

# **Steering Committee**

## **Policy on Irish-medium Education outside of the Gaeltacht**

### **Minutes of Meeting 4**

**Date:** Wednesday, 9 May 2023

**Location:** Room G13/14, The Department of Education, Marlborough Street, Dublin

**Meeting Time:** 2:30 p.m. go 4:30 p.m.

### **Present:**

Gavan O'Leary (Chair) – *Assistant Secretary, Department of Education*

Lisa Nic Dhoinnleibhe – *Principal Officer, Gaeltacht Education Unit*

Muireann Tóibín & Michael Devane – *Gaeltacht Education Unit, Department of Education*

Yvonne Ní Mhurchú – *The Inspectorate, Department of Education*

Jacqui de Paor – *The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)*

Aislinn Duffy – *The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)*

Aodán Mac an Mhíle – *The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM)*

Jacqueline Ní Fhearghusa – *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta (COGG)*

Cathy Connolly – *National Council for Special Education (NCSE)*

Stella Ní Shé – *National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)*

Arlene Forster – *National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)*

### **Apologies**

Phil Fox – *The Teaching Council*

Toby Wolfe – *The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)*

### **1. Welcome**

The Chairperson welcomed the members to the fourth meeting of the Steering Committee. He welcomed Yvonne Ní Mhurchú who was attending in Martin Whyte's stead as representative of the Inspectorate and he informed the group that Foras na Gaeilge would be nominating a new representative in place of Edel Ni Chorráin going forward.

### **2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

The minutes of meeting three of the Steering Committee were accepted without amendment. There were no matters arising.

### **3. Update on policy research**

GO'L asked LNicD to give an update on the research being undertaken in relation to the new policy.

#### *(1) Analysis of phase 1 of the consultation*

Sealbhú, DCU, is carrying out an analysis of the data collected in phase 1 of the consultation. 21,627 responses were received in total to the questionnaire's open questions and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of these open responses have been analysed to date. A breakdown of the amount of material to be analysed in the written submissions was also shared. It was stated that it was intended to provide a report on the results from phase 1 of the consultation process at the beginning of June.

#### *(2) International research*

Sealbhú has already furnished the committee with a preliminary report on international research. Research is now being carried out on two further jurisdictions, Finland and Hawaii. Further investigation of the international research is ongoing in relation to early years education and provision for special educational needs (SEN) in all jurisdictions. The redrafted interim report will be completed by the middle of June.

#### *(3) Research on Units/Streams*

T.J. Ó Ceallaigh, Máire Uí Chonghaile and Muiris Ó Laoire are carrying out research on Units and Streams. Research in the field is being conducted at present and will soon be completed. Interviews are being conducted with teachers in charge of units and with principals of host schools. Units that have been discontinued and units that transitioned to independent Gaelcholáistí are also being included in the research. It is expected that the researchers will give an interim presentation on their research to the Steering Committee at the next meeting of the committee.

#### *(4) Inspectorate composite reports*

Inspectorate composite reports on Irish-medium primary and post-primary schools outside of the Gaeltacht have been drafted and published as part of the policy development process. JdeP reported that work has been carried out by DCEDIY to identify the Irish-medium ELC settings outside of the Gaeltacht. As this information is now available, a composite report on inspectorate visits to Irish-medium early learning and care (ELC) settings will be drafted. Work will begin shortly on this composite report for ELC settings.

Committee members were satisfied with the progress in relation to research.

### **4. Update on phase 2 of the public consultation - focus groups**

LNicD gave a summary of the progress made in relation to focus groups.

#### *(a) Focus groups with primary school children*

Ninety-eight pupils from 4th-6th class in Irish-medium primary schools and in English-medium primary schools took part in the primary school focus groups. Máire Ní Ghealbháin (a research assistant from Sealbhú, DCU) attended all focus groups and has prepared an interim report on the themes emerging. Some of the pupils' thoughts were shared with the committee. Recommendations are outlined in Chapter 4 of the report, recommendations which can be considered as part of the policy development process.

#### *(b) Focus groups with post-primary students*

All of the post-primary focus groups have now been completed. One hundred and nineteen students took part in these focus groups. The interim report is currently being completed, and will be shared with committee members when available.

#### *(c) Focus groups with adults*

Five of the six focus groups with adults have now been completed. The last focus group, on schools that transitioned from English-medium to Irish-medium education, will be held in the coming weeks. LNicD gave a short summary on each focus group that has been held to date. A discussion took place on how to effectively include the views of parents. It was stated that Máire Ní Ghealbháin would continue with the analysis on these focus groups and that the result of the analysis will be shared with the committee in due course.

### **5. Planning for phase 3 of the public consultation – bilateral meetings and policy forum**

A discussion paper on bilateral meetings and the policy forum was circulated to the Steering Committee prior to the meeting and was shared on screen. Bilateral meetings are to be held with relevant organisations as part of phase 3 of the public consultation process.

The timeline relating to phase 3 was discussed. It is aimed to hold the bilateral meetings before the end of June, as far as possible. Time will be needed afterwards to analyse the information obtained. Once analysis of all three phases of the consultation is complete, the identification of policy direction can commence. It is then hoped to hold a policy forum towards the end of the year.

### **6. Discussion on emerging preliminary themes**

LNicD shared some initial elements that have emerged in the consultation so far. These included: the need to raise awareness of the advantages of bilingualism; initial teacher education, assessment at primary level; the TGMI in post-primary schools; support for parents; and Irish outside of school.

The committee held a brief discussion on some of these aspects.

### **7. Actions and the next steps**

Some of the actions arising from the meeting were summarised:

- Committee members were asked to forward any written feedback in relation to the bilateral meetings to the Department before close of business on Friday, 12 May.
- The final focus group on schools transitioning from English-medium education to Irish-medium education will be held before the next meeting.
- Interim reports on the focus groups, as well as drafts of reports on other research, will be disseminated to members of the Steering Committee as they become available.

GO'L thanked all of the members for their input and a date was agreed for the next meeting – Wednesday, 21 June 2023.

**The Gaeltacht Education Unit**

**The Department of Education**

**May 2023**