



Ireland

The Gaeltacht

Irish language education model, its characteristics, results & objectives for the future

Overview of the Gaeltacht

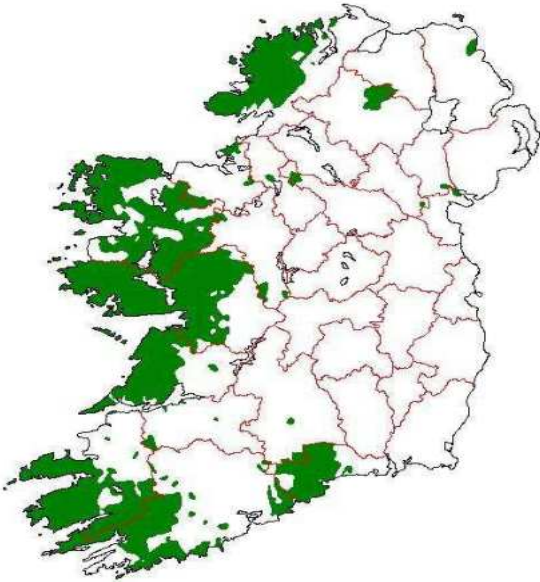
Remaining areas of Ireland where Irish remains as a community language -
96,090 (2016 Census)

Daily Irish Speakers in 2011 - 23,621 (2011 Census) - 24%

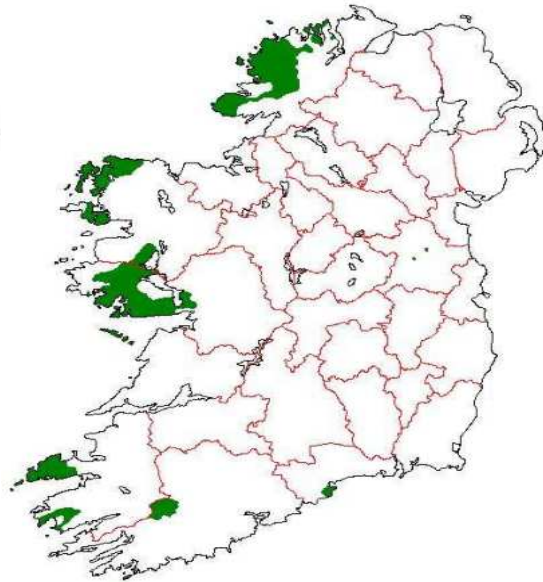
Daily Irish Speakers in 2016 - 20,586 (2016 Census) - 21%

Areas of Ireland where Irish is spoken as a community language

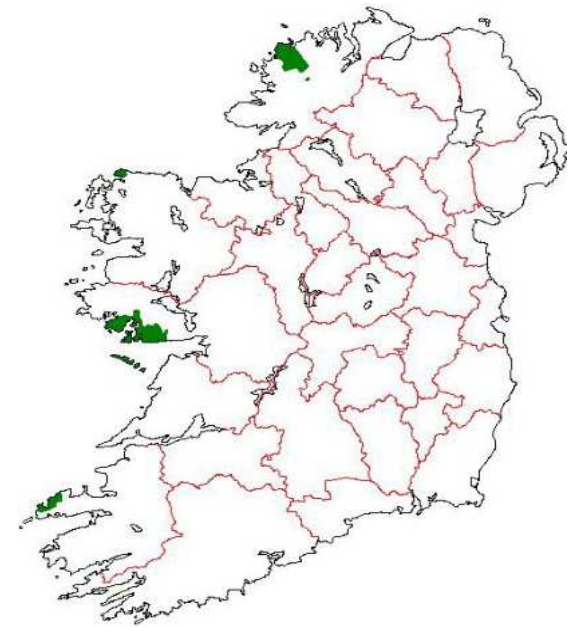
1926



2021



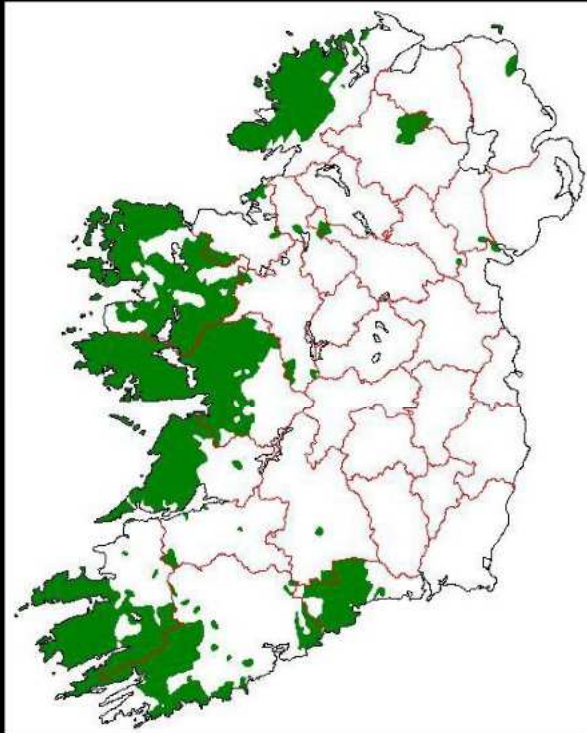
2007 (67%)



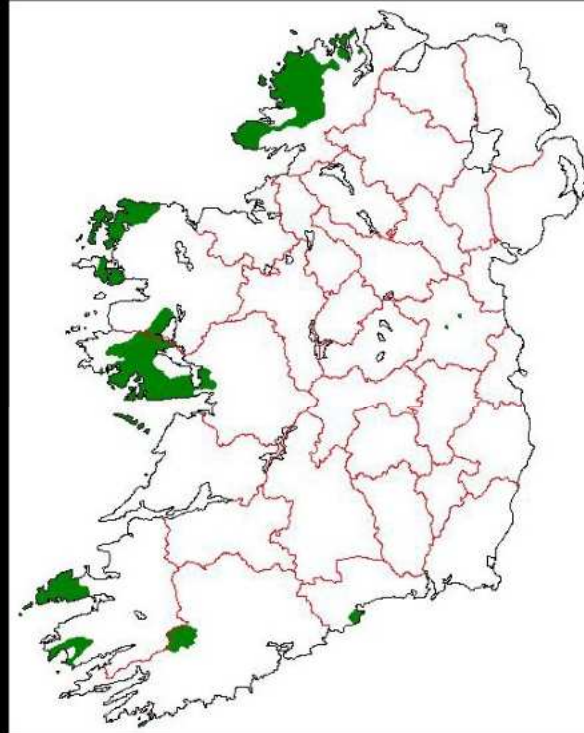
1926

1956

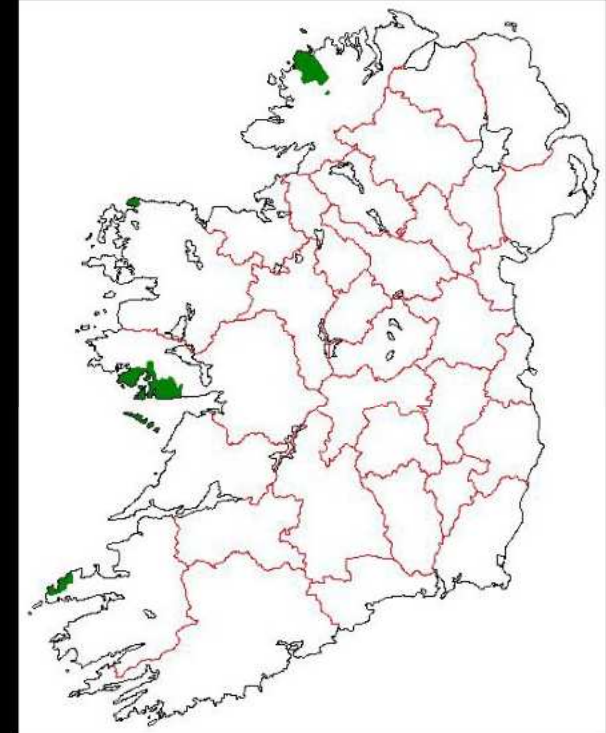
2007 (67%)



Areas qualifying for the Gaeltacht in 1926, with 25+ per cent of the population speaking Irish



The Gaeltacht in 1956



Gaeltacht Category A areas 2007 i.e. 67% or more of the population speaking Irish daily

Background to education in Gaeltacht areas

Children from Irish-speaking and non-Irish speaking homes

127 preschools
134 primary schools
29 post-primary schools

Pre-2017 many schools teaching wholly/partially through English

- 54% (68) preschools
- 24% (32) primary schools
- 32% (9) post-primary schools

Primary school enrolment
23 - 200+ pupils

Post-primary school enrolment
40 - 450+ pupils

Changes in Government Policy



1998 Education Act – responsibility on schools to contribute to maintenance of Irish as the primary community language

2007 - Analysis carried out in a Comprehensive Study of Irish in the Gaeltacht

2012 - Gaeltacht Act 2012 – legislative basis for initiating a language-planning policy

- 26 distinct language communities identified – to be the basis for 7-year language plans
- 16 Service towns indentified – language plans to support their Gaeltacht communities



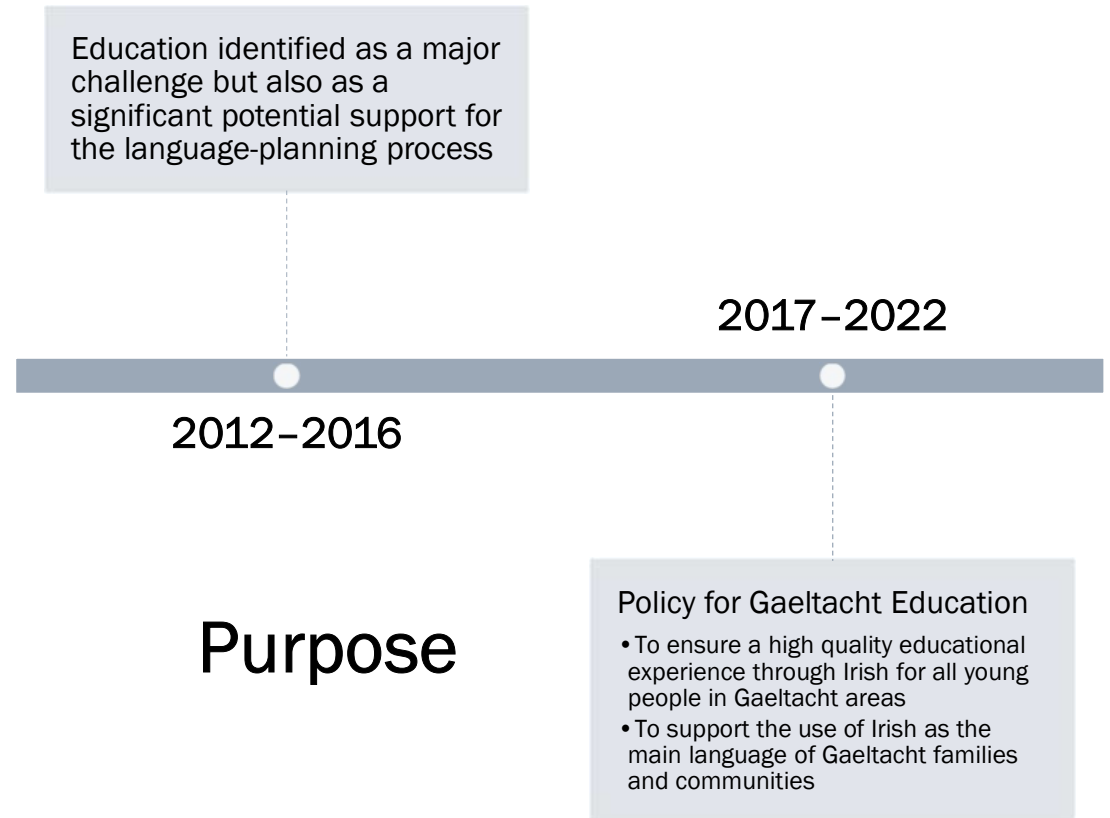
SEÁN Ó COINN FORAS NA GAELGE - NPLD S. W. HAIN / NOV 07

Policy for Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS
SCILEANNA

Polasaí don Oideachas Gaeltachta
2017-2022

DEIREADH FÓMHAIR 2016



7 Pillars

1. Strengthening the structure of educational provision

2. Improving the quality of teaching through Irish

3. Building the capacity of school leaders and school management

4. Improving the curriculum for Irish

5. Improving language resources and supports

6. Strengthening early-years' educational provision

7. Building awareness of the benefits of immersion education, communicating with, & supporting parents in promoting the language.

“Schools are developing their capacity as key hubs in the community to support the extended use of the Irish language and culture in the Gaeltacht”

NORMA FOLEY TD, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (2021)

Policy Implementation

Opt-in process

Language-based criteria:

Early full-immersion (2 years)
Vision for language use in the school
Language action-plans
Parental support

Primary supports

€1,200
Additional hours
Professional development

Post-primary supports

€15,000 pa
Language assistants
Additional teaching hours
Virtual teaching hub (physics)
€5000 equipment grant

Policy Implementation

- School recognition scheme
 - Application process
- Incentives & supports



Language-based criteria 13/11 criteria

GAELTACHT SCHOOL RECOGNITION SCHEME

Language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school



1. Implement a two-year total-immersion programme* through Irish in infant classes, during which no English will be taught.
2. Implement a total-immersion approach, where all areas of learning, apart from English, will be taught through Irish.
3. Deliver high quality educational experiences through Irish to all pupils focusing particular attention on the differentiated language needs of native Irish speakers¹ as well as learners of Irish.
4. Develop a whole-school action plan for improvement that will:
 - set out how the school will ensure the use of Irish as the language of communication, instruction and socialisation within the school and
 - communicate and promote the benefits of learning Irish and learning through Irish among the school community (principal, staff, pupils, parents and board of management).
5. Review the quality of educational provision through Irish to ensure continuous improvement through the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.
6. Provide Irish language learning experiences in accordance with the L1² learning outcomes in the Primary Language Curriculum for Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools.
7. Use Irish language resources³ to support the teaching of all curricular areas through Irish, apart from the English curriculum.
8. Deliver curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (where provided) through Irish.
9. Support their school community in the language planning process (under the Gaeltacht Act, 2012) by contributing to the use and maintenance of Irish in the school and local Gaeltacht community.
10. Prioritise the use of Irish in communicating with parents, the local community and other parties.
11. Establish useful and mutually-beneficial language and cultural links with local Irish-medium early-years settings (where available).
12. Establish useful and mutually-beneficial language and cultural links with local Irish-medium post-primary schools and other Irish-medium primary schools.
13. Make every effort to recruit teaching and ancillary staff that are proficient in Irish, and have a knowledge and understanding of pedagogical practice relevant to teaching through Irish as well as an understanding of the language and cultural dynamics of the Gaeltacht.

* The Department of Education (DfE) defines total-immersion as a programme of instruction in which the language of instruction is Irish and the language of communication is also Irish. The Department of Education (DfE) defines total-immersion as a programme of instruction in which the language of instruction is Irish and the language of communication is also Irish. The Department of Education (DfE) defines total-immersion as a programme of instruction in which the language of instruction is Irish and the language of communication is also Irish.



GAELTACHT SCHOOL RECOGNITION SCHEME

Language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht post-primary school



1. Extend the availability of a full curriculum through Irish, apart from the English and other language curricula, as the Gaeltacht school moves towards a total-immersion approach¹.
2. Deliver high quality educational experiences through Irish to all students focusing particular attention on the differentiated language needs of native Irish speakers² as well as learners of Irish.
3. Develop a whole-school action plan for improvement that will:
 - set out how the school will ensure the use of Irish as the language of communication, instruction and socialisation within the school and
 - communicate and promote the benefits of learning Irish and learning through Irish to the school community (principal, staff, students, parents and board of management).
4. Review the quality of educational provision through Irish to ensure continuous improvement through the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.
5. Implement L1³ specification for Irish at Junior Cycle.
6. Use Irish-language resources⁴ where available, to support the teaching of all curricular areas through Irish, apart from English and other languages.
7. Deliver curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (where provided) through Irish.
8. Support their school community in the language planning process (under the Gaeltacht Act, 2012) by contributing to the use and maintenance of Irish in the school and local Gaeltacht community.
9. Prioritise the use of Irish in communicating with parents, the local community and other parties.
10. Establish useful and mutually-beneficial language and educational links with other local Irish-medium primary and/or post-primary schools by utilising online and blended learning opportunities.
11. Make every effort to recruit teaching and ancillary staff that are proficient in Irish, and have a knowledge and understanding of pedagogical practice relevant to teaching through Irish as well as an understanding of the language and cultural dynamics of the Gaeltacht.

¹ Total-immersion means that the learning environment operates solely through Irish in the case of Irish as the first language of the school with the provision of English and other languages. This enables the full development of native language proficiency.
² A native speaker of Irish is defined as a child who is raised through Irish in an Irish-language community and whose parents speak Irish as the home language of communication in the home, such being defined as the parents of children for whom their first language is Irish (DfE, 2012) and L1.
³ L1 refers to Irish as the main language of the school in relation to teaching and learning, and communication in official correspondence and non-internal affairs.
⁴ The DfE website (www.dfe.gov.ie) provides a variety of resources to support teaching through Irish in primary and post-primary schools in Gaeltacht language planning zones.



Gaeltacht Education Policy Supports

Guide for Schools

Advisory visits from
inspectors

Indicators of good
practice in schools

Immersion
education
checklists

Board of
management
checklists

Sample Action
Plans

Guidance on
community
partnerships

Guidance on
strengthening links
between preschools
& primary schools

2021

Case-study report on progress



105 (134) primary schools (opted in)



29 (29) post-primary schools (opted in)



Schools developing a vision & action plan for use of Irish throughout their schools



Improved language behaviours among managers, teachers, pupils and parents



Most primary pupils (75%+) using Irish among themselves



A significant minority of post-primary pupils (25% - 49%) using Irish

2021 Case-study report on progress

“A lot done, a lot more to
do”

Increased use of Irish among pupils in class and in the school yard

Incentives being used to encourage use of Irish

Extra-curricular activities through Irish

Less progress with post-primary students

Teachers exemplifying language behaviours and standards

Improved focus on Irish in teacher recruitment

Local dialects being promoted

Teachers engaging in Professional Development for immersion

2021

Case-study report on progress

2-year full
immersion in all
primary schools

Methodology in
most schools
either very good
or good

Irish being used
in staff meetings

Irish being used
to communicate
with parents

Parents being
supported with
L1 curricular
terminology

Improvements Recommended

Local and national campaigns to target parents to use Irish as a home language

Teacher attitudes in a small number of schools

Recruitment of post-primary subject specialists

Post-primary language proficiency among teachers

Greater focus on action plans and sharing the school vision for the language with the community

More Professional development in CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning)

Improved parental awareness

Conclusions

Significant improvements in language behaviours in school, families, and communities

Schools have a vision, action plan and sense of purpose vis à vis language maintenance

Schools are energised re the Irish language and the Gaeltacht

Schools are engaging with community language-planning coordinators

Too early to say whether the policy will have a positive impact on overall figures re daily use in Gaeltacht communities

Further information

[Gaeltacht Education Policy](#)

<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/57458-policy-on-gaeltacht-education-2017-2022/>

[Report on case-study schools](#)

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e9253-report-on-case-study-schools-participating-in-the-gaeltacht-school-recognition-scheme/>



Go raibh maith agaibh!

Thank you