



Focal an Chathaoirligh



Gearóid Mac Ádhaimh, Cathaoirleach Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, launching the new IM preschool provision in An Chultúrlann, Belfast.

“ IME continues to go from strength to strength; according to the latest school census figures (2017-18) ”

Welcome everyone to this Newsletter from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. I hope that you will all enjoy reading through it and learning about the activities of An Chomhairle and of the schools and the people within our sector and that you will find the stories you read both interesting and entertaining.

In the past year or so, An Chomhairle has undergone significant change at the top level. The number of Directors has been reduced from 22 to 14 and several new members have come onto the Board. A new Chairperson has been appointed and congratulations are due to An tUas. Liam Ó Flannagáin who had been acting Chief Executive and has recently been appointed to the post on a permanent basis. We are sure that these changes will help us to provide a more effective and appropriate service to the sector in the years ahead.

IME continues to go from strength to strength; according to the latest school census figures (2017-18) there are now more than 70

institutions providing Irish-medium education, from nurseries and pre-school groups through to primary and post-primary schools. As well as that, pupils continue to achieve at levels equal to those of their peers in English-medium schools and in many cases even surpass them. This should be a source of pride for all in the sector and a cause of celebration for the schools and for the teachers who deliver these results. Congratulations to all of them and to their pupils on their great achievements. The aim for all of us in the future must be to continue to promote that ongoing growth in the sector, to always strive to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils and to ensure that every school in the sector is a centre of excellence in all that it does. Go n-éirí an bóthar linn!!

I hope that you all enjoy the summer holidays, that you have a pleasant and relaxing break and that, wherever you are, the sun shines on you!

Gearóid Mac Ádhaimh
Cathaoirleach
Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

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Focal an Phríomhfheidhmeannaigh



Dia daoibh agus fáilte romhaibh chuig nuacht litir an tsamhraidh Chomhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. Agus muid ag tarraingt ar na laethanta saoire, is fiú smaoinemh ar an dul chun cinn atá déanta le linn na bliana san earnáil.

The story of growth within Irish-medium schools continued unabated this year with further increases in numbers of almost 7% within the primary and post-primary sectors. Three new náiscoilleana commenced this year, they are already planning the development of new bunscóileanna for their areas and Coláiste Feirste with their much deserved new school buildings and spórtlann are already planning for a new campus to cater for the growth in demand for North Belfast.

All of this augurs well for the future of the Irish language as a living, spoken community language with its foundations in our Gaelscoilseanna. It

is also a great testament to the wonderful work being carried out day and daily by our Principals and teachers, náiscoil staff, parents and pupils and the hundreds of people who serve on Committees and Boards of Governors throughout the sector.

The story of growth in Irish-medium education is an important one and is a great tribute to the quality of education and service in our schools and the great interest and grá for the language developed by them. At Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta we are also very aware that all of this comes with many challenges and still with areas of inequality in services and resources available to our children.

With educational performance from Irish-medium education punching above its weight and increasing international research underlining the many benefits that come with

bilingualism, we ask how much better outcomes we could produce if we had a school infrastructure, resources and educational tools on par with English-medium education. At Comhairle, therefore, we will continue to advocate for and assist individual schools with their own particular issues as well as advocate on behalf of the sector as a whole, highlighting and working to close those areas which have yet to be improved for our children and work to further develop our sector strategically.

Tá súil agam go mbeidh Samhradh iontach agaibh go léir.

Liam Ó Flannagáin
Príomhfheidhmeannach
Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

Gaelcholáiste Dhoire building for the Future!

This is an exciting time for Gaelcholáiste Dhoire as we move into a brand new school extension with fantastic facilities for all.

Inspiring times lie ahead for us, and Irish-medium education in the area, as our school continues to grow from strength to strength. This new state of the art building sits on the site

adjacent to the Castle and provides space for the increasing student population as well as specialist teaching facilities. The new building has a Science Lab, a Home Economics suite, a computer suite and a general classroom. In addition, Gaelcholáiste Dhoire will continue to use the Castle and the Special Educational Needs (SEN) accommodation onsite has been

extended in order to improve the educational experience for all pupils, providing a calm, inclusive and positive learning environment as well as full access to the curriculum.

Along with a modern design, the building comes equipped with cutting-edge technologies and more importantly, the latest equipment to promote effective teaching and learning. The school has invested considerably in IT to enhance learning and the new extension to the current provision allows the school population to benefit from all that the technology has to offer.

With Wi-fi throughout the building, innovative teaching walls in the classrooms and the use of iPads, we're confident that our new school building will only enhance the learning experiences that our pupils already receive and we all look forward with great excitement to the beginning of a new chapter in the continuing story that is GCD and Irish-medium Education in Co. Derry.



Gaelcholáiste Dhoire is located within Dungiven Castle

New Irish-medium Provision for Armagh City, Swatragh & Toomebridge



(L – R): Malachy Ó hÁgáin, Náiscoil Ghreanacháin; Sorcha Ní Dhoibhlín, Náiscoil na Fíobha; Gearóid Mac Ádhaimh, Cathaoirleach/Chairperson Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta(3rd from left); Nuala Ní Scolláin, Foras na Gaeilge; Gearóid Ó Machail, Náiscoil na Caille; Pilib Ó Ruanáil, Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta; Conor Stiobhard, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta; Órlagh Ní Néill, Náiscoil na Caille

Gearóid Mac Ádhaimh, Chairperson of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (the body charged by the Department of Education with responsibility for the development of Irish-medium education in the north) welcomes the recent decision by the Pre-school Education Group to approve the newly established Irish-medium pre-school provision in Armagh City, Swatragh, Co. Derry and Toomebridge, Co. Antrim.

Mr Mac Ádhaimh believes that this new provision is a reflection of the wider community's appreciation of the benefits of a bilingual education for children. He explained, "These communities have embarked on an educational journey which will enrich their children's and their respective communities' lives. They are opening a door to the educational and cultural benefits that flow from bilingualism and immersion-education."

He continued, "We endeavour to make Irish-medium education accessible to as many communities as possible in the north and do so within the context of area planning. These newly established preschools (naíscóileanna) enable us to respond to demand within the community for further Irish-medium education development and provision".

"The establishment and approval of the three new settings is a significant development for our sector as it is the first time that we have established three new Irish-medium settings in the same year. This development is reflective of the growing demand from the community for Irish-medium.

There are now over 6500 children being educated in the sector with overall numbers set to rise again in this coming year".

Mr Mac Ádhaimh praised the role of those local people who gave of their own time and energy to make pre-school IME available to their communities. He also recognised the commitment and financial support provided by the All-Ireland language body, Foras na Gaeilge and of Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta (the Trust Fund for IME in the north) stating, "the three communities' desire to have IME provision on their doorsteps would not have been possible without the belief, drive and commitment of those organisations and individuals.

"I would like also to thank and give recognition to the great work and support given to the new naíscóileanna by our partner organisation Altram, the support group for Irish-medium early years projects. The support of Altram's Early Years Advisory service has been invaluable to getting the projects off the ground".

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta looks forward to working with all our partners in assisting the further development of Irish-medium education in these three communities as we advise and support them to their next stages of provision of Irish-medium education and the strengthening of the Irish Language in their areas.



Coláiste Feirste Síomha's Swimming Success

Here is Síomha Nic Pharthaláin Nic Bhradaigh who is a year 8 pupil in Coláiste Feirste. Síomha was selected for the Irish Swimming Development Squad. Síomha is a keen athlete and has been swimming since she was four years old, in spite of the difficulties she has had with muscular development in her legs from birth.

She trains tirelessly five times a week with the team in the hope of obtaining a place on the Irish Paralympic Swimming Team. Síomha hopes that she will participate and represent on behalf of her country at the Paralympic Games in Tokyo 2020. We wish you every success, Síomha!

National "Gaelbhreatach" Award to Coláiste Chaitríona for the 5th year

On Tuesday 2nd May 2018, representatives from the school's Irish Language Committee and their Teacher, An tUasal Ó Ruanaidh, headed to Leopardstown, Co. Dublin to attend a fun-filled awards ceremony where other primary and post-primary schools from throughout Ireland enjoyed music from Seo Linn and were presented with their awards.

The Coláiste Chaitríona pupils were praised for their diligence and energy in promoting Irish through a range of activities including quizzes, concerts, speaking activities, assemblies, "Gaeilge 24", "Green Day" and many more. Beatha Teanga í a Labhairt!



(L-R)Antaine Ó Coileáin (Gael Linn), Bríd Ní Aodha, Gráinne Bleasdale, Sarah Nic Anrachaigh, Pól Ó Gallchóir (Foras na Gaeilge)

The Growth of Irish-medium education in the north of Ireland 2004 -2018

As schools start to 'wind down' for the summer holidays and preparation for the new school year (2018/19) begins, Irish-medium schools are readying themselves to welcome more pupils than ever before.

The Irish-medium education (IME) sector has shown remarkable growth for over a decade (see the table below).

IME is an ever increasing phenomenon throughout Ireland with more than 60,000 children attending IME schools. In the north, IME is the fastest growing

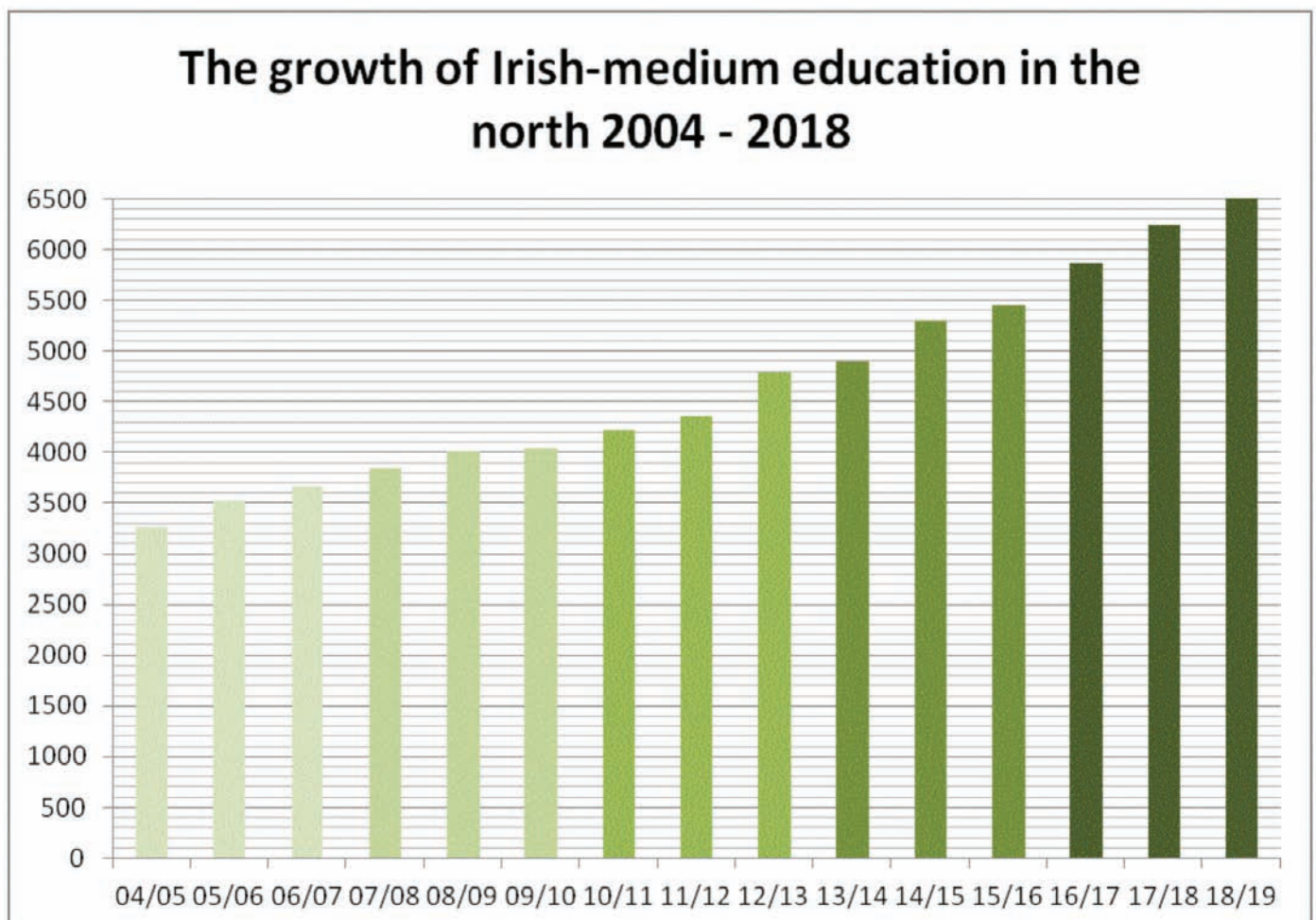
education sector; more than 6,500 children are currently availing of it.

This growth is particularly evident in Armagh, Derry and Co. Tyrone with the vast majority of IME schools appealing to parents from all communities and backgrounds. These parents are becoming increasingly appreciative of the benefits that a bilingual education bestows upon their children. Evidently, parents are recognising that pupils in IME schools are following the same curriculum as children in other schools (controlled, integrated and maintained) but with the added

advantage of acquiring a second language naturally.

This means that those children being educated through the immersion approach are benefiting from the consolidation of a unique educational experience, first started in Belfast when 9 pioneering families established Bunscoil Phobal Feirste on the Shaw's Road in 1971!

With plans afoot to further expand IME provision across the north, the future is certainly bright for the consolidation and development of Irish-medium education.



Barr na Ranga - Outstanding success for Irish-medium Students in St. Malachy's High School



After 7 seven years we are preparing to bid farewell to the first ever IME class of St. Malachy's High School. In 2011 the IME stream opened with 5 students. In September 2017, 26 new Year 8 students brought the total of IME students in St. Malachy's High School, receiving secondary education through the medium of Irish, to 81. Students have transferred from four local feeder bunscoileanna; Bunscoil Mhuire agus Phádraig, Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche, Bunscoil an Iúir and for the first time this year, Gaelscoil na mBeann.

The IME stream continues to grow and we are due to welcome 29 new IME students in September 2018, bringing the total IME enrolment to over 100.

This rapidly growing IME stream is proving a tremendous success. This year, the 8 year 12 IME students were highly successful in their GCSEs achieving 7A*, 11A, 23B and 29Cs between them. This includes one IME student, Anna Ní Nualláin achieving outstanding results 4A*, 5A and 1B.

Indeed, Anna has achieved the top position in the entire Year 12 year group. These students are a credit to their parents, bunscoileanna and St. Malachy's High School.

This academic year, IME students were involved in all areas of school life, including a vast array of extracurricular activities. The year began with a group of Year 10 students along with Mrs Pickering joining 34 other year 9 and 10 IME students from across the North,

in Brussels. Here, the students met Martina Anderson MEP, who hosted the trip, and were given a detailed tour of the European Parliament. This very unique opportunity resulted in teenagers discovering Luven and Brussels all through the medium of Irish.

Students further participated in Gaeilge 24, Tráth na gCeist, Céilithe and various other Irish language events. Indeed, Saorla McCarren from Yr. 11 made it to the final of Gael Linn's Abair which was hosted in the Seamús Heaney 'Home Place' in Bellaghy. Furthermore, a number of IME students have been very successful in winning scholarships to attend Coláistí Samhraidh this Summer in the Donegal Gaeltacht.

A number of our IME students took the lead roles in the school's highly acclaimed musical production of 'School of Rock.' A number of the main roles were year 8 IME students, testament to the confidence and transferable skills acquired through learning through the medium of Irish.

In March, our students welcomed the Dream Dearg to discuss current Irish language issues and the students had the opportunity to take part in Conradh na Gaeilge workshops exploring the history of our Teanga Roinnte.

The IME Stream in Ardscoil Noamh Maolmhaodhóg is a vibrant and flourishing entity and is testament to all that is good about Gaeloideachas.

New Irish-medium primary school in Armagh City



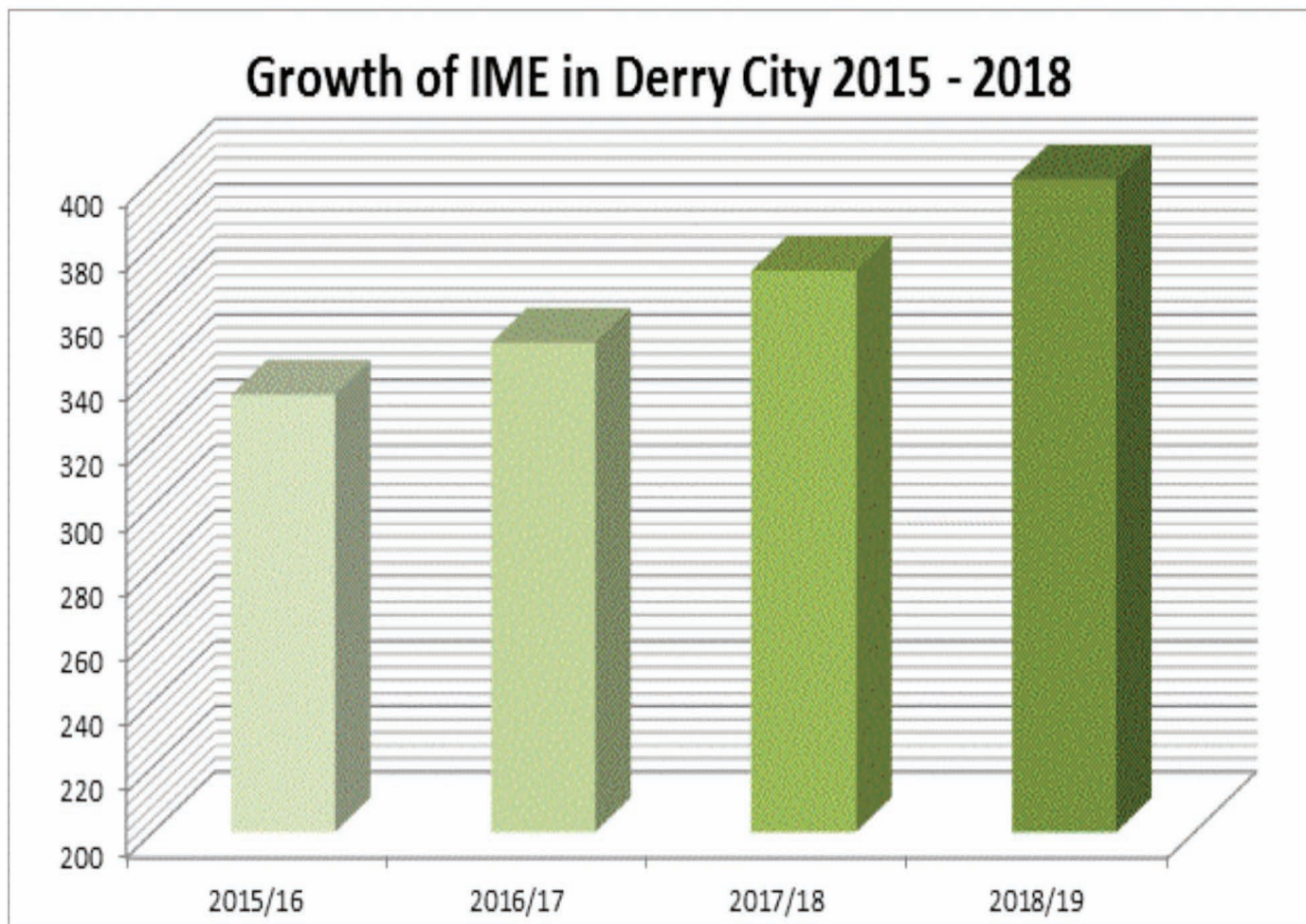
The committee of Naíscóil na Caille organised a public meeting to announce its plans to establish an Irish-medium primary school in Armagh City in September 2019. The meeting was held in the Armagh Harps GAA Club on the Loughgall Road. The announcement comes after the opening of the third Irish language nursery school, Naíscóil na Caille, in the City in September 2017.

Parents, Irish language activists, community and primary school representatives assembled to hear presentations by Conor Stiobhard, Development Officer with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, Geraldine Parks (pictured speaking to parents) a parent of Irish-medium educated children, Orlágh Ní Néill, Team Leader with Naíscóil na Caille and Gearóid Ó Machail, Director of Aonach Mhacha.

The presentations were followed by a Question & Answer session with Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta representative, Peadar Ó Cuinneagáin. He explained to those present that the demand for Irish-medium primary school places in Armagh had exceeded current capacity and that Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta are working to bridge that gap in IM provision for the local Irish language community.

Parents were given the opportunity to find out more about the plans for Irish-medium education in Armagh City and were informed that the Committee of Naíscóil na Caille, Cairde Teo supported and advised by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta had identified a potential site and were endeavouring to progress matters.

Irish-medium Education thrives in Derry City



Irish-medium education (IME) continues to thrive across the north of Ireland and Derry City is no exception. Figures from the Education Authority provide clear evidence of the continued and sustained growth of the IME sector in the city.

This growth reflects not only the success of the pupils within the sector but also the ever-growing number of parents seeking to avail of the benefits of bilingual education for their children. Irish-medium schools have continued to flourish in recent years.

Principals of the 3 local schools in Derry City have been working together alongside Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta for the past couple of years to ensure that the provision continues to thrive. This trend is illustrated in the table above:

Conor Stiobhard (Advisory Officer, CnaG) stated that, 'We are delighted with the continued growth of Irish-medium education. Looking forward, it is a source of great comfort to the sector that an increasing number of families are placing their trust in the

benefits of a bilingual education, not only here in Derry but throughout Ireland.'

The growth in the sector is clear for all to see and increasing numbers of children from all communities and backgrounds are availing of it. It is evident that the benefits of a bilingual education are becoming more appreciated by parents keen to give their children the best start in life.

Hard work pays off for Bunscoil an Traonaigh, Lisnaskea, Co. Fermanagh



The good weather affords pupils the opportunity of being taught outside the classroom

The number of pupils attending Bunscoil an Traonaigh, Lisnaskea's Irish-medium Primary School, has risen to full capacity for the first time in its P1 entry year. The numbers have increased significantly (87%) and this in spite of the recent difficulties the school is experiencing in relation to its relocation to the former Lisnaskea High School site. These accommodation and infrastructural constraints have stymied the growth and development of the

bunscoil in the past but the message is now clearly getting through to parents who are now recognising the benefits of a bilingual education for their children.

"Local parents clearly understand the advantages of bilingualism and our effective communication at our open nights and information days is certainly getting through to parents," explained Claire Collins, Chairperson of the Board of Governors. "The school governors

are delighted with the result of the sustained campaign throughout the year that involved a publicity and enrolment drive. Much of the work was planned, organised and supported by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta the representative body for Irish-medium education."

Bunscoil an Traonaigh is the only Irish-medium primary school in Co. Fermanagh and provides parents who wish their children to be educated through the medium of Irish with the opportunity as Antaine Ó Muireagáin (Advisory Officer of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta) explains, "Many children entering Irish-medium schools have no previous experience of Irish. However, they soon begin to acquire the language naturally through the daily experience of an Irish language environment". "They also have the opportunity to benefit from the many proven benefits of bilingualism which include enhanced communication skills; higher performance in exams; creative thinking; enhanced self-esteem and high levels of cultural awareness."

For further information about Irish-medium Education in Fermanagh contact: Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta 02890 321475.

Irish-medium Sectoral Co-operation



(L-R, Danny Cassidy (Altram) Conor Stiobhard (comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta) Heather Floyd (Altram)

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG) continues to work in partnership with Altram, the support organisation for

Irish-medium Pre-School Education, in the establishment and development of new provision.

This year for example, 3 new náiscoileanna (Irish-medium pre-schools) have been established; Náiscoil na Caille in Armagh; Náiscoil na Fíobha in Toomebridge and Náiscoil Ghreanacháin in Swatragh.

CnaG and Altram worked closely together in the run-up to the opening of the three new settings, particularly regarding accommodation, registration with Social Services and staffing provision.

The organisations continue to support these new settings to ensure the highest standards of provision are maintained. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta in conjunction with Altram will be facilitating workshops on leadership and management for náiscoil committees in September 2018.

Cónall Ó Corra (Past-pupil Gaelscoil na bhFál & Coláiste Feirste) speaks to Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta about his Irish-medium education experience



What do you think about your education at the primary and post-primary levels?

I have enormous and unending respect for both my parents for having chosen to send me to an Irish-medium nursery and subsequently, to an Irish-medium primary school. I am also grateful to them for taking that decision. Although Irish-medium education had been functioning agus ag bláthú for many years in Belfast it was a braver decision than it is now. I have very fond memories of my childhood in Gaelscoil na bhFál. I distinctly remember that I knew little of the importance and significance of my attendance at the school; it was a novelty to my friends from home where I lived that I had fluency in another language, different from our very poor English. For my comhghleachaithe (fellow pupils) in school, it was our social norm. To be honest, we never used the language amongst ourselves whenever figures of authority were not present. It would be in later years that I would make the conscious decision to use the language with my peers without the presence of a teacher.

We were aware however of a political aspect to our attendance at an Irish school. We were kids but we knew that Ireland was split and that things had been bad in Belfast at one stage. There was a regular surge of nationalism amongst kids to speak Irish because 'we weren't Brits'; however it lasted no longer than lunchtime and we'd return to English. We were, unknown to us, a product of the local environment; what we had seen on the walls of the areas in which we grew up and also, what was seen and heard on the television screens. It was generally accepted that Coláiste Feirste was the secondary school to which we would all transfer after Rang 7; those who had other ideas were quite strange in our eyes. At this stage, there was no real understanding except that all our mates were going there and we didn't want to be left out. We all went on to Coláiste Feirste

but I want to make a point that I don't think many of my peers have experienced. When I was in the summer of my second year at secondary school, I decided for personal reasons to leave Coláiste Feirste and go to another school; my school of choice was De La Salle College in Andersonstown, Belfast. Due to Coláiste Feirste being the only Irish-medium secondary school in Belfast, this new school was an English speaking school. Assurances were given that I would have the full support and backing of the Irish department to complete my GCSE Irish (after hours) in school and I attended every class. I excelled at this school in my subjects and socially. However, I felt there was something missing. I also began to feel my grasp of Irish slip to a point where I was finding it hard to put a sentence together in Irish, which was strange after nearly 8 years of Irish-medium education. Over the Christmas break I decided to return to Coláiste Feirste and I did.

I had experienced life outside what I had known, calling my múinteoir 'Sir' and 'Mrs' definitely threw me off in the beginning. I still had no understanding of my eventual love of the language and my understanding of its place in my life. At this stage, I just knew that I was starting to lose it

What impact has being educated through the medium of Gaelic made to your life, socially and academically?

The vast majority of the people that I associate with in a social context now, I do so through the medium of Irish. That was true in the latter years in school when my mates and I went out to the cinema or went for a walk, or sometimes, chance our hand at trying to get into a bar and we would speak to each other in Irish.

I have since attended university in NUI Galway where I am doing a degree in Irish and History which I am undertaking through Irish. The vast majority of my socialising here is done through Irish and my entire circle of close friends speak Irish. We met through our course for the most part but we also met through 'An Cumann Gaelach' which organizes events and provides us with opportunities to speak Irish in a social setting.

My girlfriend, from Cobh in County Cork, is a Gaeilgeoir and most of our conversation is in Irish. I communicate with my siblings through

Irish for the most part and with my parents whose grasp of Irish is improving. I would find it extremely easy to go about my day using only Irish, be that in Belfast or Galway

What does having Gaelic mean to you as a young person?

I mentioned above that by returning to Coláiste Feirste I had no real rooted affection or understanding of the role Irish plays in my life. I think it was by the age of 16 when I entered my final year of GCSEs that I consciously began to evaluate Irish in my life. It was probably around this time that I became aware of the politics of it. In my view, the Irish language is the most important aspect of my life, it is through it that I conduct and live my life. I made a conscious decision to surround myself and live my life through Irish. The majority of the opportunities that I have had in my life so far would not have been had I not spoken Irish.

How do you see its role in future employment opportunities for you?

Being a fluent Gaeilgeoir has enhanced my employment opportunities no end. As I see it, it can only be an advantage to speak more than one language. In my travels abroad, I've heard that, in these islands, we are quite backward in that we are monolingual, whereas those on the continent have mastery of several languages. That said, it's only natural that having Irish would be an advantage.

Does your education through the medium of Gaelic continue to influence you?

Gaelscolaíocht (Irish-medium education) influences every single decision and thought that I've had and continue to have on a daily basis. My attitude towards life, my friends, family, community and my world view are shaped by the language and the method through which I acquired her. I have a deep-rooted belief that the Irish language is the tool through which we can regenerate our areas, our towns and cities and our country; de facto, to change our world. I believe that Irish holds the key to some of our contemporary problems and provides us with an insight into the past through which we can change the present and the future. Gaelscolaíocht taught me love and respect, it taught me how to contribute and furthermore, it inspired me to want to make a difference to people's lives.

(continued on page 9)

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Cónall addressing his peers in Coláiste Feirste

Who has influenced your thinking and outlook on life, contemporary or otherwise?

I have many inspirations in my life, my father and mother being the biggest. My biggest influences would have to be Bobby Sands and 2 former teachers of mine; one from Coláiste Feirste, the other from La Salle. Their attitudes towards life and their selflessness inspire me daily.

What would you say to those who remain unaware of the benefits of a bilingual education for their children?

I believe that through bilingualism people have a much wider worldview; you can look at academic attainment also, that is the biggest aspect of education as we know it. However, I believe that bilingualism enhances your child's learning and it enhances their world view. Above all else, it teaches them tolerance and understanding because they are different from their peers in that they speak two languages, English and Irish. Finally, they can empathize with those who are different by other standards. The children learn to understand and value difference and if Gaeloideachas is successful then the parents will soon learn to embrace and value it also.

Where do you see the Irish language in 20 years?

I am often heard saying to people that we need butchers, chippys, shops, cafes and so on in Irish. To truly revive a language, every aspect of modern life has to be conducted through that language. My hopes are that Irish is brought into every aspect of society where its wanted, that its protected legally through an Irish Language Act and other legislative protection. I hope that my child will have his pick of schools, films, books, friends through Irish. I hope that our attempt to revive a way of life long since oppressed and forgotten is successful and that we truly build a society with tolerance at its heart. I believe all this is achievable through Irish.

Míle buíochas as ucht do chuid ama agus do chuid smaointe a roinnt linn / Thank you for giving of your time and sharing your thoughts with us all, a Chónaill.

Naíscoileanna receive funding from the Pathway Fund

The Pathway Fund was introduced from 1 April 2016 and focuses on the provision of Early Years education and learning services for children aged 0-4 years.

The Fund aims to improve the development of children who are at risk of not reaching their full potential within the school system. Through the provision of funding, it also aims to enhance the Early Years sector and make it more sustainable.

Eligibility and Assessment Criteria

In order to be deemed eligible for assessment for funding, applicants will be required to demonstrate that they are not in receipt of any alternative funding or income to provide the service outlined in the application. Only applicants deemed eligible will be assessed.

Settings will be scored on how and to what extent they meet each of the following 7 criteria:

1. Providing quality education and learning services in areas of social disadvantage to address both educational and social disadvantage;
2. Ensuring children with additional needs receive appropriate early years support;
3. Provision of services/support to children at risk of harm;
4. Addressing access to/improvement of infrastructure of services in rural areas and other areas where there is little or no provision;
5. Improving access for children with additional needs;
6. Improving the integration and building of community relations from an early age;
7. Delivering community based services using a social economy model.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta will be facilitating a series of workshops on the Pathway Fund in early 2019 in anticipation of the new stream of funding reopening in March 2019.

(Successful applicants below)

An Droichead

Gaelchúram Uachtar Chluanaí

Naí-Ionad Ard Eoin

Naíscoil Bheanna Boirche

Naiscoil Dhún Padraig

Cairde Gaelscoil na Móna

Ionad Uíbh Eachach

Naionra an tSleibhe Dhuibh

Scoil na Faiseoige

For further information on the Pathway Fund please contact:
cstiobhard@comhairle.org

Irish-medium Education Bursary Scheme



Pictured above are some of the beneficiaries of the Bursary scheme

The rapid growth of the Irish-medium sector has created challenges in providing a high standard of linguistic aptitude required by staff of several IM schools, many of which have been established over the last 10-20 years. As the majority of staff members are not native Irish speakers, professional development in language skills has been identified as an important element in ensuring a high standard of proficiency in both Irish and English. The IME Bursary Scheme has been set up in an attempt to address this.

A comprehensive evaluation of the IME Bursary Scheme 2010-2017 has been undertaken recently. The feedback confirmed remarkable progress in the

standards of Irish for staff partaking in a range of courses. A very positive additional advantage has allowed for some course participants to find a career path via the part-time training, an option that would not have been feasible for many because of financial reasons. The Bursary Scheme has enabled staff and aspiring trainees to become trained teachers. An example of a staff member who has followed this path is Geraldine Strain:

"I ndiaidh Dioplóma sa Ghaeilge a rinne mé le cuidiú sparánachta, chuaigh mé go Coláiste Naomh Muire agus rinne mé an TICO (2016 -2017). Tá mé ag obair mar mhúinteoir anois i nGaelscoil Uí Néill." ("After doing a

diploma in Irish, which I completed with the help of a bursary, I went to St. Mary's and I did a PGCE (2016-2017). I am now working as a teacher at Gaelscoil Uí Néill.")

Others have been inspired to participate in further studies, degrees and Masters courses as well as other informal Gaeltacht courses which they have taken part in at their own expense and in their own time.

Overall the Scheme is deemed to have been a great success in improving standards in the Irish-medium sector.

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Pobal Research of Irish-medium Past Pupils Employment



Janet Muller(above) presenting the findings.

Recently, POBAL, the independent advocacy organisation for the Irish language, held the launch in Coláiste Feirste, Belfast of its research report, ***Further and Higher Education, Training and Employment Experience of past pupils of Irish-medium education in Belfast - 1970s to the present (Follow the link below to access a pdf of the report).***

POBAL carried out the project because there is a lack of baseline data regarding the education, training, and employment of former pupils of Irish-medium schools in Belfast (and elsewhere), over the last 45 years. This research, carried out with funding from

Belfast City Council under its Capacity Building programme, provides valuable information for educationalists, government bodies, Irish language groups, training providers and others.

The research shows that Irish-medium Education prepares pupils for success in the Irish language sector, the English language sector, at home and further afield. A sense of ability and confidence emerges from the responses, but there is awareness of marginalisation from the mainstream. Respondents are concerned at the lack of legislation for Irish and the low level of Irish language services and visibility in their localities.

CnaG Hosts International Conference 2018



Participants in one of the workshops during the conference

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta's (CnaG) annual conference took place over two days this year from the 15th to the 16th March in St Mary's University College, Belfast and in Coláiste Feirste, in partnership with CAER, The Education Society for European

Regions. CAER organise an annual conference to give experts in immersion & bilingual education a chance to present their research and this year they worked alongside St Mary's University College, Belfast & *Gaeiloideachas*, the organisation that

supports Irish-medium education in the Republic, in co-operation with CnaG to deliver the largest conference of its type anywhere in Ireland. Around 170 delegates attended the event this year, mainly from local Irish-medium schools but delegates were also present from Irish language and cultural groups across Ireland and other minority language communities in Europe. Among those presenting at the Conference were international experts from the Basque region and Belgium, who discussed their most recent research on bilingualism, immersion education and multilingualism, and who gave an insight into best practice in immersion education settings. Delegates had the opportunity to network with their peers locally and nationally, and to learn of the newest and most innovative practice in immersion methodologies.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta is grateful to CAER and St Mary's University College, Belfast for their collaboration in making this year's conference a resounding success.

Fóram na bPríomhoidí, Bealtaine 2018

The Principals' Forum (Fóram na bPríomhoidí) gives Gaelscoil/Gaelcholáiste Principals an opportunity to meet to discuss and decide on strategies and review the "big picture" issues impacting on the IM sector.

The May 2018 meeting of Fóram na bPríomhoidí was no exception, covering many important issues facing the sector and learning of new research published by Pobal, as well as a presentation by Tim Chapman (Ulster University), pictured below.

Guest speaker, Janet Muller from Pobal, gave a comprehensive account of the results of Pobal research entitled: *Experience of Past Pupils*

IME 1970-Present. The research describes very impressive, positive employment opportunities and other outcomes for past students of Irish-medium Education. The second guest speaker, Tim Chapman from Ulster University gave insight to philosophy behind the approach to **Restorative Practices in Education.**

The approach to dealing with problem behaviour at school was received very positively by the Fóram, with several Principals stating that a similar approach with the same philosophy has already been adopted in Gaelscoileanna, which are strongly community based with a child-centred solution focused philosophy. The Fóram will meet again in the autumn.



Some of the principals in attendance.



Tim Chapman addressing the principals..

Public meeting held to discuss the setting-up of an Irish language pre-school in Toome



The committee of Naíscoil na Fíobha (the Irish-medium preschool) held a public meeting on 30th April 2018 to inform the community about its plans to establish a Gaelscoil in Toome. Those who attended the meeting were informed that Irish-medium Primary provision would be available for parents wishing to avail of it for their children.

Antaine Ó Muireagáin (Advisory Officer, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta) made a presentation on the advantages of a bilingual education and provided clarification on some points of information raised. Likewise, Déaglán Ó Doibhlín (Irish Language Officer, Mid Ulster District Council) spoke about the demand, "There is no Irish-medium primary provision in Toome and having

it on our doorstep would be of immense benefit to the parents and children in the naíscoil and also, to this community."

The chairperson of the Naíscoil committee, John Mulhern (pictured left speaking to parents) addressed questions and concerns from parents and others in the audience.

They were updated on the current position and also, informed of ongoing work to secure a potential site for the Gaelscoil at Cargin GAA grounds in the town. Those involved in the development of Irish-medium provision within Toome and neighbouring areas are confident that their goal will be realised in September 2019.

Learning Community /Comhphobal Foghlama

A regional Learning Community was established recently to serve the Irish-medium sector in the north. The focus of the Learning Community (Comhphobal Foghlama) is school improvement and is made up of four regional groups and a Leaders' Group, who set the strategic direction of the Learning Community.

A chairperson of the Leaders' Group has recently been selected and they

are currently working on an action plan which will assist with dissemination of good practice throughout the Irish-medium sector, particularly in the areas of literacy, numeracy, ICT and SEN. The Learning Community is currently being facilitated by Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and is supported by the Education Authority.



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