, the map clearly demonstrates that the vast majority of the children would not be eligible for school transport to either of these two locations.

Accessibility to their nearest primary school is an important factor in the minds of most parents when they are considering their choice of primary school. Within the English-medium sector in the city, very few people are located more than ½ mile away from their nearest primary school.

Accessibility is particularly important in areas of high social disadvantage and deprivation. Derry has the lowest level of access to car or a van within any LGD (31%) and the majority (51%) of children in IME in the city receive free school meals. It is unrealistic to expect parents to accompany their KS1 children to school and back, with a round trip of between 3-4 miles, twice per day.

Accessibility is just as important for IME parents as it is for EM parents. The need to arrange daily travel for a significant distance to your nearest Irish-medium school (when there are likely to be a number of English-medium primary schools located closer) would create yet another obstacle to encourage and facilitate IME.

4.0 IME SCHOOLS IN DERRY

4.1 Introduction

In accordance with the Department of Education's policy '*Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools*', schools are measured against a set of criteria to assess the degree to which a particular provision is sustainable in its current form. Each criterion is accompanied by a set of indicators to measure the degree to which it has been fulfilled. The criteria are as follows:

- Quality Education Experience
- Stable Enrolment Trends
- Sound Financial Position
- Strong Leadership and Management by Board of Governors and Principal
- Accessibility
- Strong Links with the Community

This section will examine each school individually and assess both the strengths and weaknesses of each within the context of both the Sustainable Schools Policy and wider issues surrounding the provision of IME in Derry City.

4.2 Bunscoil Cholmcille

4.2.1 School Description



School Name:	Bunscoil Cholmcille
Management Type:	Catholic Maintained
Established:	1983
Approved Enrolment:	196
Approved Admissions:	25
Current Enrolment:	88

Bunscoil Cholmcille is a Catholic Maintained IM primary school located in the Steelstown area of the city. There are currently 88 pupils in the school and 26 in the nursery unit, *Naíscoil Dhoire*. Both facilities are located on the same site as outlined in red on the below aerial photograph. The Nursery unit is outlined in blue within this overall site. Many of the buildings on the site are over thirty years old and are in contrast to the adjacent Steelstown Primary School, an English-medium CCMS school within which the IM provision was located as a unit until the school was set up as a free standing CCMS school in 1993. The site area of the school (excluding the nursery unit, access and parking) is approximately 1.25 acres.



4.2.2 Admissions & Enrolments

Whilst the school has experienced a fall in enrolment over the course of a decade or more, admissions have begun to recover in recent years and are getting closer to the sustainable target threshold. The tables below demonstrate admissions trend and enrolment over the past 5 years.

Total Enrolment at Bunscoil Cholmcille (2014 - 2019)						
Academic Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*
Total Enrolment	88	84	82	86	88	95

Admissions at Bunscoil Cholmcille (2014 - 2019)						
Academic Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*
Admissions	11	11	14	18	20	15

**2019/20 based upon 1st Preference Applications*

As evidenced from the table above, the general enrolment trend is upwards and leadership within the school is confident that it is well on track towards delivering a sustainable intake into the school. Marketing efforts have been increased in recent years and despite this potential reduction in projected intake for 2019/20, the school has very strong interest for the following year. A total of 26 Children are enrolled in the statutory nursery and, based on discussions with this cohort of parents, the school is confident that the enrolment for the 2020/21 academic year will exceed 20 children.

4.2.3 Socio-economic Context

The school is located within the Shantallow East Ward/ Super Output Area and whilst the immediate area around the school consists of mostly private sector housing, the vast majority of the hinterland is highly socially and economically disadvantaged. The following table shows a summary of the NISRA deprivation statistics for Shantallow East. The statistics rank the area against 890 other Super-Output areas in a range of deprivation measures where 1 is the most deprived and 890 is the least. Where the particular measure is within the most deprived 20% of areas, this has been highlighted in red.

The table below demonstrates the significant socio-economic challenges that prevail within the immediate catchment area of the school. The multiple deprivation ranking for the area rates it 53rd out of 890 areas which locate it within the 6% of the most deprived areas. It is ranked within the lowest 4% in terms of income and employment

and lowest 5% in terms of Housing Access. The living environment rating is within the lowest 1.2% of areas and the outdoor physical environment is the 4th lowest out of 890.

Most worryingly, in addition to the physical, employment and income deprivation, the area ranks as the 10th most deprived ward in relation to “Income Deprivation Affecting Children”.

Deprivation Ranking Summary Shantallow East		
	Rank (out of 890)	Centile Location
Multiple Deprivation Measure	53	6.0%
Income Domain	33	3.7%
Employment Domain (18 – 59/64)	36	4.0%
Health, Deprivation and Disability Domain	160	18.0%
Education, Stills and Training Domain	108	12.1%
Proximity to Services Domain	738	82.9%
Living Environment Domain	11	1.2%
Crime and Disorder Domain	508	57.1%
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Rank	10	1.1%
Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Rank	86	9.7%
Education, Skills and Training – Child Sub-Domain	113	12.7%
Education, Skills and Training – Adult Sub-Domain	103	11.6%
Living Environment Domain – Housing Quality Sub-Domain	538	60.4%
Living Environment Domain – Housing Access Sub-Domain	40	4.9%
Living Environment Domain – Outdoor Physical Environment	4	0.4%
Crime and Disorder Domain – Crime Sub-Domain	479	53.8%
Crime and Disorder Domain – Disorder Sub-Domain	521	58.5%

On a positive note, it is remarkable that despite the major social and economic deprivation, that the crime and disorder domain and sub-domains demonstrate scores above the average – all being over 50%. This reflects the strong sense of community cohesion that exists within the local area, despite the levels of deprivation.

The relatively high scoring of “Housing Quality” in the 60th centile is a positive indicator and is undoubtedly as a result of the significant investment that the Housing Executive has made in the housing stock – where it has been particularly pro-active in prioritising investment in areas of high social and economic disadvantage.

In levels of deprivation that are as severe as those within the Shantallow East Ward/ SOA, delivering a stimulating educational experience is the key to breaking the vicious

circle of inter-generational social and economic deprivation. Whilst significant capital investment has taken place in Derry over the past decade to address this, very little of this investment has been directed to the Irish-medium sector.

In an area that has an “Income Deprivation Affecting Children” that ranks the 10th most deprived out of 890 wards in the north (i.e., in the lowest 1.1% of areas), it is essential that the required capital and other investment in the IME sector is made as a matter of urgency. Also, in an area that ranks 4th out of 890 wards for “Outdoor Physical Environment” (i.e., in the lowest 0.4% of areas), it is important that the children have access to a high quality physical environment within their schools. This is clearly not the case for the IME sector.

The above deprivation is reflected in the fact that 53% of children attending the school receive free school meals.

4.2.4 Site & Accommodation Profile



Most of the buildings are ‘temporary’ classrooms that are 30+ years old and are both physically and functionally obsolete; the school has none of the ancillary accommodation required to for the delivery of a stimulating educational environment for the children. The school has been able to build its enrolment despite this and it now needs investment in its buildings to help support the positive work that has been carried out to date.

Whilst this school has an approved enrolment of 196 children, based on the number of classrooms that it has, the buildings within the school are functionally if not physically

obsolete and CnaG believes that the Approved Enrolment should be reviewed as part of a right-sizing exercise.



Many of the buildings on the site are over 35 years old and they are in a poor state of repair. Examples of this include;

- Holes at base of accommodation. This not only gives access to rodents but renders the accommodation difficult to heat and also creates the potential for damp.
- No hall for assembly, parent meetings etc. This greatly restricts the school's ability to provide a range of services and impacts upon the child's wider educational experience.

- Inadequate/unsafe lighting arrangements and no covered walkways from classrooms or to the toilet block creating great difficulties for pupils, teachers & visitors alike.

- Non-functioning septic tank and frequent sewage blockages that could present a health hazard and prolonged periods of highly unpleasant smells that are straining to all and worrying for parents.



This has had a hugely detrimental impact upon the attractiveness of the school, particularly in comparison with the adjacent English-medium school which has had the benefit of investment and improvement over recent years. All other English-medium schools in the area offer significantly better facilities than Bunscoil Cholmcille and this has acted as a barrier to the development of Bunscoil Cholmcille and to the delivery of the statutory duty in relation to IME

4.2.5 Sustainability Schools Criteria

- **Quality Education Experience**

The 2011 ETI Report indicated that Bunscoil Cholmcille's quality of education provision was 'Good' and that the school demonstrated the capacity to address

areas for improvement with the current provision. A subsequent ETI report carried out in 2018 was unable to report fully, due to ongoing action short of strike by staff.

- ***Stable Enrolment Trends***

Total Enrolment currently sits below the Urban Threshold of 140 pupils; however, admissions and enrolments at Bunscoil Cholmcille have risen steadily for the past three years. There is a pattern of increasing enrolment evident through comparison of P1 – P3 (52 pupils) and P5 – P7 (30 pupils). Based on the incoming cohort to the statutory nursery it is expected that the projected dip in the 2019/20 academic year will be redressed in the 2010/21 year. The school is very confident that they can reach a healthy intake in excess of the minimum enrolment threshold going forward. The school is of the view that enrolments are being significantly hampered by the condition of their building and whilst parents are availing of the statutory nursery, they witness the poor conditions that exist within the Bunscoil, placing a further obstacle to their opting for IME primary education at the school.

- ***Sound Financial Position***

2017/18 budget spend was outside of +/-5% allowed by the Department with an overspend of 8.33%. However, having had an underspend of 9.7% in the previous financial year, the school spending over this two-year period represents an underspend of 1.37% - comfortably within the limits allowed by DE.

- ***Strong Leadership and Management by Board of Governors and Principal***

The school has undergone a period of transition with the departure of a longstanding principal and appointment of a new principal. This period has also seen the fall in enrolments corrected and an emerging pattern of growth. A campaign for adequate and acceptable accommodation and school site has also been conducted at this time. The Senior Management Team and Board of Governors have managed this change well and demonstrated the ability to lead the school forward effectively. The leadership of the school is, at every opportunity, highlighting the exceptionally poor condition of the accommodation and how it is hampering the progress of the school and is actively working to redress this issue.

- ***Accessibility***

The majority of pupils attending the school (54%) come from within a 1 mile catchment and the vast majority come from within a 2-mile catchment. Only a small proportion of the school are in receipt of free school transport. For some of the

families of children who travel from further afield, this is not their closest IM school; they have however opted for Bunscoil Cholmcille because of its Catholic ethos and receive free school transport for this reason.

▪ ***Strong Links with the Community***

As evidenced in the 2011 ETI Report, Bunscoil Cholmcille has built strong link with local community groups and equally, with other schools in the area and across the city. Since then, the local Family Hub, the sporting club 'Na Magha', Shantallow Community Centre and the local 'Teamworks' group are a few examples of local groups which help the school improve and develop the school environment. The school's football team plays league matches with other local schools and girls have an opportunity to learn netball with their neighbouring school. The school invites the community to events such as St. Brigid's Day cross-making, Christmas Craft fairs, Coffee Afternoons etc.

4.2.6 Overall Sustainability Assessment

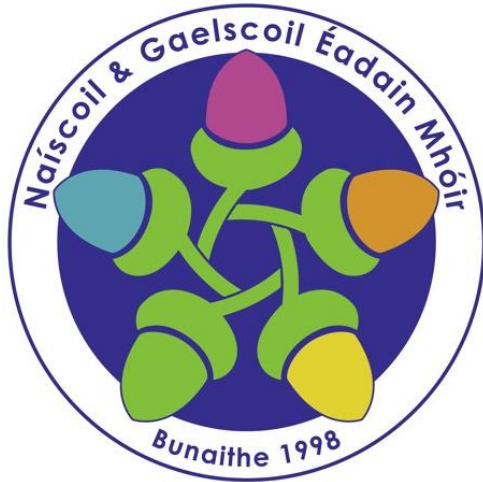
Bunscoil Cholmcille should be considered a sustainable school in light of the evidence provided above. The standard of educational provision and leadership and management of the school is good, despite the very poor and inadequate accommodation and with an established pattern of increasing enrolment evident, there is a strong argument for capital investment at the school.

4.2.7 Challenges facing Bunscoil Cholmcille

The most significant challenge for Bunscoil Cholmcille is the need to build a steady and sustainable enrolment in excess of the target sustainability admissions level of 20 pupils per annum. In order to achieve this, the school requires significant investment in its accommodation to replace buildings that are wholly unsuitable for use in a modern school. The facilities are obsolete and children get wet travelling between classes and going to the toilet, and the school cannot provide any of the ancillary accommodation for delivering an enriched educational experience for the children who attend. For children from a highly socially and economically deprived area, school should provide an opportunity to gain an enriching and inspiring education that will help them escape the vicious inter-generational cycle of disadvantage. This is not the case for children who attend Bunscoil Cholmcille and needs to be addressed if the school is to be allowed the opportunity to grow and flourish.

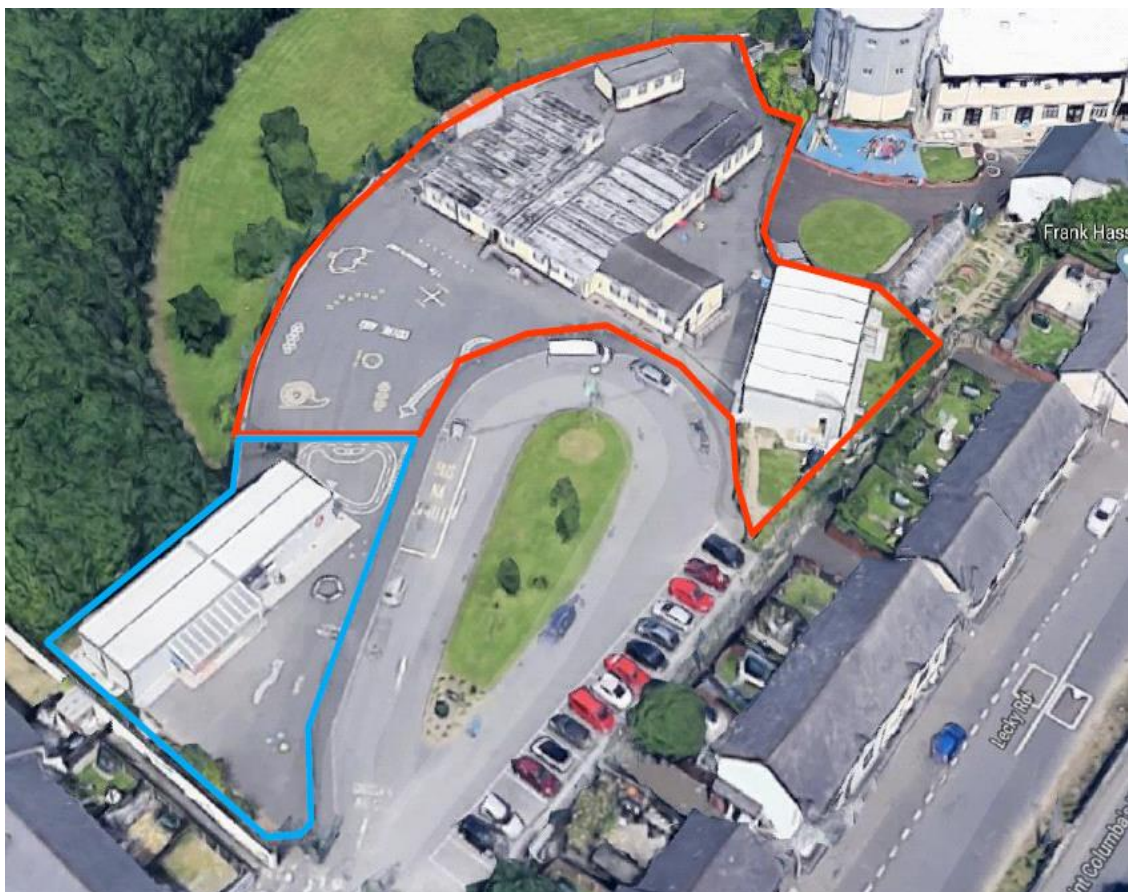
4.3 Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir

4.3.1 School Description



School Name:	Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir
Management Type:	Grant Maintained
Established:	1998
Approved Enrolment:	182
Approved Admissions:	26
Current Enrolment:	145

Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir is a grant-maintained, non-denominational IM primary school located in the Brandywell area of the city. There are currently 145 pupils in the school and 26 in the nursery unit, *Naíscóil Éadain Mhóir*. The nursery unit is outlined on blue on the aerial photograph below and the school site is outlined in red. The school site (including access and parking) extends to approximately 1.4 acres.



4.3.2 Admissions & Enrolments

Despite the poor accommodation and lack of space, Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir has firmly established itself as a popular school within the city. Enrolments have grown rapidly and significantly; in March 2018, the Dept. of Education approved a development proposal to increase approved enrolment at the school from 145 to 182 pupils. The Long-Term Enrolment figure for the school predicts an enrolment of 200+ in the coming years.

Total Enrolment at Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir (2014 - 2019)						
Academic Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*
Total Enrolment	110	108	123	136	146	158

Admissions at Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir (2014 - 2019)						
Academic Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*
Admissions	20	22	27	34	27	23

**2019/20 based upon 1st Preference Applications*

With regards to IM pre-school provision in the immediate area, the nursery unit at Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir consistently fills all 26 places and is regularly oversubscribed. This demonstrates that there is a consistent level of demand for IME in the Brandywell and Creggan areas. With the strong enrolments evidenced, the school will soon sit within (or above) the bracket for a seven-class base school.

4.3.3 Socio-economic Context

The school is located within the Brandywell Ward / Super Output Area and the vast majority of the hinterland is highly socially and economically disadvantaged. The following table shows a summary of the NISRA deprivation statistics for Brandywell. The statistics rank the area against 890 other Super-Output areas in a range of deprivation measures where 1 is the most deprived and 890 is the least. Where the particular measure is within the most deprived 20% of areas this has been highlighted in red.

The above table illustrates the major social and economic deprivation that remains within this area of the city. The multiple deprivation measure that takes into account all deprivation factors ranks the area as the 16th most-deprived area out of 890 across the north (i.e., within the 1.8% of most-deprived areas). All but two of the measures are

within the top 20% and seven of the measures are within the top 5% of most-deprived areas in the north.

The key indicator in relation to “Income Deprivation Affecting Children” is very concerning indeed and is ranked as the 8th most-deprived ward out of 890 (i.e., within the top 0.9% of areas). This is an inner-city area and has significant crime and disorder ranked as the 68th most-deprived area (i.e., within the top 7.6% of areas).

Deprivation Ranking Summary Brandywell		
	Rank (Worst = 890)	Centile Location
Multiple Deprivation Measure	16	1.8%
Income Domain	12	1.3%
Employment Domain (18 – 59/64)	19	2.1%
Health, Deprivation and Disability Domain	24	2.7%
Education, Stills and Training Domain	61	6.9%
Proximity to Services Domain	735	82.6%
Living Environment Domain	52	5.8%
Crime and Disorder Domain	68	7.6%
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Rank	8	0.9%
Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Rank	19	2.1%
Education, Skills and Training – Child Sub-Domain	63	7.1%
Education, Skills and Training – Adult Sub-Domain	65	7.3%
Living Environment Domain – Housing Quality Sub-Domain	622	69.9%
Living Environment Domain – Housing Access Sub-Domain	31	3.5%
Living Environment Domain - Outdoor Physical Environment	50	5.6%
Crime and Disorder Domain – Crime Sub-Domain	92	10.3%
Crime and Disorder Domain – Disorder Sub-Domain	46	5.2%

In levels of deprivation that are as severe as those within the Brandywell Ward/ SOA, delivering a stimulating educational experience especially at primary school is the key to breaking the vicious cycle of inter-generational social and economic deprivation. Whilst significant capital investment has taken place in Derry over the past decade to address this, very little of this investment has been directed to the Irish-medium sector.

The high scoring of “Housing Quality” at almost the 70th centile is a very positive indicator and is undoubtedly as a result of the significant investment that the Housing Executive has made in the housing stock – where it has been particularly pro-active in prioritising investment to areas of high social and economic disadvantage.

In an area that has an “Income Deprivation Affecting Children” that rank the 8th out of 890 wards in the north (i.e., in the top 0.9% of most-deprived areas), it is essential that required capital and other investment in the IME sector is made as a matter of urgency. Also, in an area that ranks 4th out of 890 wards out of 890 wards for “Outdoor Physical Environment” (i.e., in the top 0.4% of most-deprived areas), it is important that the children have access to a high quality physical environment within their schools. This is clearly not the case for the IME sector.

The above deprivation is reflected in the fact that 54% of children attending the school receive free school meals.

4.3.4 Site & Accommodation Profile



The school buildings are both physically and functionally obsolete and provide none of the necessary ancillary accommodation required for the effective management of the school and for the creation of a creative and attractive learning environment. The site is very cramped and does not have sufficient outdoor space for children at lunchtime or for sporting activities.

In 2009, the ETI reported: *‘Teachers have worked hard to create an attractive and stimulating learning environment for the children. The school’s accommodation is, nevertheless, inadequate and falls far short of modern standards. It is unsuitable and does not meet the needs of the children and teachers and does not contribute towards raising standards.’* ETI’s reported findings from 2009 remain the same.

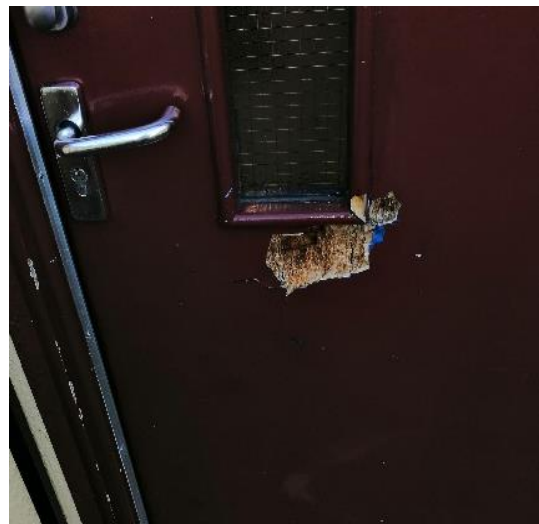
- The outdoor toilets for key stage 1 and 2 constitute a safeguarding risk.
- The paving slabs throughout the school site are uneven, slippery when wet and present a health and safety hazard.
- Holes under a number of the mobiles classrooms are a safeguarding, health and safety risk.
- The school has no assembly hall and no canteen facility, but does avail of these facilities in a nearby school.

- A School Enhancement Programme submission has been made for a modular school building. Six applications have been made for minor works in relation to the school premises.



In 2002, the school was provided with a prefabricated building comprising of four classrooms, a small staffroom and two small offices. Due to the continued growth, two additional second-hand classrooms that were already approximately 10 years old were supplied in 2004 and a small prefabricated unit as a canteen area - this 'canteen' is used as a classroom but is entirely unsuitable for teaching. In 2009, the school obtained a new multi-purpose hall and a new modular Naíscoil building in 2010. Both buildings are of a very high standard and it is no coincidence that the nursery has been oversubscribed since the new building was placed on site.

The school fabric is in very poor condition and is increasingly difficult to maintain. The school is currently overcrowded and struggling to find room to provide basic educational services, as well as the additional services that are a vital part of modern school life (play, sport, and library and computer services). Records show that there has been over 100 interventions over an 18-month period (up to March 2019) in terms of health and safety issues such as sewerage leaks, water leaks, roof leaks, heating problems, issues with power and electricity, ongoing structural and school fabric issues as well as more routine maintenance.



One of the temporary structures/classrooms has been in a very bad state for many years. The school is currently using spaces for teaching that are not designed for that purpose and are in a very poor condition. There is very limited space in terms of outdoor play (a key part of the curriculum). The current enrolment is very strong and current enrolment trends indicate that there will be further growth. This will make the issue of overcrowding and the poor condition of classrooms a critical issue throughout 2019-20.

4.3.5 Sustainability Schools Criteria

- **Quality Education Experience**

Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir was last inspected by ETI in June 2016 and the quality of education provided was found to be “Good”. The ETI Report informs that “Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir has demonstrated the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners.”

- **Stable Enrolment Trends**

Total Enrolments at the school sit comfortably above the Urban Threshold of 140 pupils and there is a Long-Term Enrolment projection of 200+ pupils. There is a pattern of increasing enrolment evident through comparison of P1 – P3 (87 pupils) and P5 – P7 (40 pupils).

- **Sound Financial Position**

2017/18 spending is within +/-5% allowed by the Department with an underspend of 1.5% (Allocated £549,619, Expenditure £541, 513, Carry-over £8,106).

- **Strong Leadership and Management by Board of Governors and Principal**

The 2016 ETI Report indicated that the leadership and management of the school were *very good*. In recent years, the school has successfully applied for a statutory nursery unit and an increase in enrolments, and in the process, managed these additions confidently. In addition to ETI Reports and successful pupil recruitment campaigns, the school leadership has also been successful with various minor works applications and managed all work effectively so as to minimise any possible disruptions.

- **Accessibility**

The majority of the pupils attending Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir come from the TRIAX area which is the main catchment area for the school. The easy accessibility of this school within a very socially and economically disadvantaged area is important to maintaining strong enrolments and to the future sustainability of the school.

- ***Strong Links with the Community***

There are very strong links established with the other local Irish-medium preschools and primary schools in the city and further afield. Additionally, Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir engages frequently with the closest Irish-medium Post-Primary, Gaelcholáiste Dhoire in Dungiven.

The Board of Governors has developed a vision for the promotion of the Irish language in the area which includes classes for adults and there is a local Irish-medium youth club, Club Óige Setanta. The school community also works with a range of local organisations such as Cultúrlann Uí Chianáin, Seán Dolan's GFC and Derry City FC.

4.3.6 Overall Sustainability Assessment

CnaG is of the view that Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir is a sustainable school in each of the areas assessed. It is an emerging school with strong enrolments; it is a school which is moving forward each year and given the proper accommodation, site and facilities has the potential to become an excellent school.

4.3.7 Challenges facing Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir

The biggest issue facing Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir is the limitations of its site and the buildings on the site. The securing of a site that is large enough to accommodate a 200+ pupil school should be made an absolute priority and the relocation of the school to a new site in purpose-built accommodation needs to be prioritised as a matter of urgency.

Children in Key Stage 2 in the school, virtually all of whom come from an area of high economic and social disadvantage, will grow up not having experienced a high quality purpose-built primary school building and associated grounds. However, if a new site and building are prioritised and delivered it should be possible that today's Key Stage 1 children will benefit from this in the final years of their primary education.

4.4 Gaelscoil na Daróige

4.4.1 School Description



School Name:	Gaelscoil na Daróige
Management Type:	Grant Maintained
Established:	2005
Approved Enrolment:	81
Approved Admissions:	15
Current Enrolment:	76

Gaelscoil na Daróige is a Grant Maintained IM primary school located in the Ballymagroarty area of the city. There are currently 76 pupils in the primary school and 24 in the feeder playgroup, *Naíscóil na Daróige*. The two organisations are located on the same site with the overall site outlined in red with the Naíscóil (which pre-dates the Gaelscoil) outlined in blue. Excluding the naíscóil, the area of the school site extends to approximately half an acre. This site was originally intended to accommodate the Naíscóil and the intention was for the school to be temporarily accommodated on this site pending a site and accommodation being located elsewhere. This has never happened, despite the school having been established for almost 14 years.



4.4.2 Admissions & Enrolment

Gaelscoil na Daróige is both the youngest and smallest of the three IM schools in Derry City. With an enrolment of 76, it is below the Urban Threshold (140). However, there is a pattern of increasing enrolment at Gaelscoil na Daróige, with an anticipated 47 pupils in Primary 1 – 3 compared to 29 in Primary 5 – 7 in the forthcoming academic year (2019/20). A concerted effort has been made over recent years to increase enrolments and this is evident in a growth of 66%+ from 2014/15 to 2019/20.

Total Enrolment at Gaelscoil na Daróige (2014 - 2019)						
Academic Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*
Total Enrolment	69	67	66	67	76	87

Admissions at Gaelscoil na Daróige (2014 - 2019)						
Academic Year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20*
Admissions	12	7	11	10	16	20

**2019/20 based upon 1st Preference Applications*

With regards to IM pre-school provision in the immediate area, the feeder pre-school, *Naíscoil na Daróige*, has also increased its numbers in recent years and has an average admissions number of 18 pupils for 2017 – 2019 (based upon 1st Preference Applications for 2019/20 - 17). The figures have translated into increased admissions to the Gaelscoil and demonstrate that there is a sustained and growing demand for IME in the locality.

It is truly remarkable that the school has been able to build its enrolments in the face of the constraints of a very constricted site and poor accommodation. These increased enrolments will continue to place even more pressure on the space within the school as the smaller year groups at the top of the school are replaced by larger admissions. If these enrolments are to be sustained, the school needs to be supported by the securing of a new site for the school that will become the school's permanent site.

It is also important to note that this school is the closest Irish-medium school to the proposed areas of new planned housing development with a planned 2100+ new houses by 2022 and 5,000 houses within a 10-year period. If the school is expected to meet its target long-term admissions figure of 20 in September 2019, the development of this housing will only add to the long-term enrolment and sustainability of the school.

4.4.3 Socio-economic Context

The school is located within the Springtown 1 Super Output Area and the hinterland is highly socially and economically disadvantaged. The following table shows a summary of the NISRA deprivation statistics for Springtown 1.

The statistics rank the area against 890 other Super-Output areas in a range of deprivation measures where 1 is the most deprived and 890 is the least. Where the particular measure is within the top 20% of most-deprived areas this has been highlighted in red.

Deprivation Ranking Summary Springtown 1		
	Rank (Worst = 890)	Centile Location
Multiple Deprivation Measure	143	16.1%
Income Domain	85	9.6%
Employment Domain (18 – 59/64)	97	10.9%
Health, Deprivation and Disability Domain	271	30.4%
Education, Skills and Training Domain	328	36.9%
Proximity to Services Domain	472	53.0%
Living Environment Domain	154	17.3%
Crime and Disorder Domain	553	62.1%
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Rank	93	10.4%
Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Rank	116	13.3%
Education, Skills and Training – Child Sub-Domain	318	35.7%
Education, Skills and Training – Adult Sub-Domain	334	37.5%
Living Environment Domain – Housing Quality Sub-Domain	871	97.9%
Living Environment Domain – Housing Access Sub-Domain	46	5.2%
Living Environment Domain - Outdoor Physical Environment	128	14.5%
Crime and Disorder Domain – Crime Sub-Domain	580	66.2%
Crime and Disorder Domain – Disorder Sub-Domain	488	54.8%

The above table illustrates the significant levels of deprivation within this area of the city. The overall multiple deprivation measure places Springtown 1 as 143rd most-deprived ward out of 890 which ranks it within the top 16.1% of deprived areas in the north. 8 of the 17 deprivation rankings are within the top 20% of most-deprived wards.

It is very concerning that the “Income Deprivation Affecting Children” indicator is ranked 93rd most-deprived area, placing it within the top 10.4% of areas.

The high scoring of “Housing Quality” is a very positive indicator and is undoubtedly as a result of the significant investment that the Housing Executive has made in the housing stock – where it has been particularly pro-active in prioritising investment to areas of high social and economic disadvantage.

In levels of deprivation that are as severe as those within the Springtown 1 SOA, delivering a stimulating educational experience is the key to breaking the vicious circle of inter-generational social and economic deprivation. Whilst significant capital investment has taken place in Derry over the past decade to address this, very little of this investment has been directed to the Irish-medium sector.

The area’s relatively good scores in relation to crime and disorder reflect the strong sense of community cohesion that exists within the local area despite the levels of deprivation.

The above deprivation is reflected in the fact that 42% of children attending the school receive free school meals.

4.4.4 Site & Accommodation Profile



Gaelscoil na Daróige is based primarily in three prefabricated mobiles which were provided by a variety of local community groups (including the voluntary feeder pre-school, Naíscoil na Daróige). Within the last year, DE provided a modular unit in order to provide a special needs facility, a store, staffroom and a principal's office. Due to the lack of facilities and space, it has also been utilised as a server. Indeed, the principal's office has to double up as a staff room, such is the lack of space. It should be noted that this (along with one small portacabin) is the only accommodation that has been provided by a statutory agency or department. Unfortunately, the canteen (modular unit) is not large enough to cater for all the children and every day, groups of pupils eat lunch (dinner and lunch) in their own classrooms. Due to the lack of accommodation, this space is also used for health visits, learning support and a whole range of other activities.



The existing prefabricated buildings are in an increasingly poor state. There are holes in walls, roof leaks (including around electrics and fuse boxes) and general structural issues across the whole school. In many instances, there are issues surrounding bases of the mobiles and there have been several issues with rodents gaining access to them as a result. Additionally, recent work contracted by the Education Authority saw painting and protection of the mobiles incomplete.

Single base layers were applied to walls with no finishing and as a result, the paint used was not weather-resistant nor providing any long-term protection to the integrity of the building.

Outside of the accommodation itself, the site is very restrictive and offers little play space for the growing number of pupils. This raises issues both around health and safety of pupils engaging in play and the ability of the school to meet the needs of the whole curriculum.



4.4.5 Sustainability Schools Criteria

- ***Quality Education Experience***

Gaelscoil na Daróige was last inspected by ETI in June 2014 and the quality of education provided was found to be “Good”. The quality of teaching observed ranged from “Good to Outstanding”, with four-fifths being “Very Good” or “Outstanding”.

- ***Stable Enrolment Trends***

Total Enrolment sits below the Urban Threshold of 140 pupils. However, enrolments at Gaelscoil na Daróige have risen consecutively for three years. There is a pattern of increasing enrolment evident through comparison of P1 – P3 (47 pupils) and P5 – P7 (29 pupils) for 2019/20 (based upon 20^{1st} Preference Applications for Primary 1).

- ***Sound Financial Position***

2016/17 spending is within +/-5% allowed by the Department with an overspend of 1.1% (Allocated £327,255 - Expenditure £333,500 - Carry-over -£6,245).

- ***Strong Leadership and Management by Board of Governors and Principal***

A 2014 ETI Report noted that the principal had developed a clear strategic approach to monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching and effective use of performance data and teacher observations to better inform planning. Additionally, the Board of Governors and school leadership have worked concertedly to increase enrolments and campaign for a suitable site for the school – including innovative proposals for a shared campus with Groarty Integrated Primary School.

- ***Accessibility***

The majority of pupils attending the school (62%) come from within a 1-mile catchment and the vast majority from within a 2-mile catchment. The school is located within Ballymagroarty estate which is an area of particular disadvantage. There are a number of children who travel from further across the city as a result of both parental choice and practical reasons (e.g. childcare arrangements).

- ***Strong Links with the Community***

There are very strong links established with the other local IM providers and with the closest Irish-medium Post-Primary, Gaelcholáiste Dhoire in Dungiven. The

school has led a successful CPD cross-phase collaboration with the other IME primary providers in the city and with Gaelcholáiste Dhoire in order to affect a smooth transition to post-primary. The school community is actively involved in the community and welcomes involvement from local sports and cultural groups in school activities. The school is active in the local Outerwest Education forum and in the local extended schools cluster. The school has become an intrinsic part of the fabric of the community and engages in community events including performing plays at the local Carol service. The school has built a strong record in Shared Education with Groarty Integrated Primary School. Quite remarkably, the partnership with Groarty IPS brought about letter of support for a shared site signed by ALL parties and the independent group of local councillors. Additionally, Gaelscoil na Daróige attracts pupils from both sides of the community.

4.4.6 Overall Sustainability Assessment

Gaelscoil na Daróige meets the majority of the criteria contained within the Sustainable Schools Policy. Enrolments at the school have been clearly below the Urban Threshold in the past; however, enrolments have grown in six out of the last eight years – including the last three years consecutively. The school management has demonstrated the capability to increase enrolments and continues to forge a tradition of IME in the locality in the face of significant challenges. It is important to note that this growth has been sustained in a cramped site with insufficient facilities and accommodation. Even so, the most recent enrolment figure demonstrates that sustainability is a real prospect for this school once given decent accommodation and an adequate site.

4.4.7 Challenges facing Gaelscoil na Daróige

Similar to the other IM primary schools in the city, the biggest issue facing Gaelscoil na Daróige is securing a site large enough to attend to its pupils with fit-for-purpose accommodation. This has had an increasingly detrimental impact upon the attractiveness of the school and acted as a barrier to the development of Gaelscoil na Daróige. Again, when viewed in the context of the Dept. of Education's duty to encourage and facilitate the development of IME, this issue takes on an added dimension.

As previously addressed, the current accommodation is not fit-for-purpose and poses a range of difficulties for the school. Examples of this include:

- Holes at base of accommodation giving access to rodents.
- Insufficient canteen area and outdoor space.
- Leaks in ceiling
- No hall for assembly, parent meetings etc

This has had a hugely detrimental impact upon the attractiveness of the school, particularly in comparison with other English-medium schools in the area and has acted as a barrier to the development of Gaelscoil na Daróige and to the delivery of the statutory duty, therefore, with regards to IME.

The school is keen to transform the status of the preschool provision from voluntary into a statutory nursery unit. The establishment of a nursery unit would assist the transfer rate to the Gaelscoil and provide an improved linguistic – teacher led environment and improved educational outcomes for children in keeping with the recommendations of the recent DE report “Research on the outcomes of Pre-school Irish-medium Education”.

5.0 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

We have undertaken a qualitative options appraisal and have not carried out a discounted cash flow on these options on the basis that we feel there is only one feasible option.

5.1 Options Defined

During this exercise as part of the consultations with the local IM schools and other interested parties CnaG gave consideration to a range of options to meet the needs of the IME sector within the city.

The defined options that were put forward were as follows:

1. Status Quo - with no further capital investment on the existing sites
2. An amalgamation of the current IM schools into either one or two IM schools.
3. The development of the existing schools within their local areas – though an investment and relocation programme

5.2 Options Consideration

Following research and discussions with interested parties, consideration was given to the range of advantages and disadvantages of the above options and these are summarised as follows:

5.2.1 Option 1: Status Quo

This option is based on each of the three schools remaining on their current sites with only minor maintenance and improvement works to the buildings. The following table outlines the advantages and disadvantages of this option.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Little initial financial cost to the Public Purse</p>	<p>School sites/accommodation wholly inadequate for current enrolments.</p> <p>Current accommodation not fit-for-purpose and is obsolete and deteriorating and has the potential to become a significant health and safety concern to the children attending the school.</p> <p>Seriously undermines the efforts of the schools to build and sustain enrolments and effectively denies them the opportunity to build and maintain a sustainable enrolment at each of the three sites.</p> <p>Poor accommodation and sites would have a highly detrimental impact upon attractiveness of IME in Derry City.</p> <p>The non-investment in the IME sector juxtaposed the significantly higher historic investment and higher quality accommodation in the EM sector acts as a major barrier to IME and is a potential breach of the Department’s statutory duty to encourage and facilitate IME that could potentially be challenged in court.</p> <p>Schools within highly socially- and economically-deprived areas would continue to be denied proper facilities, denying already significantly disadvantaged children at IME the opportunity to have acceptable basic educational facilities. Potentially, this raises issues regarding equality that could be challenged in court.</p>

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta does not believe that this option can deliver a network of sustainable IM primary schools for Derry City. Two of the schools concerned (Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir & Gaelscoil na Daróige), have already long outgrown their current sites and rising enrolments will place even greater pressure on the sites as smaller year groups in Key Stage 2 leave to be replaced by larger intakes. As such, both sites urgently require new sites and accommodation to adequately provide for both their current pupils and to enable the schools to grow to their full potential.

Bunscoil Cholmcille could potentially remain on their existing site for an interim period. However, the current site is inadequate to provide for growth to a seven-class base school that would provide the standards and facilities contained within the Building Handbook.

Indeed as outlined earlier in the document the accommodation at all three schools is not fit-for-purpose and themselves act as a barrier to the continued development and growth of IME in Derry City.

For these reasons, this option is discounted.

5.2.2 Option 2: Amalgamation

This option would consist of an amalgamation of the current IM schools into one or two new IM schools.

The second option considered pertains to the potential amalgamation of all three schools into a super-school or two schools into a new IM school, given that one school is already sustainable under SSP criteria.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>A single school or two larger schools would potentially enable a larger school to be developed and would be a more cost effective Capital Build</p> <p>This would consolidate the existing skills base within the schools and streamline management requirements</p>	<p>This would significantly reduce the accessibility of IME for local established Irish-language communities. It would move the schools out of these communities and most parents would not be able to avail of free school transport to these further away schools.</p> <p>This would place a major burden on parents of children within areas of social and economic disadvantage to arrange transport for their children. This would effectively act as a barrier to IME for disadvantaged families.</p> <p>Whilst this could result in a single 'sustainable' the barriers to parents of having to travel greater distances could act to reduce the overall IME sector within the city.</p> <p>This could result in a This would involve the merging of 2 or 3 separate management / governance bodies that would need to be represented within a new governance framework. This has major potential to create friction between different established governance approaches and would necessitate a complicated and prolonged negotiation.</p> <p>Removal of parental choice in relation to the religious ethos of their choice of primary school.</p> <p>There would be reduced accessibility and interaction between current IM pre-school and primary settings.</p>

5.2.2.1 Solution via Amalgamation

The potential disadvantages outweigh the advantages heavily. Taking the schools out of their established language communities where there is active local involvement in Governance and other aspects of school life, could significantly damage the development of these growing language communities. A school established through amalgamation would significantly increase the average travel time and distance to school for most children in the sector. This would not only place an additional burden on parents to arrange this transport but would act to create a barrier that would reduce the numbers availing of IME in the city.

Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir is the strongest of the three schools with regards to the sustainability criteria. With a projected enrolment of 200+ pupils, potential for future growth and its entirely separate geographical location, it is discounted as a candidate for potential amalgamation.

Furthermore, through consultation carried out by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta with the Senior Management and Board of Governors of each school, it is clear that there is not the necessary support for an amalgamation given both the ethos differences and the distinct geographical catchment areas of each school. For these reasons, this option is discounted.

The option of the amalgamation of Bunscoil Cholmcille and Gaelscoil na Daróige has been explored through dialogue with the Senior Management and Board of Governors of the two schools, CnaG and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools. Bunscoil Cholmcille is a Catholic Maintained school and has a strong faith-based ethos. Gaelscoil na Daróige is a non-denominational school and firmly wishes to retain that ethos.

In consultation with the schools, concerns were expressed about the additional travel time for pupils from their existing catchment areas in the scenario of an amalgamation and the fact that this would be unlikely to attract free school transport. It was also strongly felt that the accessibility of the amalgamated school for parents within socially and economically disadvantaged areas would place a major burden on families already struggling to cope and would effectively create a barrier for these

people to avail of IME. They were also very concerned about the potential disconnect that could occur between the language communities and any new school.

Significant concerns were also raised about the arrangements for combining the governance of the existing schools into a new governance structure and the potential for conflict and differing views and ethos in relation to the governance approach.

A Potential amalgamation was consulted upon and considered by all parties. Having given full consideration to this option, CnaG is satisfied that this would not encourage and facilitate the development of IME within the City for the reasons discussed and the absence of necessary support for such an option. CnaG are also concerned about the deliverability of this approach. For these reasons, this option has been discounted.

5.2.3 Option 3: Three School Solution

The development of the existing schools within their local areas – though an investment and relocation programme. The third option considered relates to the continued development of each school with suitable sites and adequate accommodation which cater for current enrolments, projected growth and future potential.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Will establish a network of sustainable IM primary schools.</p> <p>Maintains current connection to existing and established school communities.</p> <p>Maximises accessibility to IME in Derry</p> <p>Provides a stronger basis for responding to future growth within the city for the foreseeable future</p> <p>Preserves parental choice of school ethos and management types</p> <p>Increased visibility, confidence and status of IME within the city</p> <p>Increased capacity within settings to improve educational outcomes</p> <p>Increased capacity for collaboration across a range of initiatives</p> <p>Schools in quality accommodation will improve growth to viability for IM post-primary provision for the city</p> <p>No additional physical separation of Pre-school & Primary IM provision</p>	<p>Time required to realise both projected and potential growth</p> <p>Financial cost of acquiring suitable sites</p> <p>Need for interim solutions before each setting reaches its final destination</p>

The patterns of enrolment and admissions, as previously described, demonstrate the sustained demand for IME provision in Derry City. One of the existing schools has already well surpassed its sustainable admissions target and the two other schools are both on a

growth trend capable of reaching this minimum admissions target. As each school identified is at a different stage of development towards sustainability, there is a need for bespoke interim solution to redress the current respective challenges facing each school in the form of poor accommodation and unsuitable sites.

It has been documented that all three schools are currently located on restrictive sites that are incompatible for full growth to sustainability. Additionally, all three schools are in accommodation that is not fit-for-purpose and so poor as to act as a barrier to the realisation of each school's potential on a city-wide basis. The absence of any fit-for-purpose accommodation within the IM sector in Derry City is a major cause for concern.

The option of developing each existing school through provision of suitable sites and accommodation to bring them to appropriate standards has been identified as the most viable option. However, the short-term needs of each of the schools require an interim or transitional phase to enable them to meet the needs of their pupils. This is dealt with in the next section of this report.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta recommends that, from an Area planning perspective, steps are taken to promote Option 3 in order to develop a network of sustainable IM schools which facilitate and encourage the continued development of IME in the city. As indicated above a full cost appraisal of each of these options has not been taken. However, we believe that there the framework proposed in Option 3 is the only real deliverable option that will allow the Department to deliver their Article 89 Statutory duty to encourage and Facilitate IME. We would recommend that a full cost appraisal be undertaken by a proposed working group outlined later in this section of the report. In view of the extremely poor state of the IM schools estate in the city as compared to the English-medium sectors CnaG would recommend that the Department formulate and deliver an action plan that will bring about significant capital investment into the schools estate within the city in order to:

- Redress the real and perceived imbalance between the accommodation within the IME sector and the EM sector in the city and reduce this major obstacle to parents opting for IME. CnaG believe that under the Statutory Duty that the department is obliged to address this in order to encourage and facilitate IME in the city.
- Invest in Education within some of the most socially and economically deprived communities in the north in order to help break the inter-generational educational underachievement. This will redress the significant inequality for disadvantaged children who deserve the same enriching educational experience as their counterparts in the English-medium sector.

We would propose the following objectives be included within the Action Plan for each of the schools:

6.1 Bunscoil Cholmcille

Bunscoil Cholmcille is the longest established provision (35 years since it initially opened as a unit in Steelstown PS) and is the only Catholic Maintained IM primary school in the city.

Its buildings are probably the oldest mobile classrooms in use within the Education sector and the need for children to go between classrooms in very difficult weather conditions

presents a range of health & safety concerns. The school has a long list of minor works applications and health and safety issues regularly occurring.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta therefore recommends the following:

- CnaG continue to support the school to build enrolment through targeted and general information for parents – both on an individual school-basis and through collaboration with other IME providers in the city and with other cultural organisations (such as An Chultúrlann) to ensure an agreed approach which is timed to maximise effectiveness.
- Immediate steps should be taken to replace a number of the classrooms on the site with new modular classrooms that can be redeployed once the school secures a site and new permanent building.
- Work starts immediately to identify a long-term site for the school to accommodate a permanent build as soon as the school has secured a stable enrolment trend in excess of the minimum target sustainable admission numbers.
- A modular-built, school-assembly hall (that could also function as a canteen and sports hall) be constructed on the site as soon as possible to allow the school to undertake all-school events and enrich the curriculum with indoor sports activities.
- It is recommended that the school admissions number is changed in order to ‘right-size’ the school and bring it into line with current and projected figures

6.2 Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir

The school has already clearly demonstrated its sustainability with further growth projected and a Development Proposal recently approved to increase the Approved Admissions and Enrolment. The school is on an inadequate site and despite the excellent work of the management, governance and teachers. The school’s ability to deliver an enriching educational experience is being constrained by the limitations of the site and the buildings on the site.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta would therefore recommend the following:

- CnaG continue to support the school to build enrolment through targeted and general information for parents – both on an individual school-basis and through collaboration with other IME providers in the city and with other cultural organisations (such as An Chultúrlann) to ensure an agreed approach which is timed to maximise effectiveness.

- Due to clearly established sustainability of the provision at Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir and coupled with sustained upward trajectory in relation to enrolments, the acquisition of a new school site should be actioned immediately. This should be for a new seven-class base school and should be located within the current catchment area.
- Pending the delivery of the new site and building an investment programme should be undertaken within the existing site to replace the obsolete buildings with new modular classroom buildings (that can be re-deployed elsewhere by the Education Authority once the new school has been delivered).
- It is recommended that a modular-built, school-assembly hall (addressing the failings of the current multi-purpose hall in regards to DE Handbook regulations) be constructed on the site as soon as possible. This hall would also function as a canteen and sports hall and would allow the school to undertake all-school events and enrich the curriculum with indoor sports activities.

6.3 Gaelscoil na Daróige

It is remarkable that this school has been able to grow its pre-school and primary admissions, despite extremely poor accommodation and an incredibly cramped site. The primary school site extends to approximately half an acre and the success of the school in such conditions is testament to the dedication and effort of the governance, management and staff and the confidence of parents in the school.

This school is in exactly the same “Catch 22” position as outlined by Justice Keegan in the Gaelscoil an Lonnáin case where she was not satisfied that the article 89 Statutory Duty was discharged because the school was not capable of expanding within its current accommodation to meet its sustainability targets. The site is clearly too small to enable to the school to grow further to sustainability and this matter needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta therefore proposes that:

- CnaG continue to support the school to build enrolment through targeted and general information for parents – both on an individual school-basis and through collaboration with other IME providers in the city and with other cultural organisations (such as An Chultúrlann and Cumann an Ghrianáin with whom the school is running a parent and toddler club) to ensure an agreed approach which is timed to maximise effectiveness.

- The current site is extended into a site that has been identified as being available that is located directly adjacent to the school site. It is understood that this site is available for rental or purchase. However, if this cannot be delivered, the acquisition of another larger interim site or, if possible, permanent site should be fast tracked to enable the continued growth of the school.
- A modular-built, school-assembly hall (that could also function as a canteen and sports hall) be constructed on the site as soon as possible to allow the school to undertake all-school events and enrich the curriculum with indoor sports activities, drama, dance etc.
- An additional classroom is made available to the school for 2020/21 academic year in order to cater for current enrolment
- Steps are taken immediately to identify a long-term site for the school that is large enough for a permanent build as soon as the school has secured the required enrolment to qualify for a capital build.
- A Development Proposal is prepared to establish a statutory nursery unit within Gaelscoil na Daróige and enable further growth in admissions to the school.

6.4 Establishment of Dedicated Action Plan Working Group for Irish-medium Education in Derry City

CnaG would recommend a dedicated Working Group be put together to formulate a priority action plan for IME in the city to deliver on the above objectives. CnaG recommends that members of this working group include CnaG, Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta, the Department's Estate Operations Team and the Buildings Section of the Education Authority, and that representation also be sought from the management/ governance of each of the schools.

This working group should be tasked to draw up a Priority Action Plan to identify and agree the short, medium and long term objectives for the IME estate in Derry City. The working group would be responsible for developing the framework for Option 3 outlined above and to undertake a range of option appraisals for taking forward the defined objectives. Some of these objectives would need to be actioned immediately and some could be advanced with their implementation being subject to the schools establishing stable enrolment patterns over the coming years.



COMHAIRLE
NA GAELSCOLAÍOCHTA

© Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta 2019
