An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

An Overview of Provision for Irish-Medium Education outside of the Gaeltacht

Current Provision and Future Projections

October 2022

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Abbreviations

COGG	An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DTCAGSM	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ELC	Early learning and care
ETB	Education and training board
IME	Irish-medium education
ITE	Initial teacher education
JCSP	Junior Certificate School Programme
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCS	National Childcare Scheme
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NSEG	New Schools Establishment Group
OPSS	Online Patronage Process System
P-POD	Post-primary online database
SET	Special education teacher
SNA	Special needs assistant
WTE	Whole-time equivalent

Executive Summary

Objective of the report

It is intended that this report will provide data and factual information which will be of assistance in informing a public consultation process as part of the development of a new policy on Irish-medium education outside of Gaeltacht areas. This report presents data available to the Department of Education on current provision for Irish-medium education outside of Gaeltacht areas. It also outlines the processes and the factors that are taken into account in determining future Irish-medium education provision.

Key findings and data by sector

Early learning and care

The indicative data available suggests that there are approximately 253 Irish-medium early learning and care (ELC) settings in and outside of the Gaeltacht that have self-identified as operating through the medium of Irish, albeit at varying levels. As data on the language used in ELC settings is not systematically gathered, further work is currently being undertaken to obtain more accurate information on this sector.

Primary schools

The following key data is presented in relation to Irish-medium provision outside of the Gaeltacht at primary level:

- 37,650 pupils were enrolled in Irish-medium primary schools (Gaelscoileanna) in the 2020-21 school year, representing 7% of all enrolments outside of the Gaeltacht at primary level.
- In 2021-22, there were 152 Gaelscoileanna outside of the Gaeltacht, with every county having at least one Gaelscoil.
- Furthermore, there were 2,202 teachers (whole-time equivalents) teaching in Gaelscoileanna in that academic year.
- There are 28 Gaelscoileanna with DEIS status. This represents 18% of all Gaelscoileanna.
- While the majority of Gaelscoileanna have a Catholic ethos, 23% of Gaelscoileanna are inter-denominational or multi-denominational.

Post-primary schools

The following key data is presented in relation to Irish-medium provision outside of the Gaeltacht at post-primary level:

- 10,283 students were enrolled in Irish-medium post-primary schools (Gaelcholáistí) in the 2020-21 school year, representing 2.8% of all enrolments outside of the Gaeltacht at post-primary level.
- In 2021-22, there were 29 Gaelcholáistí outside of the Gaeltacht. There are 7 counties with no Irish-medium post-primary school provision.
- There were 798 teachers (whole-time equivalents) teaching in Gaelcholáistí in that academic year.
- There were 4,723 pupils in sixth class in Gaelscoileanna in June 2020. Of these, 1,688 transitioned to a Gaelcholáiste, representing a transition rate of 36%.

- Five Gaelcholáistí have DEIS status. This represents 17% of all Gaelcholáistí.
- 69% of Gaelcholáistí are either multi-denominational or inter-denominational, with 31% of Gaelcholáistí having a Catholic ethos.

Aonaid and sruthanna

Aonaid (Irish-medium units) and sruthanna (Irish-medium streams) operate in a number of English-medium post-primary schools across the country. Research is currently underway to analyse the existing provision in aonaid and sruthanna, which will provide valuable information to inform the development of a new policy on Irish-medium education.

Planning for future provision

Given the expected change in demographics over the coming years, a reduction in the establishment of new schools is expected. It will be important, therefore, that opportunities for increased Irish-medium provision within the existing schools' infrastructure are maximised. This will include making best use of existing school accommodation provision and getting the most out of capital investment in our schools. Possible approaches may include facilitating the expansion of existing Irish-medium schools, providing joint campuses or supporting the transition of English-medium schools to Irish-medium.

1. Introduction

The provision of high-quality Irish-medium immersion education is a key action of the Government's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 to support the development of linguistic abilities in our young people and to increase the number of daily speakers of Irish. The strategy includes commitments to provide continued support for Irish-medium education (IME) at all levels from early learning and care (ELC) settings through primary to post-primary, including Irish-medium language units/streams (aonaid/sruthanna) in English-medium post-primary schools.

In support of this strategy, the Department of Education is now developing a new policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht. This policy will be informed by a review of relevant national and international research and by an extensive public consultation process. It is intended that the data in this report will provide necessary background information to support the drafting of submissions and responses to the consultation process on the new policy.

The data in this report[1] focuses mainly on the provision of Irish-medium education outside of Gaeltacht areas[2]. The report analyses the data in order to map the current configuration of Irish-medium education provision and projected future demand for IME outside of Gaeltacht areas. This provides necessary background information across sectors to inform the development of a new policy on Irish-medium education outside of Gaeltacht areas.

Under the Education Act 1998, the Department of Education has a responsibility to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish-medium education.

Irish-medium education is provided in Irish-speaking ELC settings and in schools. It is acknowledged that Irish-medium education is at an early stage of development in the ELC sector (when compared to the primary and post-primary sectors) and that practice in the use and promotion of Irish varies among settings. The Department of Education is committed to continue working with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to support and improve the educational outcomes for children accessing Irish-medium education in ELC settings.

Aonaid and sruthanna are some of the existing approaches used towards providing post-primary education through the medium of Irish where demand cannot be met through the provision of a Gaelcholáiste. The extent to which educational provision is through the medium of Irish in aonaid/sruthanna varies among schools and it may be the case that the students are not immersed in Irish for all subjects or throughout the school day.

[1] The data in this report, other than that in the sections relating to special educational needs, reflects enrolments in mainstream classrooms.

[2] Gaeltacht schools are excluded from the data on Irish-medium schools in this report as the focus is on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht. A similar report was published on educational provision within the Gaeltacht as part of the development of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education in 2015. As Gaeltacht schools are predominantly in rural areas, the data on Irish-medium schools outside of the Gaeltacht may reflect a more urban context.

The following terminology will be used throughout for the purposes of this report:

Naíonra	ELC setting providing services through the medium of Irish.[3]
Gaelscoil	Irish-medium primary school outside of the Gaeltacht.[4]
Gaelcholáiste	Irish-medium post-primary school outside of the Gaeltacht.[5]
Aonad	An Irish-medium unit, attached to a host school which operates through the medium of English, in which some or all subjects are taught through the medium of Irish.
Sruth	An Irish-medium stream, within a host school which operates through the medium of English, in which a small number of subjects are delivered through the medium of Irish.

[3] It is acknowledged that the amount of Irish spoken in naíonraí can vary. Providers generally self-identify as naíonraí.

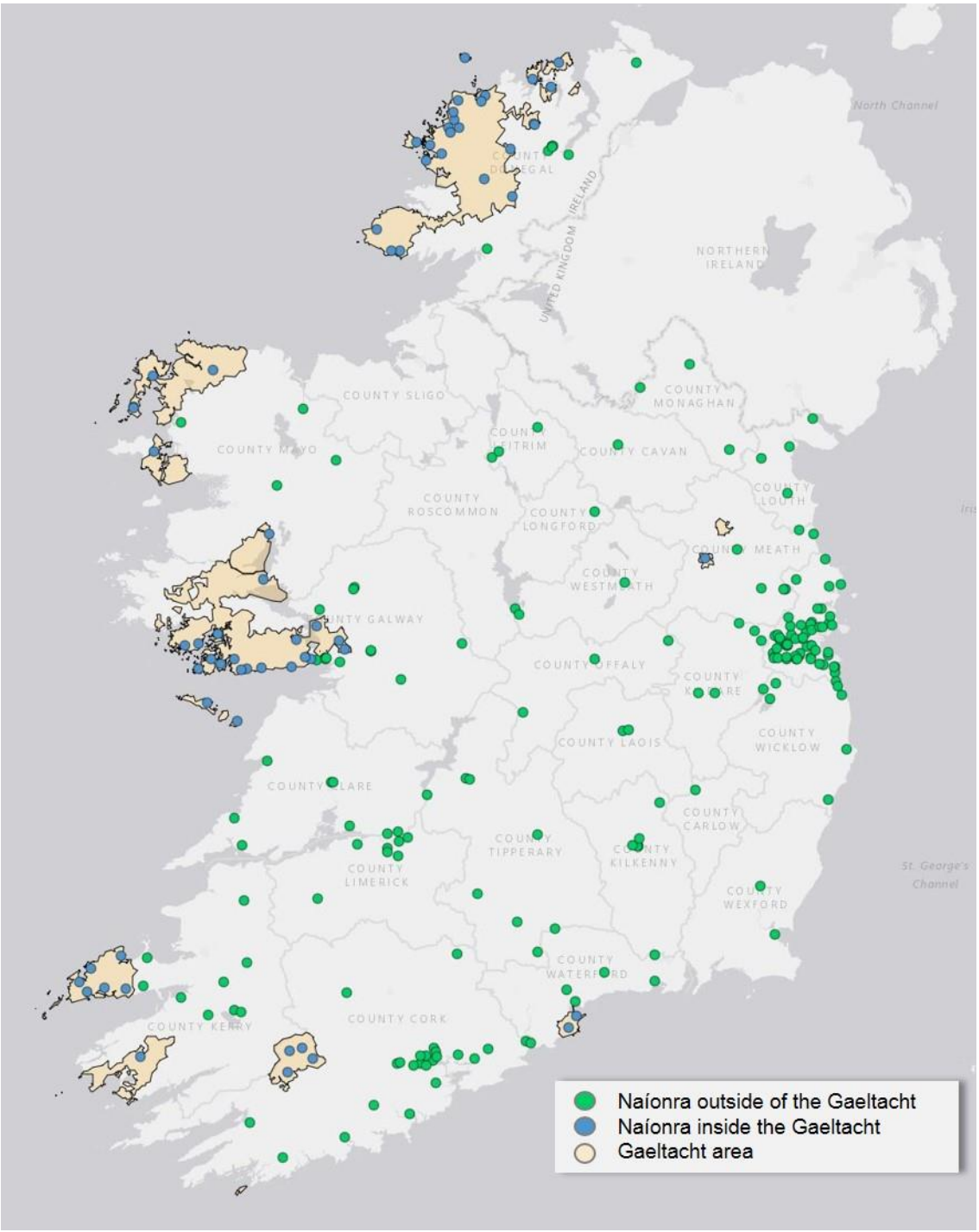
[4] The term 'Gaelscoil' will be used in this report to refer to all Irish-medium primary schools outside of the Gaeltacht. It should be kept in mind however that some Irish-medium primary schools outside of the Gaeltacht may not refer to themselves as a Gaelscoil, but for ease of readability the term Gaelscoileanna will be used as an umbrella term throughout. A small number of Gaelscoileanna do exist within the Gaeltacht language planning areas, but data from these schools is excluded from the composite data on Gaelscoileanna.

[5] The term 'Gaelcholáiste' will be used in this report to refer to all Irish-medium post-primary schools outside of the Gaeltacht. It should be kept in mind however that some Irish-medium post-primary schools outside of the Gaeltacht may not refer to themselves as a Gaelcholáiste, but for ease of readability the term 'Gaelcholáiste' will be used as an umbrella term throughout. A small number of Gaelcholáistí do exist within the Gaeltacht language planning areas, but data from these schools is excluded from the composite data on Gaelcholáistí.

2. Mapping Irish-medium early learning and care provision

Map 1 provides indicative information on Irish-medium ELC settings in Ireland. As data on the language used in ELC settings is not systematically gathered, further work is currently being undertaken to obtain more accurate information on this sector. The information in the map is based on self-reported data and should not be relied on to identify specific ELC settings. However, broadly speaking, the indication is that Irish-medium ELC provision outside of the Gaeltacht is strongly centred on urban areas.

Map 1: Indicative map showing location of Irish-medium ELC settings



3. Mapping Irish-medium primary and post-primary school provision

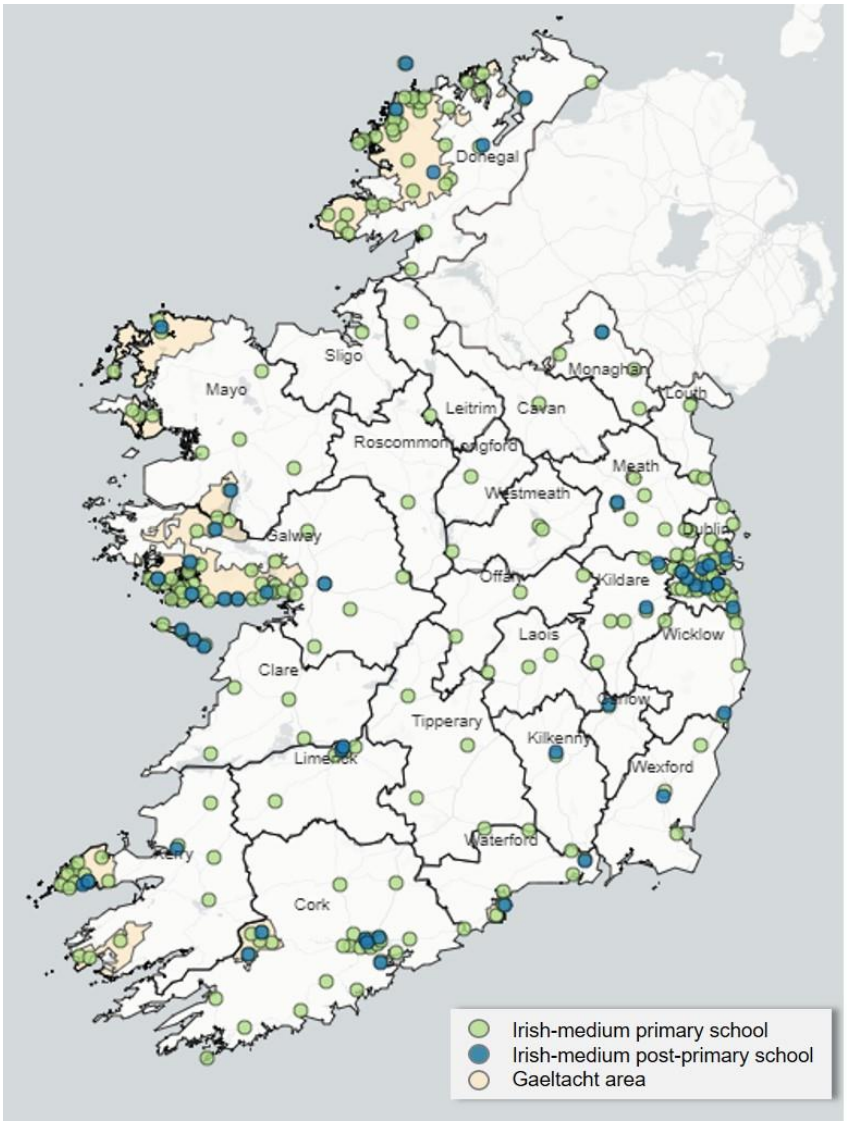
The following maps provide a visual representation of the locations of Irish-medium primary and post-primary schools.

Map 2 provides a national overview of supply. As can be seen, a significant proportion of Irish-medium primary schools (105 out of 254) are located within the Gaeltacht areas. Several counties have just one Gaelscoil, whereas there is a noticeable lack of Gaelscoileanna in the midlands.

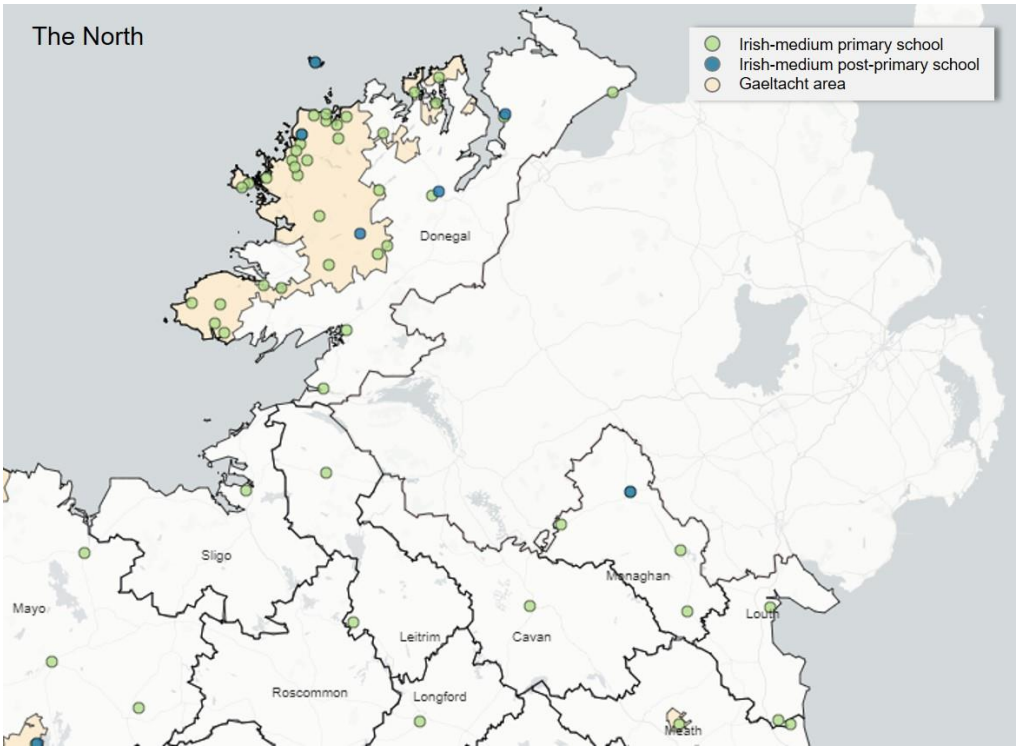
In the post-primary sector, half of the Irish-medium schools (29 out of 58) are located outside of Gaeltacht areas.

Maps 3-6 provide a more detailed view of the supply of Irish-medium education across the country.

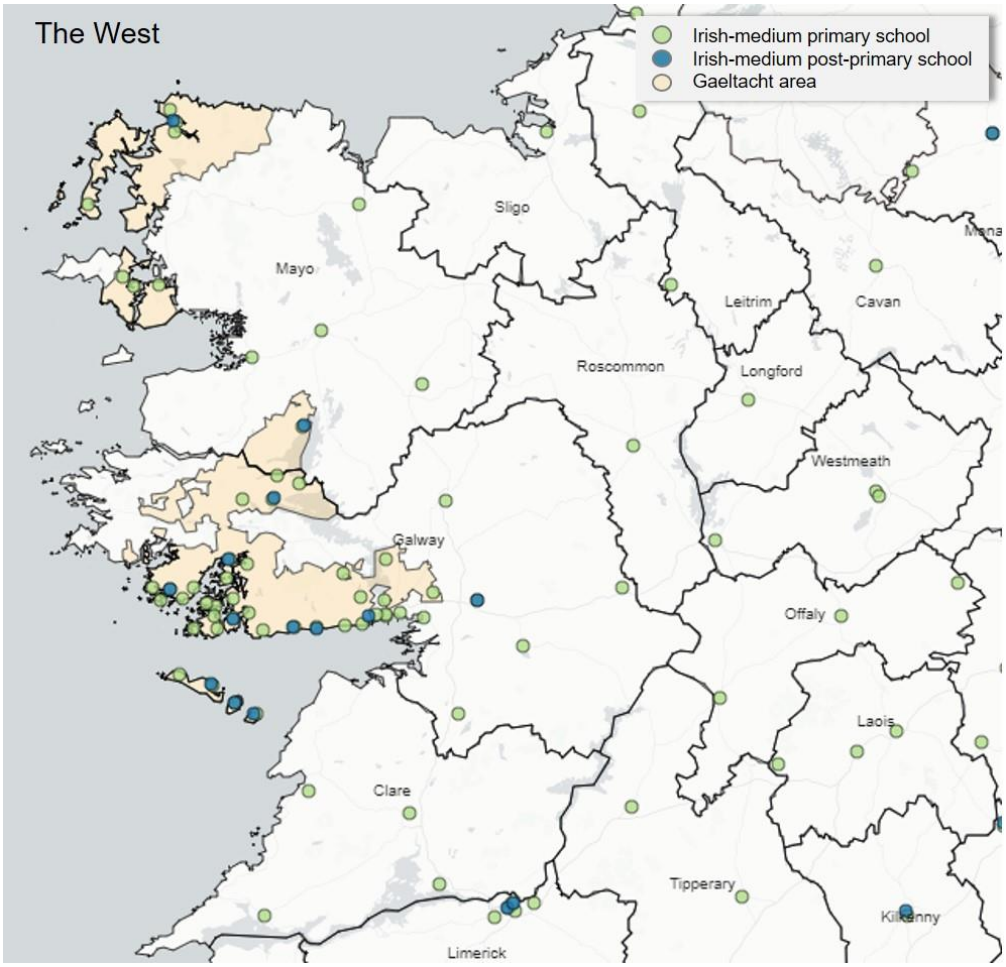
Map 2: Location of Irish-medium schools within and outside of the Gaeltacht, 2020



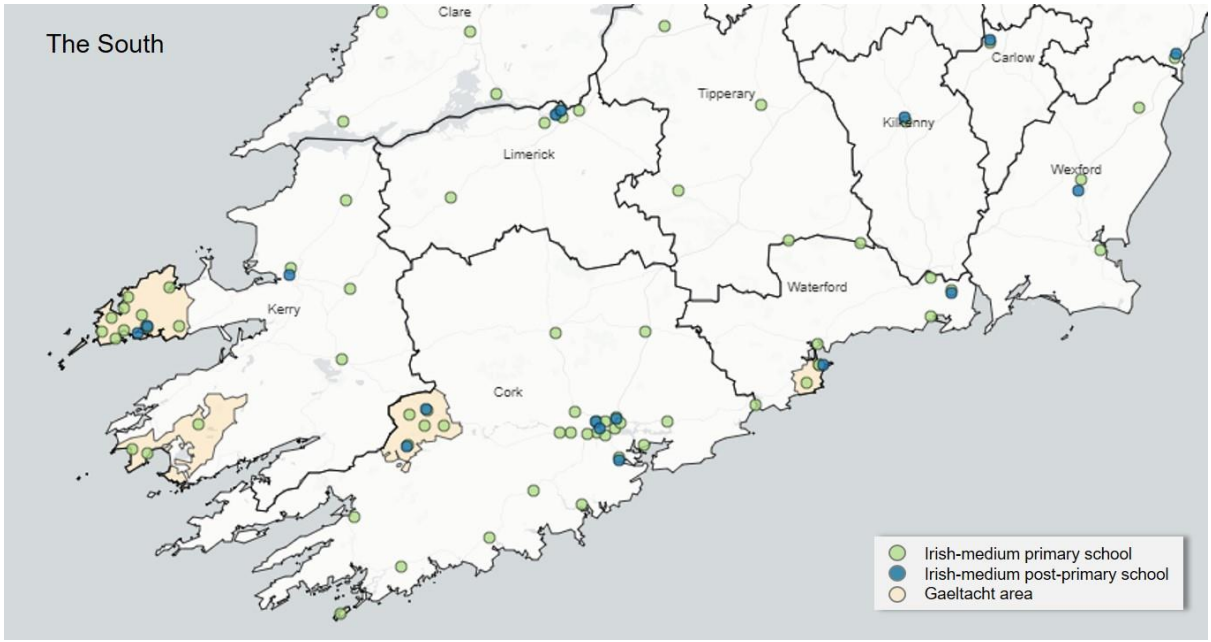
Map 3: Location of Irish-medium schools within and outside of the Gaeltacht, North, 2020



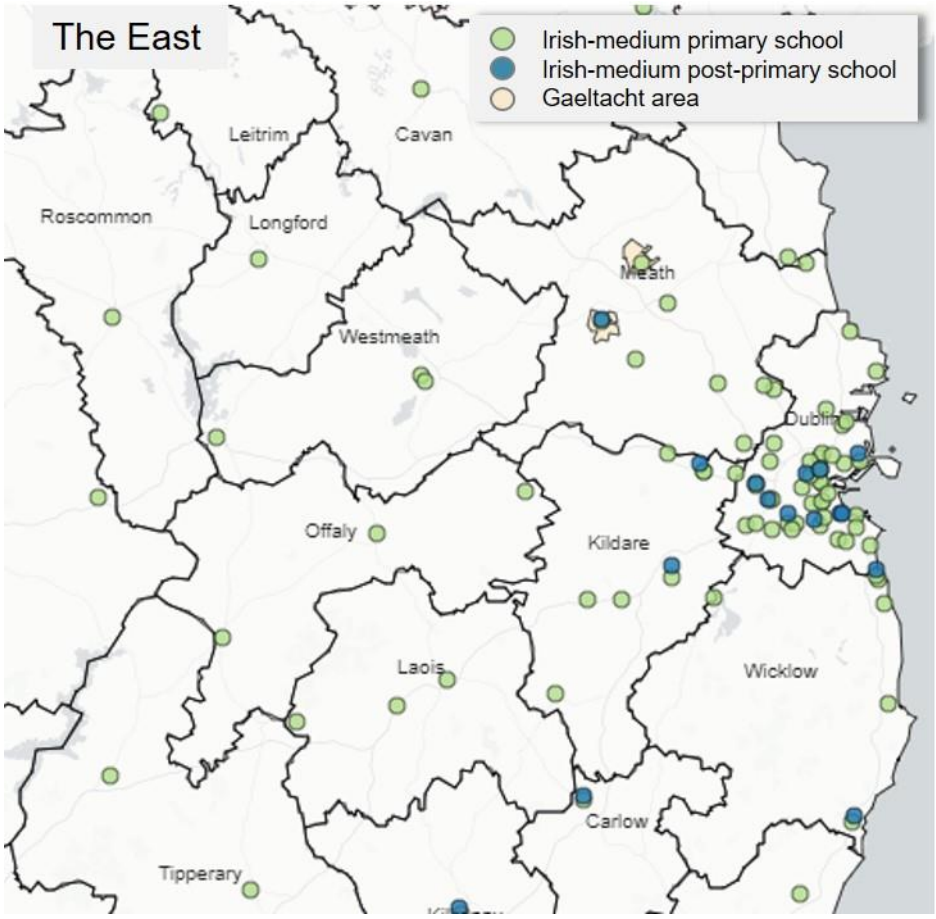
Map 4: Location of Irish-medium schools within and outside of the Gaeltacht, West, 2020



Map 5: Location of Irish-medium schools within and outside of the Gaeltacht, South, 2020



Map 6: Location of Irish-medium schools within and outside of the Gaeltacht, East, 2020



4. Early Learning and Care Settings – Naíonraí

4.1 Background

Nationally, naíonraí operate both inside and outside of designated Irish-speaking Gaeltacht communities. They aim both to develop the language skills of children who have Irish as a first language, and to promote the acquisition of Irish as a second language.

A naíonra which uses an "early-immersion" model of language development allows children to hear and engage with Irish in a very natural and engaging way. This is possible when the early years educator speaks in Irish only from the outset and uses gestures to promote communication in, engagement with, and understanding of Irish.

Irish-medium provision is funded on the same basis as English-medium provision. For the 3-5 age-group, the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme provides early learning and care on a universal, free basis, for 15 hours per week and 38 weeks per year. Outside this, early learning and care is subsidised through the National Childcare Scheme.

The ECCE programme entitles children to avail of up to two years of free care and education prior to enrolment in primary school.

4.2 Current provision

Data from annual surveys, issued by Gaeloideachas to the management of ELC settings, was made available to the Department. This self-declared data was provided by ELC settings to Gaeloideachas to raise awareness of the efforts of the settings to provide services through the medium of Irish.

To gain an insight into existing Irish-medium provision among ELC settings, the Evaluation Support and Research Unit of the Department of Education's Inspectorate analysed and cross-referenced the data received with the Pobal list of active ELC settings using Tusla identifiers and Eircodes.

The result of this analysis indicates that overall there are approximately 253 Irish-medium ELC settings in and outside of the Gaeltacht that have self-identified as operating through the medium of Irish, albeit at varying levels. Further analysis of the data is due to be undertaken to estimate the number of ELC settings outside of the Gaeltacht.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is currently leading an inter-agency working group to gather more up-to-date and accurate information on Irish-medium early learning and care provision.

4.3 Planning future provision

As ELC settings are private enterprises, there is no restriction on the establishment of naíonraí other than the need to be registered with Tusla and the requirement to comply with the Childcare (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Child Care Act 1991, as well as any other relevant legislation.

First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028, published by DCEDIY, is a whole-of-government approach to improving the lives of babies, young children and their families. This ten-year plan builds on the very significant developments in ELC (and school-age childcare) over recent years and seeks to increase

affordability, accessibility and quality. *First 5* sets out the Government's policy approach to strengthening provision of ELC over the years ahead through to 2028.

5. Primary schools – Gaelscoileanna

5.1 Current provision

As outlined in Table 1 below, 37,650 pupils were enrolled in Gaelscoileanna[6] in 2020, representing 7% of all enrolments of pupils at primary level outside of the Gaeltacht.

Table 1: Number of primary schools and enrolments outside of the Gaeltacht, 2020

School Type	Number of Schools	Number of Enrolments	Percentage of Schools	Percentage of Enrolments
Gaelscoil	149	37,650	5%	7%
English-medium school outside of the Gaeltacht	2,826	497,302	95%	93%
Total	2,975	534,952	100%	100%

Table 2, on the following page, presents these enrolments by county and shows that, while Dublin had the largest absolute number of pupils enrolled in Gaelscoileanna with 10,354 pupils, Monaghan had the highest percentage of pupils with 11.5%[7]. Cavan had the lowest rate of enrolment in Gaelscoileanna with just 102 pupils out of 9,690 representing 1.1% of all enrolments.

[6] This data is based on the information supplied by each school to the Department of Education. 'Gaelscoileanna' refers to schools outside of the Gaeltacht that have identified themselves as teaching 'all subjects through Irish to all pupils'.

[7] The percentage of enrolments in Gaelscoileanna in Monaghan has increased steadily over the past ten years, from 8.5% in 2011 to 11.3% in 2019 and 2020.

Monaghan Primary School Enrolments	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total Primary Enrolments	6,988	7,210	7,310	7,466	7,635	7,694	7,801	7,881	7,922	7,861
Total Gaelscoil Enrolments	594	646	699	757	794	829	850	875	899	887
% of Gaelscoil vs Total Enrolments	8.5%	9.0%	9.6%	10.1%	10.4%	10.8%	10.9%	11.1%	11.3%	11.3%

Table 2: Number of Gaelscoileanna and enrolments in Gaelscoileanna by county, 2020

County	Number of Gaelscoileanna	Enrolments in Gaelscoileanna	Total enrolments in all schools	Enrolments in Gaelscoileanna as % of total enrolments
Carlow	1	467	7,424	6.3%
Cavan	1	102	9,690	1.1%
Clare	4	641	12,988	4.9%
Cork	22	6,666	61,224	10.9%
Donegal	6	782	15,600	5.0%
Dublin	38	10,354	139,423	7.4%
Galway	9	2,558	24,825	10.3%
Kerry	4	880	14,741	6.0%
Kildare	8	2,565	29,128	8.8%
Kilkenny	1	451	10,997	4.1%
Laois	3	443	10,897	4.1%
Leitrim	2	208	3,699	5.6%
Limerick	6	1,994	22,270	9.0%
Longford	1	150	5,254	2.9%
Louth	2	407	16,898	2.4%
Mayo	4	709	13,284	5.3%
Meath	7	1,965	25,964	7.6%
Monaghan	4	887	7,743	11.5%
Offaly	3	348	9,350	3.7%
Roscommon	1	156	7,713	2.0%
Sligo	1	233	7,394	3.2%
Tipperary	5	860	17,963	4.8%
Waterford	4	974	13,737	7.1%
Westmeath	3	582	11,157	5.2%
Wexford	3	629	18,019	3.5%
Wicklow	6	1,639	17,570	9.3%
Total	**149**	**37,650**	**534,952**	**7.0%**

5.2 Class size

Table 3 displays enrolments in Gaelscoileanna in 2020 by class size, as compared to English-medium schools and schools in the Gaeltacht. Gaelscoileanna had the largest class sizes with almost one in four pupils (24%) in classes of 30 pupils or more, compared with just 13.8% in English-medium schools, and 10.9% in Gaeltacht primary schools.

Table 3: Class size in Gaelscoileanna, 2020

Class size	0-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35+	Total
	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils	Pupils
Gaelscoileanna	3,400	9,115	15,795	9,020	320	37,650
Gaeltacht primary schools	2,322	1,882	2,093	771	-	7,068
Other schools	77,127	145,740	209,789	64,831	3,288	500,775
Total number of pupils	82,849	156,737	227,677	74,622	3,608	545,493
	%	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**	**%**
Gaelscoileanna	9.0%	24.2%	42.0%	24.0%	0.8%	100%
Gaeltacht primary schools	32.9%	26.6%	29.6%	10.9%	0.0%	100%
Other schools	15.4%	29.1%	41.9%	12.9%	0.7%	100%

5.3 School size

As can be seen in Table 4, the average number of pupils enrolled in Gaelscoileanna is significantly larger than average enrolment in primary schools; an average of 253 pupils in Gaelscoileanna compared to an average of 178 in primary schools nationally. A higher proportion of Gaelscoileanna would also appear at the larger end of the scale (Table 5) with almost 33% of schools having in excess of 300 pupils, compared to just 19% of all primary schools. This may to some extent be attributed to the fact that Irish-medium schools are more typically found in urban rather than rural areas, particularly when Gaeltacht schools are not included.

Table 4: Average number of students in Gaelscoileanna compared to all primary schools, 2020

	Gaelscoileanna	All mainstream primary schools (incl. Gaelscoileanna)
Average number of students	253	178

Table 5: Size of Gaelscoileanna compared to all primary schools, 2020

School size (number of pupils)	Gaelscoileanna		All mainstream primary schools (incl. Gaelscoileanna)	
	number of schools	%	number of schools	%
400 and above	30	20.1%	340	11.4%
between 300 and 399	19	12.8%	229	7.7%
between 200 and 299	46	30.9%	506	17.0%
between 100 and 199	30	20.1%	735	24.7%
between 50 and 99	13	8.7%	644	21.6%
fewer than 50	11	7.4%	521	17.5%
Total	**149**	**100.0%**	**2,975**	**100.0%**

5.4 Staffing

In the school year 2021/22, there were 2,202 teachers (whole-time equivalents – WTEs) teaching in Gaelscoileanna.

Table 6: Posts in Gaelscoileanna, 2021

Posts in Gaelscoileanna	Number of posts
Classroom posts (including teaching principals)	1,521
Support posts	681
Total posts in Gaelscoileanna	2,202

Teacher allocations for Gaelscoileanna are the same as those for all mainstream primary schools.

5.5 DEIS status

Table 7 displays the DEIS status of Gaelscoileanna in September 2022. Of the 28 Gaelscoileanna with DEIS status, the vast majority are in the urban categories (14 in Urban Band 1 and 12 in Urban Band 2), with only two schools in the Rural DEIS band.

Table 7: Gaelscoileanna with DEIS Status, September 2022

DEIS Status	Gaelscoileanna	All Primary Schools (incl. Gaelscoileanna)
Number of schools with DEIS status	28	964
% of schools with DEIS status	18%	30%
Enrolments in schools with DEIS status[8]	4,400	150,794

[8] Enrolment figures are based on the 2021-22 school year for schools with DEIS status in the 2022-23 school year.

% of enrolments in schools with DEIS status	11.8%	27.2%

Table 8: Gaelscoileanna with DEIS status by county, September 2022

County	No. of Gaelscoileanna with DEIS status
Dublin	8
Cork	3
Clare	2
Kerry	2
Tipperary	2
Cavan	1
Donegal	1
Galway	1
Kildare	1
Limerick	1
Longford	1
Louth	1
Mayo	1
Monaghan	1
Offaly	1
Westmeath	1

5.6 Ethos and patronage

The ethos of Gaelscoileanna, compared with all schools in the country, is shown in Table 9. As can be seen, the majority of schools have a Catholic ethos, as is the case generally in primary schools across the country; however, a much more substantial percentage of Gaelscoileanna (23% compared to 5% of all schools) are inter-denominational or multi-denominational. All inter-denominational schools in Ireland are Gaelscoileanna, and all but one of these have An Foras Pátrúnachta as their patron.

Table 9: Ethos of Gaelscoileanna, 2021

	Gaelscoileanna		All primary schools (incl. Gaelscoileanna)	
Catholic	114	75.0%	2,759	88.7%
Other Single Religious Ethos	0	0.0%	191	6.1%
Inter-denominational	16	10.5%	16	0.5%
Multi-denominational	19	12.5%	139	4.5%
Other/Unknown	3	2.0%	6	0.2%
Total	**152**	**100.0%**	**3,111**	**100.0%**

The patronage of Gaelscoileanna is displayed in Table 10.

Table 10: Patronage of Gaelscoileanna, 2021

Patron	Number of schools	% of schools
Catholic patron	75	49.3%
An Foras Pátrúnachta[9]	71	46.7%
Minister for Education	3	2.0%
Joint Catholic and Church of Ireland patrons	1	0.7%
Educate Together	1	0.7%
Gaelachas Teo	1	0.7%
Total	**152**	**100.0%**

5.7 Catering for pupils with special educational needs

Table 11 outlines the special education teacher (SET) hours and special needs assistant (SNA) posts in Gaelscoileanna in comparison to all primary schools. As can be seen, the proportion of SET hours and SNAs allocated to mainstream classes in Gaelscoileanna is roughly similar to all primary schools.

Table 11: Mainstream SET hours and SNAs in Gaelscoileanna, 2021 (data from NCSE)

	Gaelscoileanna		All primary schools (incl. Gaelscoileanna)	
	Total	Average per school	Total	Average per school
Mainstream SET hours	12,128.72	79.79	232,709.40	74.75
Mainstream SNA	380.58	2.50	8,496.27	2.73

A difference in provision for pupils with special educational needs emerges when we look at special classes. At primary level, 18 Gaelscoileanna have special classes. This represents 11.8% of all Gaelscoileanna. By comparison, across all primary schools, 25.9% (805 schools) have special classes. All special classes in Gaelscoileanna are for pupils with autism or are early intervention classes (EI).

As can be seen below in Table 12, the allocation of special class teaching and SNA posts in Gaelscoileanna (per school) is approximately one-third that of primary schools nationally.

Table 12: Special class teaching posts and SNAs in Gaelscoileanna, 2021 (data from NCSE)

	Gaelscoileanna		All primary schools (incl. Gaelscoileanna)	
	Total	Average per school	Total	Average per school
Special class teaching posts	27.00	0.18	1,540.00	0.49
Special class SNAs	50.28	0.33	2,915.21	0.94

[9] Schools under An Foras Pátrúnachta can have an inter-denominational, multi-denominational or Catholic ethos.

5.8 Nationality

As can be seen from the data in Table 13, pupils with a nationality other than Irish are significantly more likely to attend English-medium schools, with just 1% of Gaelscoil pupils having a nationality other than Irish.

Table 13: Nationality of pupils in Gaelscoileanna, 2020

	Gaelscoileanna		All primary schools (incl. Gaelscoileanna)	
Nationality Description	**Enrolment**	**%**	**Enrolment**	**%**
Ireland (including Dual Nationals)	37,290	99.0%	488,680	89.6%
Other Nationalities	372	1.0%	56,813	10.4%
Total	**37,662**	**100.0%**	**545,493**	**100.0%**

6. Post-primary schools – Gaelcholáistí, aonaid/sruthanna

6.1 Current provision

Table 14 presents data on Gaelcholáistí and enrolments in 2020.

There were 700 post-primary schools in total outside of the Gaeltacht in 2020, of which 29 were classified as Gaelcholáistí. Enrolments in these schools account for 2.8% of all post-primary enrolments outside of the Gaeltacht.

The overall enrolments in post-primary English-medium schools with aonaid are included in Table 14, and reflect overall total enrolments in these schools with a mix of English-medium education and Irish-medium education provision. Reliable data is not available centrally on the actual numbers of students within English-medium post-primary schools who attend the aonaid themselves.

Table 14: Number of post-primary schools and enrolments outside of the Gaeltacht, 2020

School Type	Number of Schools	Number of Enrolments	Percentage of Schools	Percentage of Enrolments
Gaelcholáiste	29	10,283	4.1%	2.8%
English-medium school with aonad[10]	22	13,140	3.1%	3.5%
English-medium school without aonad	649	348,916	92.7%	93.7%
Total	**700**	**372,339**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 15 shows enrolments by county in Gaelcholáistí in 2020. A total of 10,283 students were enrolled in Gaelcholáistí, representing 2.8% of all enrolments, which is lower than in the primary sector. Dublin had the highest number of students at 4,387, while Monaghan had the highest rate of enrolment with 6.8%.

As can be seen in Table 15, 13 counties have no Gaelcholáiste enrolments, and seven of those counties also have no aonad.

[10] Information on aonaid in this table is taken from the Department of Education's post-primary online database (P-POD) system in which schools self-report whether they are providing Irish-medium education in an aonaid. The number of schools with aonaid is likely to be lower than the figure in this table, as there can be delays in updating this information. See the section on aonaid below for further information.

Table 15: Enrolments in Gaelcholáistí and schools with aonaid outside of the Gaeltacht by county, 2020

County	Number of Gaelcholáistí	Number of schools with aonaid	Enrolments in Gaelcholáistí	Enrolments in schools with aonaid	Enrolments in English-medium schools	Total Enrolments	Enrolments in Gaelcholáistí as % of total
Carlow	1		361	0	5,715	6,076	5.9%
Cavan			0	0	5,919	5,919	0.0%
Clare		1	0	487	8,173	8,660	0.0%
Cork	4	9	1,558	6,533	35,185	43,276	3.6%
Donegal	2		304	0	11,244	11,548	2.6%
Dublin	10		4,387	0	89,631	94,018	4.7%
Galway	1	1	252	621	16,931	17,804	1.4%
Kerry	1	1	350	523	9,612	10,485	3.3%
Kildare	2		398	0	19,780	20,178	2.0%
Kilkenny	1	1	207	254	7,608	8,069	2.6%
Laois		1	0	300	5,962	6,262	0.0%
Leitrim			0	0	2,700	2,700	0.0%
Limerick	2	1	1,079	405	14,898	16,382	6.6%
Longford			0	0	4,052	4,052	0.0%
Louth		2	0	1,237	11,980	13,217	0.0%
Mayo			0	0	9,498	9,498	0.0%
Meath			0	0	15,615	15,615	0.0%
Monaghan	1		384	0	5,231	5,615	6.8%
Offaly			0	0	6,413	6,413	0.0%
Roscommon			0	0	4,069	4,069	0.0%
Sligo		1	0	520	4,689	5,209	0.0%
Tipperary		3	0	1,087	12,791	13,878	0.0%

Waterford	1		154	0	9,245	9,399	1.6%
Westmeath		1	0	1,173	7,161	8,334	0.0%
Wexford	1		245	0	12,990	13,235	1.9%
Wicklow	2		604	0	11,824	12,428	4.9%
Grand Total	**29**	**22**	**10,283**	**13,140**	**348,916**	**372,339**	**2.8%**

6.2 School size

Table 16 displays the size of Gaelcholáistí by student numbers. The vast majority of the schools are at the smaller end of the scale, with 45% in the smallest category (<300 students). No Gaelcholáiste had more than 800 students enrolled as of the 2020-21 school year.

Table 16: Size of Gaelcholáistí, 2020

	Gaelcholáistí		All post-primary schools (incl. Gaelcholáistí)	
School size (student numbers)	**Number of schools**	**Percentage of schools**	**Number of schools**	**Percentage of schools**
Under 300	13	44.8%	179	24.6%
300-599	13	44.8%	283	38.8%
600-799	3	10.3%	150	20.6%
800 and over	0	0.0%	117	16.0%
Total	**29**	**100.0%**	**729**	**100.0%**

6.3 Staffing

Teacher allocations for Gaelcholáistí are the same as those for mainstream English-medium post-primary schools with the exception that they receive one additional teaching post. Schools with an aonad are entitled to an additional allocation of 1.18 whole-time equivalents (WTEs) – 1 WTE post (22 hours per week) for the aonad and 0.18 WTE post (4 hours per week) in respect of the Múinteoir i bhFeighil (Teacher in Charge). The allocation is given each year on receipt of confirmation from the schools that they are still running the aonad.

As can be seen in Table 17, there are 798 teachers teaching in Gaelcholáistí (not including schools with aonaid). As with enrolments, the highest number of teachers are in Dublin and Cork, with these counties combined having 58% of the allocation.

Table 17: Number of teachers (WTE) in Gaelcholáistí, 2021

County	Allocation (WTE)
Carlow	24.95
Cork	123.10
Donegal	25.56
Dublin	340.80
Galway	20.17
Kerry	26.10
Kildare	34.51
Kilkenny	16.15
Limerick	78.36
Monaghan	27.19
Waterford	14.94
Wexford	21.22
Wicklow	45.27
Total	**798.32**

The average teacher allocation for Gaelcholáistí is 27.52 (WTE) compared to 43.12 in mainstream schools on average.

6.4 Aonaid

Research, commissioned by An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), is currently underway to analyse the quality of existing provision in aonaid and sruthanna, both within and outside of the Gaeltacht. This research will provide valuable information to inform the development of a new policy on Irish-medium education provision.

6.5 Satellite model pilot

In 2021, the Minister for Education approved a proposal for a satellite model of Irish-medium education provision to be piloted in Dundalk. This model involves the provision of an additional campus under the management of an existing Gaelcholáiste in Balbriggan, Coláiste Ghlór na Mara, rather than the establishment of a new school. The satellite will operate under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta.

Piloting the Irish-medium satellite model provides an opportunity to explore a model which could have strategic benefits and applicability elsewhere in the country where the establishment of a stand-alone Gaelcholáiste is not currently feasible but where there may be a level of unmet demand for Irish-medium post-primary education.

This pilot offers parents in Dundalk a new choice for Irish-medium provision, in addition to existing provision provided by schools in the area. The learnings from the pilot may assist in the potential development of an enduring policy/approach for the application of this model elsewhere, subject to successful review. An Foras Pátrúnachta is in the process of making the necessary arrangements for the Dundalk-based satellite/campus to be established in September 2023.

6.6 Subject offerings

Table 18 below identifies the subjects offered in Gaelcholáistí for senior cycle in the 2021/2022 school year. The number and proportion of schools offering each subject is shown, along with the number and proportion of all post-primary schools for comparison.

Table 18: Subjects offered for senior cycle in Gaelcholáistí, 2021

	Gaelcholáistí		All post-primary schools (incl. Gaelcholáistí)		Difference in %
Subject	Number of schools	% of schools	Number of schools	% of schools	
Irish	28	100%	683	100%	0%
English	28	100%	683	100%	0%
Mathematics	28	100%	683	100%	0%
Geography	28	100%	677	99%	+1%
Biology	28	100%	680	100%	0%
History	27	96%	644	94%	+2%
French	27	96%	653	96%	0%
Chemistry	27	96%	590	86%	+10%

Business	27	96%	665	97%	-1%
Music	27	96%	566	83%	+13%
Physics	25	89%	529	77%	+12%
Home Economics S&S	25	89%	554	81%	+8%
Religious Education (non-exam)	24	86%	542	79%	+7%
Physical Education	23	82%	551	81%	+1%
Career Guidance	22	79%	401	59%	+20%
Art (with Craftwork option)	21	75%	487	71%	+4%
German	17	61%	380	56%	+5%
Spanish	14	50%	314	46%	+4%
Construction Studies	14	50%	458	67%	-17%
Accounting	14	50%	500	73%	-23%
Design & Communication Graphics	14	50%	455	67%	-17%
Physical Education (LC Exam)	13	46%	277	41%	+5%
Economics	10	36%	303	44%	-8%
Applied Mathematics	9	32%	197	29%	+3%
Art (with Design option)	8	29%	231	34%	-5%
Social, Personal and Health Education	7	25%	141	21%	+4%
Engineering	6	21%	306	45%	-24%
Agricultural Science	5	18%	390	57%	-39%
Technology	4	14%	129	19%	-5%
Computer Science (LC Exam)	3	11%	66	10%	+1%
Computer Studies	3	11%	169	25%	-15%
Politics and Society	3	11%	141	21%	-11%

6.7 Leaving Certificate Applied and Vocational

28 of the 29 Gaelcholáistí outside of the Gaeltacht had students sitting the Leaving Certificate in 2020-21. Gaelcholáiste Mhaigh Nuad was only established in 2020 and therefore had no senior cycle students at the time.

Three Gaelcholáistí offered the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme in 2020 (Gaelcholáiste Mhuire in Cork, Meánscoil Gharman in Wexford and Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach in Carlow). No Gaelcholáistí offered the Leaving Certificate Applied programme that year (although it was offered in some Irish-medium schools within the Gaeltacht).

Table 19: Leaving Certificate programmes offered by Gaelcholáistí, 2020

Programme	Number of schools offering
Leaving Certificate	28
Leaving Certificate Applied	0
Leaving Certificate Vocational	3

6.8 Transition year

Table 20 shows participation in Transition Year in Gaelcholáistí compared to English-medium schools over the past ten years. While participation rates are rising across all schools, rates within Gaelcholáistí are particularly high with 96% of both male and female students participating.

Table 20: Participation in Transition Year by school type and gender, 2011 - 2020

Year	Gaelcholáistí Female	Gaelcholáistí Male	English-medium Female	English-medium Male
2011	84.1%	94.1%	56.6%	49.8%
2012	86.8%	93.0%	58.1%	51.9%
2013	99.1%	94.0%	60.6%	53.4%
2014	93.6%	93.8%	64.3%	57.0%
2015	95.9%	95.1%	67.3%	62.3%
2016	93.7%	95.3%	68.6%	63.2%
2017	94.6%	96.0%	70.7%	65.1%
2018	93.3%	95.2%	73.6%	67.1%
2019	96.5%	97.5%	72.5%	67.1%
2020	96.0%	95.9%	76.3%	70.3%

6.9 Junior Certificate School Programme

Table 21 shows participation in the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) by school type. As can be seen, participation in the JCSP is lower in Gaelcholáistí than in English-medium schools.

Table 21: Junior Cycle by type, by medium, 2020

	Gaelcholáistí	English-medium schools
Junior Certificate students	5,815	177,975

JCSP students	505	20,731
Total Junior Cycle	6,320	198,706
JCSP participation rate	8.0%	10.4%

6.10 DEIS status

As can be seen in Table 22, five Gaelcholáistí have DEIS status (as of September 2022), which represents 17% of all Gaelcholáistí. Two of these schools are in Cork and three are in Dublin.

Table 22: Gaelcholáistí with DEIS status, 2022

	Gaelcholáistí	All post-primary schools (incl. Gaelcholáistí)
Number of schools with DEIS status	5	234
% of schools with DEIS status	17%	32%
Enrolments[11] in schools with DEIS status	1,952	97,853
% of enrolments in schools with DEIS status	17.60%	25.00%

6.11 Ethos and patronage

As can be seen in Table 23, the majority of Gaelcholáistí are multi-denominational, with only 31% of schools having a Catholic ethos. A significantly greater proportion of Gaelcholáistí are multi-denominational than is the case when we look at all post-primary schools.

Table 23: Gaelcholáistí by ethos, 2021

	Gaelcholáistí		All post-primary schools (incl. Gaelcholáistí)	
Catholic	9	31.0%	344	48.9%
Inter-denominational	5	17.2%	149	21.2%
Multi-denominational	15	51.7%	210	29.9%
Total	**29**	**100.0%**	**703**	**100.0%**

Table 24 displays the patronage of Gaelcholáistí. 17 of the schools (or 59%) are under the patronage of an education and training board (ETB).

Table 24: Patronage of Gaelcholáistí, 2021

Patron	Number of schools
An Foras Pátrúnachta	5
Edmund Rice Schools Trust	3
Le Chéile Schools Trust	2

[11] Enrolment figures are for the 2021 school year for schools with DEIS status in 2022.

CEIST	1
Gaelachas Teo	1
Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB	4
Kildare and Wicklow ETB	3
Cork ETB	2
Donegal ETB	2
Kilkenny and Carlow ETB	2
Cavan and Monaghan ETB	1
Galway and Roscommon ETB	1
Kerry ETB	1
Limerick and Clare ETB	1
Total	**29**

6.12 Catering for students with special educational needs

Table 25 displays the SET hours and SNA posts allocated for mainstream classes in Gaelcholáistí. While at primary level, the allocation of these resources per school were similar across both language sectors, there is a significant difference at post-primary level. The allocation of both SET hours and SNAs in Gaelcholáistí is less than half that of the sector as a whole.

Table 25: Mainstream SET hours and SNA posts in Gaelcholáistí, 2021

	Gaelcholáistí		**All post-primary schools (incl. Gaelcholáistí)**	
	Total	Average per school	Total	Average per school
Mainstream SET hours	1,834.23	63.25	96,951.73	132.99
Mainstream SNA	50.75	1.75	2610.75	3.58

At post-primary level, only one Gaelcholáiste provides a special class. The teaching posts and SNAs allocated for special classes are displayed in Table 26. The three teaching posts and five SNAs in Gaelcholáistí are all allocated to the one school.

Table 26: Special class teaching posts and SNAs in Gaelcholáistí, 2021

	Gaelcholáistí		**All post-primary schools (incl. Gaelcholáistí)**	
	Total	Average per school	Total	Average per school
Special class teaching posts	3	0.11	909.5	1.25
Special class SNAs	5	0.17	1,137.25	1.56

6.13 Nationality

With regard to the nationality of pupils attending Gaelcholáistí, the picture at post-primary level mirrors that at primary level. In both cases, approximately 1% of students have a non-Irish nationality compared to more than 10% across all schools.

Table 27: Nationality of students in Gaelcholáistí, 2020

	Gaelcholáistí		All post-primary schools (incl. Gaelcholáistí)	
Nationality Description	Enrolment	%	Enrolment	%
Ireland (including Dual Nationals)	10,139	98.6%	338,180	89.2%
Other Nationalities	144	1.4%	41,000	10.8%
Total	**10,283**	**100.0%**	**379,180**	**100.0%**

7. Transitions

7.1 Transitions from ELC settings to primary schools

It is vitally important to cultivate links between naíonraí and primary schools to facilitate children's continuity of learning and to assist children and their parents in the transition from ELC settings to primary school. The importance of fostering such links has been reinforced by *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028*, which was published in 2018. A key objective of First 5 is that 'children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onwards to primary schooling'. A number of actions have been agreed as part of this strategy, which will impact on children and families in the Irish-medium context.

There is an understanding in the literature[12] of the importance of continuity in language learning development and of children's capacity to learn languages from a young age. Hence the importance of ensuring seamless transitions across all settings in which early education takes place, that is, the home, the ELC setting and the primary school.

The development of strong links between naíonraí and primary schools is of particular importance for optimising the Irish-language learning experiences of children. These links can facilitate the fostering of positive relationships, the development of clear communication channels, and continuity of engagement of parents and the wider community to support children's development of their Irish language skills.

7.2 Transitions from primary to post-primary schools

Tables 28 and 29 show data in relation to the transition of sixth class pupils in Gaelscoileanna in 2020 to first year in post-primary schools in September 2020. It is important to note that the data relating to schools with aonaid includes mainly English-medium students with smaller cohorts of Irish-medium students.

There were 4,723 pupils in sixth class in Gaelscoileanna in June 2020. Of these, 1,688 transitioned to a Gaelcholáiste, representing a transition rate of 35.7%. There were 2,456 pupils who transitioned to an English-medium school, accounting for 51.9% of pupils. The remaining 588 pupils transitioned to English-medium post-primary schools with an aonad.

In relation to the students attending Gaelcholáistí, it is noted that 2,082 pupils started first year in 2020. As previously mentioned, 1,688 transitioned from a Gaelscoil, meaning the remaining 394 students transferred to Gaelcholáistí from English-medium schools.

Table 28: Transition of pupils from 6th class in Gaelscoileanna to first year post-primary, by post-primary medium of education, 2020

Type of post-primary school	Gaelcholáistí	Schools with aonaid	English-medium schools	Total
Number of pupils	1,688	588	2,456	4,732
% of pupils	35.7%	12.4%	51.9%	100.0%

[12] For analysis on this topic, see the research report published by the Department of Education on links between naíonraí and primary schools in a Gaeltacht setting.

Table 29: Source of students in Gaelcholáistí by language medium of primary school, 2020

	Gaelscoileanna	English-medium	Total
Gaelcholáistí	81.1%	18.9%	100.0%

Table 30 shows the same transitions by county, along with the number of Gaelcholáistí in each county.

Dublin had the highest absolute number of pupils making the transition from Gaelscoil to Gaelcholáiste in 2020. 740 pupils, or 57.3%, of the pupils who left Gaelscoileanna in Dublin that year continued on to Gaelcholáistí. Carlow (68.9%) and Monaghan (62.7%) had the highest proportion of Gaelscoil pupils transferring to Gaelcholáistí.

Several counties had no pupils who transitioned to either a Gaelcholáiste or an aonad, such as Cavan and Longford – both counties without a Gaelcholáiste.

Table 30: Transition rates from Gaelscoil to Gaelcholáiste, by county, 2020

	Gaelscoil pupils by type of post-primary school				Transition rates %		
County of primary school	To Gaelcholáistí	To schools with aonaid	To English-medium	Total	To Gaelcholáistí	To schools with aonaid	To English- medium
Carlow	42	0	19	61	68.9%	0.0%	31.1%
Cavan	0	0	10	10	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Clare	6	20	38	64	9.4%	31.3%	59.4%
Cork	212	195	431	838	25.3%	23.3%	51.4%
Donegal	53	0	60	113	46.9%	0.0%	53.1%
Dublin	740	91	460	1291	57.3%	7.0%	35.6%
Galway	83	75	172	330	25.2%	22.7%	52.1%
Kerry	42	0	58	100	42.0%	0.0%	58.0%
Kildare	114	73	177	364	31.3%	20.1%	48.6%
Kilkenny	8	0	42	50	16.0%	0.0%	84.0%
Laois	0	20	20	40	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Leitrim	0	0	22	22	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Limerick	122	14	81	217	56.2%	6.5%	37.3%
Longford	0	0	25	25	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Louth	0	14	46	60	0.0%	23.3%	76.7%
Mayo	2	0	90	92	2.2%	0.0%	97.8%
Meath	16	23	214	253	6.3%	9.1%	84.6%
Monaghan	64	0	38	102	62.7%	0.0%	37.3%
Offaly	3	0	27	30	10.0%	0.0%	90.0%
Roscommon	0	0	23	23	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Sligo	0	8	19	27	0.0%	29.6%	70.4%
Tipperary	1	25	88	114	0.9%	21.9%	77.2%
Waterford	38	0	80	118	32.2%	0.0%	67.8%
Westmeath	0	13	66	79	0.0%	16.5%	83.5%

Wexford	23	17	49	89	25.8%	19.1%	55.1%
Wicklow	119		101	220	54.1%	0.0%	45.9%
Grand Total	**1,688**	**588**	**2456**	**4732**	**35.7%**	**12.4%**	**51.9%**

8. Planning for primary and post-primary provision

8.1 The planning process

In order to plan for school provision and analyse the relevant demographic/population data, the Department of Education divides the country into 314 school planning areas and uses a geographical information system mapping tool. This system uses data from a range of sources, including Child Benefit and school enrolment data, and information on planned additional housing development to identify where the pressure for school places across the country will arise and where additional school accommodation is needed at primary and post-primary level.

Where data indicates that additional educational provision (school places) is required at primary or post-primary level, the delivery of such additional places depends on the particular circumstances of each case and may be provided through either one, or a combination of, the following:

- utilising existing unused capacity (for example, a spare room) within a school or schools
- extending the capacity of a school or schools (such as, by building an extension to the school)
- providing a new school or schools, that is, a new school is established.

The New Schools Establishment Group (NSEG), an external independent advisory group set up in 2011 to advise the Minister on the patronage of new schools, oversees the patronage process. Following the group's consideration of the Department's area assessment reports, the NSEG submits a report with recommendations to the Minister for consideration and final decision. The assessment reports and the NSEG recommendations for all such patronage processes are made available on gov.ie.

8.2 Estimating supply and demand

An annual national demographic/population review is carried out in the Department to determine where additional school provision (school places) might be needed at primary and post-primary level.

Where demand for school places is projected to be increasing, the level of additional demand across school planning areas ranges from small to medium increases, that are likely to be accommodated by existing schools, through to significant projected growth that may require extending the capacity of existing schools (building an extension) or establishing a new school.

This balance will differ from area to area, depending on the overall number and size of schools available to absorb the estimated increase in enrolments and the capacity of those schools, where necessary, to expand to accommodate additional student numbers. The distance from existing schools to areas of expanding population and the extent of educational options available, including language options, may also be considerations in this regard. Analysis of the timing and duration of any demographic peak (population increase) may also inform how projected growth should be facilitated.

The most recent analysis undertaken by the Department projects that over 90% of the 314 school planning areas at primary level show decreasing enrolments for the period to 2025 compared with 2021, whereas some 88% of school planning areas at post-primary level are

anticipated to have increased enrolments for the period to 2028, with most expected to reach a peak in the next two or three years[13]. In 2021/2022, there were 546,106 primary pupils and 391,698 post-primary students in Ireland.

This means that notwithstanding the fact that primary level enrolments have peaked in 2018, there will be a requirement to continue providing additional primary school places in certain areas. Indeed, some 9% of school planning areas (mainly urban or developing areas) will continue to experience some level of demographic growth at primary level over the coming five years.

At national level, the Department's latest enrolment projections are published in a statistical report, *Projections of Full-time Enrolment Primary and Second Level (2021–2040),* published in November 2021[14]. The national level projections and school planning area projections are largely in line overall. However, in contrast with the national enrolment trends projected in the statistical report, the school planning area projections highlight the variation that can arise on a more local basis at both primary and post-primary level.

Based on current projections, it is anticipated that the number of new schools being established will reduce over the coming years.

8.3 Census data

The census is an important source of information on the number of Irish speakers in Ireland. The most recent results available are from Census 2016. For the purposes of this report, an Irish speaker is considered as someone who speaks Irish daily or weekly outside of the education system.

Table 31 separates out Gaeltacht areas and areas outside of the Gaeltacht and, not surprisingly, the highest rates of Irish speakers are found within the Gaeltacht areas. In areas outside of the Gaeltacht, Leitrim had the highest percentage of Irish speakers among both primary and post-primary age pupils. However, most notable is that the percentage of primary school age children who speak Irish is remarkably consistent across all counties, varying very little. The same applies to post-primary school age children.

Table 31: Census data on Irish-speakers by county, 2016

	All areas primary	All areas post-primary	Gaeltacht areas primary	Gaeltacht areas post-primary	Areas outside of the Gaeltacht primary	Areas outside of the Gaeltacht post-primary
Age group	5-12 years	13-18 years	5-12 years	13-18 years	5-12 years	13-18 years
Total	5.3%	5.7%	22.9%	22.4%	5.0%	5.4%
Carlow	4.7%	6.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.7%	6.0%

[13] See Appendix 1 for further data.
[14] This report may be accessed online at https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/projections/.

Cavan	4.2%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	5.3%
Clare	5.4%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	5.4%	5.9%
Cork City	4.8%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	4.8%	4.7%
Cork County	5.1%	5.9%	25.9%	28.3%	5.0%	5.7%
Donegal	7.9%	8.5%	26.7%	27.9%	5.1%	5.3%
Dublin City	5.0%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	4.7%
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	5.4%	6.2%	0.0%	0.0%	5.4%	6.2%
Fingal	4.8%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	4.8%	4.9%
South Dublin	5.0%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Galway City	5.9%	6.4%	6.3%	7.2%	5.8%	6.1%
Galway County	9.3%	9.8%	28.0%	26.9%	5.3%	5.7%
Kerry	6.3%	6.2%	26.0%	21.7%	5.3%	5.3%
Kildare	5.3%	5.7%	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	5.7%
Kilkenny	4.7%	5.8%	0.0%	0.0%	4.7%	5.8%
Laois	4.9%	5.4%	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	5.4%
Leitrim	5.9%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%	6.7%
Limerick City and County	4.3%	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%	5.2%
Longford	4.2%	4.7%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	4.7%
Louth	4.9%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	4.9%
Mayo	6.0%	6.7%	12.5%	13.0%	5.6%	6.1%
Meath	5.0%	5.5%	23.2%	25.6%	4.9%	5.2%
Monaghan	5.1%	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	5.1%	5.9%
Offaly	5.0%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	5.6%
Roscommon	4.5%	5.8%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%	5.8%
Sligo	4.9%	4.9%	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	4.9%
Tipperary	4.9%	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	5.2%
Waterford City and County	5.5%	6.2%	33.7%	26.9%	4.9%	5.9%
Westmeath	4.5%	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%	5.2%
Wexford	4.5%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	4.5%	4.8%
Wicklow	5.2%	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%	5.2%	5.2%

8.4 Patronage process for new schools

New schools are established by the Department of Education on the basis of identified demographic/population increase demand in an area, and only after consideration of the capacity of existing schools to absorb the expected school place demand. Where it is decided based on demographic analysis that a new school is required, a patronage process is conducted in respect of the patronage of the new school and the language of the school (with the exception of those primary schools which have been designated as Irish-medium in advance of conducting a patronage process – see note below).

The patronage process is open to all patron bodies and prospective patrons. A prospective patron can choose the school(s) it wishes to apply for and complete an application form in that regard for each school, for submission to the Department. The Department provides details on its online patronage process system (OPPS) of the school(s) and the applicant patrons that have applied for patronage of the school(s).

Parents access the OPPS website, which allows them to access the appropriate survey for their area, to input the details of the eligible child(ren) and to select their preferred patron and language of instruction (where applicable). The OPPS was developed by the Department to provide objective information to parents in the relevant school planning area(s) for whom a new school is being set up/established, which allows them to make an informed choice about their preferred model of patronage as well as language of instruction (Irish or English) of a new school. Parental preferences, as well as other considerations such as the extent of diversity of existing provision in an area (including Irish-medium provision), are key to the decision-making process.

It is in this way that decisions are taken at primary level as to which patron will operate the school and whether the school will operate through the medium of Irish or English.

8.5 Framework to increase the provision of Irish-medium education at primary level

In 2019 a framework was developed to provide more opportunities to increase the provision of Irish-medium education at primary level through new schools and expansion of existing Irish-medium primary schools.

The framework includes:

- Designating the language of the school as Irish in some circumstances, prior to running the OPPS
- Testing (on a pilot basis) the potential to cater for demand for English and Irish-medium provision through, for example, delivering two 8-classroom schools (one English-medium and one Irish-medium) in a shared building/campus rather than delivering one 16-classroom school, subject to factors such as demand and site conditions
- Exploring the potential to expand existing Irish-medium primary schools to satisfy unmet demand in an area
- Providing opportunities for patrons of existing schools to change the language of instruction from English to Irish, such as is envisaged as part of the Schools Reconfiguration for Diversity process.

In cases where there may be some unmet demand for Irish-medium education, albeit not at a level where the outcome of the patronage process would be a Gaelscoil, the measures

outlined above provide a framework of factors to be considered and avenues to be explored in this regard.

Nine new primary schools were announced to be established in 2020 and 2021, four of which were designated in advance of their establishment as Gaelscoileanna in line with this framework. A number of additional schools announced to be established during this period were deferred having regard to updated information on the delivery of planned housing developments and other factors.

Given declining demographics, it is anticipated that there will be significantly fewer new primary schools established over the coming years. The opportunities for the establishment of new Gaelscoileanna are likely to be limited and other options are likely to be more sustainable.

8.6 Schools Reconfiguration

The Schools Reconfiguration for diversity process, which supports transfers of schools to multi-denominational patrons in response to the wishes of school communities, aims to facilitate more availability of multi-denominational schools across the country. The reconfiguration process involves existing schools changing their patron and may also involve a change of ethos (for example, a change from a religious ethos to a multi-denominational ethos).

Irish-medium school communities can engage with their school patron in the same way as English-medium schools regarding a potential change to a multi-denominational patronage. In a similar way to the vast majority of English-medium schools, many Irish-medium schools are under Catholic patronage.

Although it has not happened to date, it is also possible that some English-medium schools may wish to change both from a single religious ethos to a multi-denominational one and also from an English-medium to an Irish-medium school. The reconfiguration process provides opportunities for English-medium schools to make a transition to Irish-medium in that context.

The guidance in place for the Schools Reconfiguration process notes that no detailed guidance is currently in place for schools transitioning from English-medium to Irish-medium, and that the work on the development of the policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht will provide an opportunity to consider how these transitions might be supported.

8.7 Language of instruction in new post-primary schools

At post-primary level, consideration of parental preferences and the extent of diversity of existing provision (including Irish-medium provision) contribute to decisions as to which patron will operate the new school and as to whether a school would take the form of a Gaelcholáiste or whether, if English-medium, the school would include an aonad. Most new post-primary schools must have a student enrolment capacity of 600–1,000 students. A lower threshold of 400 students may apply to a Gaelcholáiste, having regard to the alternative of establishing an aonad within a school.

9. Considerations and conclusions

In working towards meeting the Government's commitment to doubling the proportion of children in Irish-medium education, the Department will need to consider a range of options, and will need to address a number of issues that will arise. As is evidenced by the data collated for this report, there is scope for development in a number of areas, including special needs education, inclusivity, and supporting transitions from naíonraí to Gaelscoileanna and on to Gaelcholáistí.

9.1 School places

Given declining demographics over the coming years, a significant reduction in the establishment of new schools is expected. There will be limited opportunities for increasing Irish-medium provision by means of such new schools. It will be important, therefore, that opportunities within the existing schools' infrastructure are maximised. This will include making best use of the existing school accommodation provision and capitalising on previous, current and future capital investment in our schools. This may include options such as facilitating the transition of English-medium schools to Irish-medium, providing joint campuses, or expanding existing Irish-medium schools.

The research currently being done on aonaid and sruthanna, as well as the outcome of the satellite school pilot in Dundalk, will also provide useful information on possible models of provision at post-primary level.

The solutions proposed will also need to be considered in the context of the priorities within the Department's capital funding envelope. This will include provision for students with special educational needs, demographic requirements, Programme for Government commitments on the modernisation of school accommodation, and climate action goals, specifically the Government's Net Carbon Zero target for 2050.

9.2 Teacher supply

To ensure a high standard of education can continue to be provided to an increasing proportion of pupils and students in Irish-medium schools, the issue of teacher supply will need to be addressed.

Under the Policy on Gaeltacht Education, two third-level courses were established for the Irish-medium sector: a Bachelor of Education (B Ed) degree through the medium of Irish which provides initial teacher education (ITE) for primary teachers, and a Master's degree (M Ed) in Gaeltacht and Irish-medium Education, for practising teachers and principals in Irish-medium and Gaeltacht Schools.

In addition to the establishment of these courses, support has been provided to the University of Galway/Ollscoil na Gaillimhe for its Professional Master of Education qualification through the medium of Irish. This post-graduate course provides ITE for post-primary teachers with an emphasis on teaching through Irish. Two teachers on secondment have been made available by the Department under the Policy on Gaeltacht Education and COGG also provides bursaries for students on the course.

The actions under the Policy on Gaeltacht Education, while focused on providing for Gaeltacht schools, have also benefitted Irish-medium schools outside of the Gaeltacht. Future developments will be required to build on this progress.

9.3 Towards policy development

To ensure the policy on Irish-medium education outside of the Gaeltacht is underpinned by the latest research, a review of national and international research has been commissioned by the Department of Education. This review is being carried out by SEALBHÚ (Dublin City University's cross-faculty research centre dedicated to research on the teaching and learning of Irish) and will involve a comprehensive review and evaluation of relevant national and international research, literature and policies. It will culminate in the provision of recommendations for actions and policy proposals for consideration by the Department.

In developing the policy, the Department is committed to listening to the voices of the various stakeholders with an interest in the area of Irish-medium education. This will include young people, parents, school staff and leaders, Irish-language organisations, and the public in general. A wide-ranging consultation process will be held to engage with stakeholders and to ensure they are given the opportunity to have their views and opinions heard.

Appendix 1: Enrolment projections

Table 32: Enrolment projections for the top 20 areas (areas with the greatest projected enrolment increase) at primary level*

	2020 Enrolment	Peak Enrolment	Change to Peak	Peak Year	Total 2021	Junior Infants 2020	Junior Infants 2021	Junior Infants 2022	Junior Infants 2023	Junior Infants 2024	Junior Infants 2025	Rank
Dublin 8	3,374	3,931	557	2025	3,491	478	539	553	590	602	494	1
Dunshaughlin	1,344	1,755	411	2025	1,407	178	176	191	204	239	273	2
Limerick City	13,052	13,052	0	2020**	12,988	1,556	1,600	1,581	1,559	1,493	1,430	3
Dublin 2 – Dublin 4	2,494	2,865	371	2025	2,589	297	396	433	438	426	352	4
Drumcondra – Marino – Dublin 1	4,847	5,203	356	2025	4,847	637	768	804	852	853	735	5
Dublin 6 – Clonskeagh	3,628	3,944	316	2025	3,698	462	507	520	538	540	519	6
Maynooth	2,255	2,570	315	2025	2,301	321	308	317	330	320	324	7
Galway City	8,918	9,095	177	2021**	9,095	1,081	1,127	1,148	1,177	1,108	1,082	8
Donabate	1,280	1,577	297	2025	1,289	165	186	195	214	228	232	9
Cabra – Phibsboro – Dublin 7	5,087	5,376	289	2025	5,076	642	678	706	745	752	687	10
Dun Laoghaire	4,584	4,865	281	2024	4,661	564	635	610	612	613	540	11
Booterstown – Blackrock	1,961	2,175	214	2024	2,017	256	281	280	285	288	263	12
Oranmore	1,853	1,927	74	2025**	1,868	190	251	247	246	233	236	13
Donaghmede – Howth – Dublin 13	4,981	5,135	154	2024	5,006	600	660	662	671	647	608	14
Portmarnock	1,825	1,979	154	2025	1,880	232	226	236	252	262	271	15
Kilternan	683	825	142	2025	724	83	104	103	110	119	102	16
Rathkeale	758	795	37	2025**	760	104	98	103	104	96	115	17
Ballinteer – Stepaside – DLR	5,265	5,385	120	2022	5,310	669	729	711	702	668	602	18
Glasheen – Cork City	4,634	4,751	117	2025	4,606	566	616	623	647	642	656	19
Finglas East – Ballymun – Dublin 11	2,886	2,990	104	2023	2,943	298	424	414	379	357	270	20

*The figures are projections of gross demand and do not take into account existing capacity in these areas. Existing schools may have additional capacity and new schools may have been established / may be established in some of the above areas in recent/coming years.

** Some School Planning Areas have long term peak enrolments set for beyond 2025 and have been included here as their ranking is dictated by the longer term ranking.

Table 33: *Enrolment projections for the top 20 areas (areas with the greatest projected enrolment increase) at post-primary level*

	2020 Actual Enrolment	Peak Enrolment	Actual Increase	Peak Year	2021 Projected Enrolment	Rank
Limerick City	8,226	9,321	1,095	2025	8,549	1
Ballinteer – Stepaside – DLR	1,319	2,308	989	2028	1,485	2
Midleton – Carrigtwohill	3,569	4,310	741	2025	3,835	3
Lucan	5,506	6,069	563	2024	5,702	4
Swords	3,039	3,583	544	2025	3,214	5
Galway City	6,904	7,433	529	2024	7,202	6
Newcastle – Rathcoole	1,033	1,544	511	2025	1,140	7
Balbriggan	3,736	4,232	496	2024	4,017	8
Drogheda	5,709	6,176	467	2023	5,961	9
Donaghmede – Howth – Dublin 13	3,798	4,263	465	2024	3,987	10
Tallaght	3,343	3,782	439	2024	3,538	11
Maynooth	1,668	2,100	432	2028	1,761	12
Athenry	1,955	2,376	421	2026	2,103	13
Ballincollig	2,244	2,647	403	2027	2,336	14
Celbridge	2,129	2,524	395	2025	2,252	15
Greystones	1,526	1,912	386	2025	1,652	16
Scribblestown – Finglas West	1,104	1,483	379	2027	1,166	17
Whitehall – Santry – Dublin 9	2,274	2,652	378	2025	2,443	18
Athlone	2,896	3,270	374	2025	3,012	19
Cabra – Phibsboro – Dublin 7	3,461	3,833	372	2026	3,508	20

*The above figures are projections of gross demand and do not take into account existing capacity in these areas. Existing schools may have outstanding capacity and new schools may have been established / may be established in some of the above areas in recent years or may already have been identified for establishment in the coming years.

Table 34: *Primary projections by county*

County	Total 2021	Total 2022	Total 2023	Total 2024	Total 2025
Carlow	7,322	7,185	7,016	6,858	6,755
Cavan	9,565	9,375	9,166	8,944	8,778
Clare	12,781	12,459	12,285	12,008	11,823
Cork	60,834	59,654	58,371	57,421	56,782
Donegal	17,801	17,482	17,149	16,878	16,639
Dublin	139,393	138,878	138,277	137,498	135,213
Galway	29,205	28,769	28,234	27,688	27,271
Kerry	15,193	14,854	14,451	14,202	13,960
Kildare	28,839	28,440	27,929	27,545	27,237
Kilkenny	10,790	10,557	10,251	10,060	9,864
Laois	10,658	10,501	10,284	10075	9,932
Leitrim	3,629	3,596	3,537	3,480	3,424
Limerick	22,094	21,823	21,377	20,970	20,660
Longford	5,153	5,026	4,922	4,837	4,681
Louth	16,637	16,382	16,115	15,874	15,650
Mayo	14,070	13,836	13,519	13,244	12,991
Meath	26,360	25,952	25,533	25,173	25,013
Monaghan	7,657	7,544	7,414	7,283	7,046
Offaly	9,115	8,938	8,728	8,545	8,404
Roscommon	7,597	7,455	7,293	7,182	7,045
Sligo	7,249	7,087	6,963	6,831	6,683
Tipperary	17,796	17,432	17,157	16,767	16,600
Waterford	13,682	13,335	12,958	12,694	12,447
Westmeath	10,987	10,727	10,432	10,264	10,031
Wexford	17,616	17,294	16,898	16,574	16,346
Wicklow	17,323	17,022	16,616	16,303	15,895
Grand Total	**539,344**	**531,603**	**522,874**	**515,199**	**507,170**

Table 35: *Post-primary projections by county*

County	Total 2021	Total 2022	Total 2023	Total 2024	Total 2025	Total 2026	Total 2027	Total 2028
Carlow	6,174	6,211	6,237	6,227	6,165	6,058	5,995	5,828
Cavan	6,017	6,056	6,184	6,254	6,178	6,113	5,990	5,851
Clare	8,827	8,904	8,879	8,822	8,698	8,457	8,238	8,105
Cork	41,721	42,587	43,286	43,535	43,393	42,951	42,400	41,596
Donegal	13,576	13,682	13,779	13,743	13,442	13,143	12,762	12,437
Dublin	79,167	81,245	83,086	84,557	84,844	84,746	84,390	83,446
Galway	21,476	21,600	21,874	22,002	21,833	21,673	21,263	20,910
Kerry	11,445	11,296	11,526	11,444	11,298	10,976	10,729	10,409
Kildare	19,397	19,827	20,245	20,431	20,317	19,951	19,737	19,308
Kilkenny	8,231	8,294	8,379	8,295	8,223	8,088	8,011	7,811
Laois	6,509	6,630	6,763	6,831	6,729	6,594	6,478	6,296
Leitrim	2,779	2,731	2,762	2,715	2,710	2,706	2,691	2,638
Limerick	16,065	16,469	16,895	17,051	16,983	16,727	16,538	16,287
Longford	4,179	4,223	4,283	4,261	4,248	4,177	4,062	3,949
Louth	12,605	12,819	12,943	12,977	12,820	12,622	12,357	12,094
Mayo	10,657	10,704	10,700	10,680	10,592	10,454	10,361	10,173
Meath	16,268	16,812	17,088	17,272	17,021	16,821	16,478	16,005
Monaghan	5,452	5,507	5,484	5,497	5,499	5,445	5,392	5,331
Offaly	6,534	6,624	6,629	6,595	6,419	6,210	5,987	5,709
Roscommon	4,243	4,366	4,478	4,532	4,535	4,525	4,531	4,431
Sligo	4,905	5,008	5,058	5,114	5,095	5,087	4,983	4,817
Tipperary	13,465	13,671	13,502	13,557	13,338	13,169	12,952	12,670
Waterford	9,823	9,904	9,957	9,873	9,746	9,535	9,326	9,083
Westmeath	8,506	8,655	8,703	8,623	8,550	8,372	8,176	7,900
Wexford	13,652	13,729	13,773	13,727	13,548	13,336	13,112	12,783
Wicklow	12,361	12,551	12,699	12,715	12,571	12,297	12,002	11,717
Total	**364,034**	**370,105**	**375,192**	**377,330**	**374,795**	**370,233**	**364,941**	**357,584**

Appendix 2: Relevant organisations

Department of Education

The Department of Education is responsible for education policy in Ireland. Its mission is to facilitate children and young people, through learning, to achieve their full potential and contribute to Ireland's social, economic and cultural development. The Department is committed to the principles of continuous improvement, innovation and evaluation which underpin evidence-based policy development and programme delivery.

The Early Years Education Policy Unit in the Department of Education supports the development and delivery of high quality educational provision in the early years sector through the implementation of the two national practice frameworks, *Síolta* and *Aistear*. They also promote high quality initial education and training, CPD opportunities for practitioners, and workforce development and professionalisation. The unit is co-located with the Early Years Division in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education works to improve the quality of education and learning experiences of children and young people in schools, centres for education and state-funded ELC settings for children from 0 years to 18 years.

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has responsibility for operational, policy and legislative developments relating to improving access to high quality and affordable ELC for children.

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM)

The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media has among its policy responsibilities the protection and development of Ireland's rich cultural heritage including arts, culture, the Irish language, and Gaeltacht.

An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)

COGG's role is to advise the Minister for Education and the NCCA on all matters pertaining to Irish-medium and Gaeltacht education and the teaching of Irish in all schools; to co-ordinate the provision of teaching resources; to provide support services and to conduct research on Irish-medium education. COGG also has a role in the implementation of specific actions in the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017 – 2022.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is a statutory body of the Department of Education. The NCCA advises on curriculum and assessment for ELC, primary and post-primary education and on the assessment procedures used in schools and on curriculum-based subject examinations.

Pobal

Pobal administers a number of Government funding schemes for the ELC sector, including the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme and the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), and audits compliance with funding requirements. ECCE is a universal two-year ELC programme available to all children within the eligible age range. It provides children with their first formal experience of early learning prior to commencing primary school. The National Childcare Scheme provides financial support to help with childcare costs.

Tusla

The Child and Family Agency, Tusla, was established in January 2014 as the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children. It has oversight responsibility for child protection, early intervention and family support services in Ireland. Tusla is the statutory regulator for ELC.

Gaeloideachas

Gaeloideachas is a voluntary organisation funded by Foras na Gaeilge, which provides support to Irish-medium schools and to naíonraí outside of Gaeltacht areas. Advice, assistance and support services are provided to parents/guardians who wish to have their children educated through Irish, and they also advocate for those working in the sector. Gaeloideachas provides additional support material, information workshops and advice to ELC educators and to those interested in establishing naíonraí outside of the Gaeltacht.