



Coiste Oideachais Thionól Thuaisceart Éireann
Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Education

ar

on

Bille Shainriachtanais Oideachais agus Míchumas
Special Educational Needs and Disability Bill

Aibreán 2015

April 2015

Cúlra | Background:

Is fóram daonlathach é Conradh na Gaeilge do phobal na Gaeilge. Oibríonn an eagraíocht ar son na Gaeilge agus ar son na ndaoine a bhaineann úsáid as an teanga timpeall oileann hÉireann agus fud fad an domhain.

Is é príomh-aidhm na heagraíochta ná an Ghaeilge a fheiceáil mar ghnáth-theanga labhartha na hÉireann. Ó a bunaíodh an eagraíocht ar 31ú Iúil 1893, tá baill Chonradh na Gaeilge gníomhach leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn i ngach gné i saol na tíre seo, ó chúrsaí dlí, chúrsaí oideachais, go bhforbairtí sna meáin agus seirbhísí trí Ghaeilge.

Tá 180 Craobh agus neart ball aonar de Chonradh na Gaeilge, agus oibríonn baill de Chonradh na Gaeilge go léir go dian le húsáid na Gaeilge ina gceantracha féin a fhorbairt.

Tá níos mó eolais faoi obair Chonradh na Gaeilge ar fail ag www.cnag.ie.

Conradh na Gaeilge is a democratic forum for the Irish language community. The organisation works on behalf of the Irish language and the people who use it throughout the island of Ireland and around the world.

The main aim of the organisation is to see Irish used as the ordinary language in Ireland. From its establishment on the 31st July 1893, members of Conradh na Gaeilge have been active in promoting the Irish language in every aspect of this country's life, from legal matters, to education, to developments in the media and Irish language services.

There are 180 branches and many individual members of Conradh na Gaeilge. All members of Conradh na Gaeilge work hard to develop the use of Irish in their own areas.

More information about the work of Conradh na Gaeilge is available at www.cnag.ie.

Intreoir | Introduction:

Tá fás súntasach déanta ag Gaelsoideachas le blianta anuas. Ó a bunaíodh an chéad bunscoil ar Bhóthar Seoighe i 1971, tá fás agus forbairt déantar ar an earnáil agus anois, tá níos mó ná 5,000 páiste ag dul fríd an chóras tumoideachais. Áfach, in aineoinn an éileamh atá ag fás do Ghaeloideachas, is iomaí dúshlán atá go fóill roimh an earnáil.

Cuireann Airteagal 89 den Ord Oideachais (Tuaisceart Éireann) 1998 dualgas reachtúla ar an Roinne Oideachais leis an Ghaeloideachas ‘a spreagadh agus a éascú.’ Tá an dualgas seo bunaithe ar an dualgas a bhí leagtha síos i 1989 don earnáil iomlánaithe, agus ciallaíonn sé go gcaithfidh an Roinn Oideachais céimeanna a ghlacadh le cinntiú go bhfaigheann earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta an tacaíocht agus na hacmhainní cuí atá de dhíth leis an earnáil a fhorbairt bunaithe ar an éileamh atá ann. Sa chás *Ard-Chúirte i 2011 Coláiste Feirste v Roinn Oideachas (2011) 98 NIQB*, dúirt Justice Treacy go raibh ‘practical consequences and legislative significance’ ag baint leis an dualgas seo.

Is deis iad an Bille agus an comhairliúchán seo le cinntiú go bhfuil freastail ceart déanta ar riachtanais daoine óga a bhfuil sainriachtanais oideachais acu.

Irish-medium education has grown significantly here in the past number of years. Since the establishment of the first Irish-medium school on the Shaws Road in Belfast in 1971, the sector has grown and flourished and now provides education to more than 5,000 children. However, in spite of the growing demand for Irish-medium education, there are still many challenges faced by the sector.

Article 89 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 places a statutory duty on the Department of Education to ‘encourage and facilitate’ Irish-medium education. This duty, modelled on that set down in 1989 for the Integrated Education sector, means that the Department of Education must take steps to ensure the Irish-medium education sector is given the necessary resources and support to grow and develop in line with the demand that exists for it. In the 2011 High Court case of *Coláiste Feirste v Department of Education (2011) NIQB 98*, Justice Treacy found that this order was to have ‘practical consequences and legislative significance.’

The Bill currently being consulted on, is an opportunity to ensure that the needs of children with special educational needs in the Irish-medium sector are properly catered for.

Diagnóis Shainriachtanais Oideachais i nGaelscoileanna |

Diagnosis of Special Educational Needs in Irish-medium schools:

Tá difir mhór idir na céadatáin de pháistí agus de dhaoine óga le ráiteasaí Sainriachtanais Oideachais in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta i gcomparáid leis an earnáil ar fad. I 2014-2015, bhí ráiteas ag 3.8% de pháistí i mbunscoileanna, agus ag 1.9% de pháistí i nGaelscoileanna ag leibhéal bunscoile, agus tá ráiteas ag 5.9% de dhaoine óga i meánscoileanna, agus ag 3.6% sa chóras Gaeloideachais ag leibhéal meánscoile.

Tógann na figiúirí seo dhá cheist: Ar dtús, an bhfuil na huirlisí diagnóiseacha atá ar fáil faoi láthair comh éifeachtach agus is féidir, agus ina dhiaidh sin, mura bhfuil sé seo an cás, cén fáth an bhfuil an difir súntasach seo againn in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta? Is minic an cás nuair a dhéantar diagnóis ar pháiste le sainriachtanais oideachais go moltar lena dtuismitheoirí an páiste a bhaint ón ghaelscoil a roghnaigh siad, agus iad a chur chuig scoil Bhéarla. Cuireann sé seo isteach ar chearta tuismitheoirí rogha an Gaeloideachais a dhéanamh dá bpáistí, agus tógtar ceisteanna dáiríre faoi chearta an pháiste oideachais a bheith acu in máthartheanga.¹

The percentages of children and young people with statements of Special Educational Needs varies significantly between the schools sector as a whole and the Irish-medium sector. In 2014-2015, 3.8% of children in primary schools had a statement of Special Educational Needs, as did 1.9% of children in Irish-medium schools, and 5.9% of children in secondary schools had statements, as did 3.6% of children in Irish-medium education.²

These figures raise two questions: Firstly, whether the diagnostic tools currently available are as effective as they need to be in Irish-medium schools, and secondly, if it is not the case that those in needs of statements have not received them, then why is there a significantly lower number of children with statements in the Irish-medium sector? It is often the case that when a child is diagnosed with having special educational needs that the parents will be advised to remove that child from the Irish-medium school that they have selected for their child and to enrol them in an English speaking school. Doing this infringes upon the parents' right to choose Irish-medium education for their child, and also raises serious questions in relation to the rights of the child to receive education in their mother tongue.³

¹ For more information, see Prof. Dr. Fernand de Varennes, Education, Discrimination and Language, 13 March 2015

² NI Schools Census 2014-2015

³ For more information, see Prof. Dr. Fernand de Varennes, Education, Discrimination and Language, 13 March 2015

Tá síceolaithe oideachais ag rá go bhfuil fadhb eile ag earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta maidir leis an easpa uirlísí measúnú do Shainriachtanais Oideachais trí Ghaeilge. Ba chóir go mbeadh measúnú déanta ar pháistí atá sa chóras Gaeloideachais trí Ghaeilge leis na torthaí is cothroime a fháil. Tá na síceolaithe seo ag rá go bhfuil trí dhúshlán mór rompu san obair seo: “cumas pearsanta sa Ghaeilge (24%), easpa uirlísí measúnú sa Ghaeilge (20%) agus diagnóis cruinn ar dheacrachtaí foghlama(12%).”⁴ Mothaíonn na daoine siúd atá bainte leis an obair seo go mbeadh sé fiúntach dá mbeadh tuiscint níos fearr acu ar na modhanna oideolaíochta atá in úsáid i gcóras tumoideachais ina buntáiste dóibh. Mura bhfuil freastal ceart déanta ar pháistí agus ar dhaoine óga a bhfuil sainriachtanais oideachais acu taobh istigh den chóras Gaelscolaíochta, ní bheadh an dualgas reachtúla leis an Ghaeloideachas a ‘spreagadh agus a éascú’ á comhlíonadh mar is ceart. De réir an Tuairisc seo, cé go bhfuil na prótacail cuí in úsáid i nGaelscoileanna le freastal ar Shainriachtanais Oideachais, tá cásanna ann nuair nach bhfuil mórán eolais ag an CSO ar an Ghaeilge. Ar a bharr seo, is iomaí múinteoir san earnáil, thart ar 33%, nach bhfuil níos mó ná cúig bhliain de thaithí acu, agus mar gheall ar an dhá rud seo curtha le chéile, bíonn sé deacair in amanna sainriachtanais oideachais a aithint i dtimpeallacht Gaeloideachais. Is mór an tábhacht a bhaineann le Sainriachtanais Oideachais a aithint a luaithe agus is féidir, agus thioctadh leis na deacrachtaí seo fadhbanna fad-tearmach a chruthú ag leibhéal meánscoile don pháiste agus don scoil agus iad ag iarraidh freastal ar a riachtanais.

⁴ Ní Chinnéide, The Special Educational Needs of Bilingual (Irish/English) Children, Department of Education (NI), September 2009, pg 22

Educational psychologists have indicated that another problem faced by the Irish-medium sector in the identification of SEN is the lack of assessment materials in Irish. Pupils who are being educated through Irish ought to be assessed in Irish in order to give the most accurate results. These psychologists have also indicated three major challenges that they face in their work, which include “personal Irish language competence (24%), the lack of assessment material in Irish (20%) and accurate diagnosis of learning difficulties (12%).”⁵ Those involved in the assessment of pupils with SEN have also indicated that they feel a better understanding on their part of the pedagogical methods and specific needs of immersion education would be beneficial. A failure to ensure that children and young people with Special Educational Needs are properly catered for within the Irish-medium sector means that the statutory duty to ‘encourage and facilitate’ Irish-medium education is not being properly fulfilled. This Report suggested that while the correct protocols were in place in Irish-medium schools in order to address Special Educational Needs, there are instances where SENCOS do not have any knowledge of Irish. In addition to this, a large proportion, around a third, of teachers in the Irish-medium sector have less than five years of experience, and these factors taken together can make it more difficult to effectively and accurately diagnose special educational needs within an Irish-medium setting. As early diagnosis of SEN is of extreme importance, these deficiencies could lead to longer-term problems at post-primary level both for the pupil and for the schools’ ability to cater for them.

⁵ Ní Chinnéide, The Special Educational Needs of Bilingual (Irish/English) Children, Department of Education (NI), September 2009, pg 22

Athbheithniú ar an Ghaeloideachas | Review of Irish-medium Education:

San Athbheithniú ar Ghaeloideachas a rinne an Roinn Oideachais i 2008, rinneadh moltaí i dtaca le Sainriachtanais Oideachais:

“Moladh 17: Tacaíocht do Shainriachtanais Oideachais

i. Ba chóir don Údarás Oideachais agus Scileanna an cumas a fhorbairt sainriachtanais oideachais pháistí a chomhlíonadh trí mheán na Gaeilge nuair is féidir, agus fócas ar leith ar réimsí ina mbeadh a leithéid de thacaíocht ina buntáiste. Teastóidh foireann tacaíochta SEN atá oilte go cuí uaidh seo a mbeidh scileanna Gaeilge ar ardchaighdeán acu, agus d’fhéadfaí seo a fhorbairt, mar shampla, trí sparánachtaí.

ii. Molann Bord an Tionscadail, nuair nach bhfuil tacaíocht SEN ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge, gur chóir go dtabharfaí an tacaíocht is mó agus is féidir trí mheán an Bhéarla do pháistí, agus úsáid iomlán á baint as an bhonneagar C2K agus acmhainní eile. Sna himthosca seo ba chóir don Údarás Oideachais agus Scileanna a chinntiú go bhfuil an tacaíocht íogair do riachtanais na bpáistí atá ag foghlaim trí Ghaeilge. Ba chóir an dea-chleachtas a scaipeadh, lena n-áirítear comhthéacs saineúil agus saincheistanna a bhaineann leis an ghaelscolaíocht a chur san áireamh, agus teagmháil á déanamh le scoileanna agus múinteoirí ar na saincheistanna seo.

In the Review of Irish-medium education that was carried out by the Department of Education in 2008, recommendations were made in relation to Special Educational Needs.

“Recommendation 17: Support for Special Educational Needs

i. The Education and Skills Authority should develop the capacity to meet the special educational needs (SEN) of children through the medium of Irish where possible, with a particular emphasis on those needs that are most acute. This would require appropriately skilled SEN support staff with high-quality Irish-language skills, which could be developed, for example, through bursaries.

ii. The Project Board recommends that, where SEN support is not available through the medium of Irish, children should receive as much support as possible through the medium of English, making full use of the C2K infrastructure and other resources to optimise the availability and specificity of the support. In these circumstances the Education and Skills Authority should ensure that the support is sensitive to the needs of the children learning through Irish. Best practice should be disseminated, including taking account of the specific context and issues relevant to Irish-medium Education, and engaging with schools and teachers on these issues.

iii. Ba chóir go dtabharfaí tacaíocht do mhúinteoirí sa Ghaelscolaíocht trí dhea-chleachtas atá ann cheana féin in SEN a chomhroinnt, go hairithe ó earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta. Ba chóir don Údarás Oideachais agus Scileanna agus do ghníomhaireachtaí eile seo a chur chun cinn agus a thacú, agus leas á bhaint as foinsí ar bhonn uile-Éireann agus thoir/thiar ó shuíomhanna lán-Bhéarla chomh maith le comhthéacsanna an tumoideachais. Beidh príomhról ag TFC i réadú na mbuntáistí atá ar fáil do dhaltaí agus dá múinteoirí.

iv. Ba chóir uirlisí diagnóiseacha ardleibhéal a fhorbairt d'earnáil na gaelscolaíochta, agus leas á bhaint as deiseanna uile-Éireann agus thoir/thiar.”

Acmhainní | Resources:

Cé go bhfuil ‘Comhad Áiseanna GO’ foilsithe ag an Roinne Oideachais dóibh siúd atá ag obair in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta, níl ann ach aistriúchán ar an Chomhad Áiseanna atá ar fáil i scoileanna Béarla chéanna féin. Ní phléann an Comhad Áiseanna seo leis na riachtanais breise atá ag páistí agus ag daoine óga i gcóras Gaeloideachais. Tá rudaí breise le cur san áireamh nuair nárbh í teanga an seomra ranga an chéad teanga atá ag an pháiste. Tá sé riachtanach, mar sin, le cinntiú go bhfuil tuilleadh comhairle agus tacaíochta curtha ar fáil do mhúinteoirí, thuismitheoirí agus do bhaill Bhoird Gobhnairí le cuidiú leo an tacaíocht is fearr a chur ar fáil do na páistí seo nuair atá sé de dhíth.

iii. Teachers in Irish-medium Education must make best use of the available support for SEN, and should be supported through the sharing of existing best practice in SEN; examples from immersion education contexts, and particularly from the Irish-medium sector, should be included. This should be promoted and assisted by the Education and Skills Authority and other support agencies, using ICT as appropriate, drawing on sources on an all-Ireland and east-west basis from English-medium settings as well as immersion language contexts. ICT will have a key role to play in the realisation of the available benefits for pupils and their teachers

iv. The development of high-level diagnostic tools for the Irish-medium sector should be investigated, informed by experiences within Ireland and Britain on both an all-Ireland and east-west basis.”

Although a ‘IME Resource File’ has been published by the Department of Education for those working in the Irish-medium education sector, this is simply a translation of the Resource File already available in English-medium schools. This Resource File doesn’t address the needs of children and young people who are receiving their education through Irish. There are additional considerations to take into account whenever the language of instruction is not the child’s first language. It is essential, therefore, that additional guidance and support is provided to teachers, parents and members of Boards of Governors to help them to provide the support for these children which is necessary.

Ní amháin gur chóir na rudaí seo a chur san áireamh i gcomhthéacs an Bhille seo, ach ba chóir go mbeadh na rudaí seo pléite san earnáil oideachais mar atá faoi láthair. Léirigh Tuairisc a rinneadh faoin na Sainriachtanais Oideachais atá ag páistí dátheangacha anseo go bhfuil easpa tacaíochta dírithe ar riachtanais na hearnála tumoideachais.

“Respondents indicate a need for IM-specific support which takes account of the challenges and complexities of identification and assessment of SEN and teaching the curriculum through the medium of a second language in an immersion education programme.”⁶

Not only does this need to be considered in the context of this Bill, but also needs to be addressed in the education sector as it currently stands. A Report that was carried out into the Special Educational Needs of bilingual children here has found that there is, at present, insufficient support specifically directed at the needs of the immersion education system.

“Respondents indicate a need for IM-specific support which takes account of the challenges and complexities of identification and assessment of SEN and teaching the curriculum through the medium of a second language in an immersion education programme.”⁷

Sainriachtanais Oideachais sa Bhreatain Beag | Special Educational Needs in Wales:

Sa Bhreatain Beag, áit eile ina bhfuil córas tumoideachais acu, déantar gach iarracht le cinntiú go bhfuil tacaíocht agus comhairle curtha ar fáil trí mheán na Breataine, mar chuid den oideachas atá ag an pháiste. De réir a gCód Cleachtas do Shainriachtanais Oideachas:

*“All other bodies which help pupils and their parents, but which are not covered by the Welsh Language Act, should also, in so far as they are able, ensure that their services are delivered in Welsh and/or English as appropriate. It should be remembered that Welsh or English speaking children and young people’s progress will be hindered if they do not receive services in the language in which they are most comfortable, and this applies equally to those pupils receiving Welsh medium, English medium or bilingual education.”*⁸

In Wales, where they also have a system of immersion education, every effort is made to ensure that the assistance and support given is through the medium of Welsh, in keeping with the child’s education. Their Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs states:

“All other bodies which help pupils and their parents, but which are not covered by the Welsh Language Act, should also, in so far as they are able, ensure that their services are delivered in Welsh and/or English as appropriate. It should be remembered that Welsh or English speaking children and young people’s progress will be hindered if they do not receive services in the language in which they are most comfortable, and this applies equally to those pupils receiving Welsh medium, English medium or bilingual education.”

⁶ Ní Chinnéide, The Special Educational Needs of Bilingual (Irish/English) Children, Department of Education (NI), September 2009, pg 22

⁷ Ibid pg 22

⁸ Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales:

<http://learning.wales.gov.uk/docs/learningwales/publications/131016-sen-code-of-practice-for-wales-en.pdf>

Le linn an Chóid seo, tá riachtanais na bpáistí a bhfuil Breatnais acu ina gcuid lárnach, príomhshruthaithe den soláthar do Shainriachtanais Oideachais. Ba chóir go mbeadh an sampla seo in úsáid anseo, mar ní amháin go léiríonn sé seo gur féidir bheith cinnte go bhfuil freastal ceart déanta ar riachtanais páistí dátheangacha, ach go bhfuil na rudaí seo riachtanach le cinntiú go bhfuil an seirbhís is fearr agus is féidir curtha ar fáil do na páistí seo.

Aonaid Speisialta | Specialist Units:

Más rud é go bhfuil na riachtanais speisialta atá ag páiste comh dáiríre sin nach féidir le hoideachas i scoil phríomhshruthaithe freastal ar riachtanais an pháiste, níor chóir go gciallaíonn sé seo go huathoibríoch nach mbeadh rogha an Ghaeloideachais ar fáil dóibh. Tá thart fá 28 aonad do shainriachtanais speisialta ag leibhéal bunscoile, agus ní éascaíonn ceann ar bith acu páistí a bhfuil Gaeilge acu. Ba chóir go mbeadh aonaid den tsórt seo bunaithe le cinntiú nach mbeidh ar thuismitheoirí rogha a dhéanamh idir a bpáistí a chur chuig aonad speisialta nó cuidiú leo an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim.

Ceantracha atá faoi Mhíbhuntáiste | Disadvantaged Areas:

Tá bunús na nGaelscoileanna anseo i gceantracha atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste, socraithe ar líon na mbeilte saoire atá sa scoil. Mar gheall ar an chomhghaol atá idir ceantracha atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste agus diagnóis sainriachtanais oideachais, tá sé le ciall go mbeadh tuilleadh acmhainní le cuidiú le sainriachtanais oideachais ag dul i dtreo earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta.

Throughout this Code, the needs of Welsh speaking pupils are considered as a central and mainstreamed part of Special Educational Needs provision. This sample should be followed here, as it shows that not only is it possible to ensure that the needs of bilingual children are met, but that this is also essential to ensuring that the best possible services for those children are provided.

In instances where a pupil's special educational needs are deemed so severe that education in a mainstream school cannot meet their needs, this shouldn't automatically mean that the option of Irish-medium education is not available to them. There are approximately 38 dedicated units for special educational needs at primary level, none of which cater for pupils who speak Irish. Units which can provide this support should be established so that parents are not faced with the choice of sending their children to a specialist unit or helping their child to learn Irish.

Most Irish-medium education schools are in areas of disadvantage, as determined by their entitlement to free school meals. Due to the correlations that have been found between areas of disadvantage and the diagnosis of special educational needs, it stands to reason that more resources to address special educational needs would be directed into the Irish-medium sector because of this.

Forálacha sa Bhille | Clauses of the Bill:

Foráil 1: Dualgas an Údaráis barúlach an pháiste a chur san áireamh

Nuair atá páiste ag freastal ar Ghaelscoil chéanna féin, agus tá comhairliúchán á dhéanamh ar na cinnithe faoina sainriachtanais oideachais, ba chóir go mbeadh sé soiléir don pháiste sin – mar chuid den eolas riachtanach a bhfaighidh siad – go mbeidh an tacaíocht agus cuidiú céanna ar fáil dóibh sa Ghaelscoil, trí Ghaeilge, agus a bheadh ar fáil dóibh dá mbeadh siad ag freastal ar scoil ar bith eile.

Foráil 2: Dualgas an Údaráis pleananna a fhoilsiú i dtaca le socruithe do sholáthar ar shainriachtanais oideachais

Ní mór don Údaráis riachtanais na bpáistí i nGaelscoileanna a chur san áireamh mar chuid soiléir de na plean iomlán. Ní leor é leis na céimeanna atá i scoileanna Béarla a chur i bhfeidhm in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta fosta. Ní chlúdaíonn an cur chuige seo na gnéithe breise a bhaineann le hoideachais i dtimpeallacht tumoideachais.

Foráil 3: Dualgas ar Bhoird Gobharnóirí i dtaca le scoláirí le sainriachtanais oideachais

Is cúis imní iad na forálacha le tuilleadh dualgais a chur ar Bhoird Gobharnóirí i dtaca le sainriachtanais oideachais, mar is mór an brú atá ar Gobharnóirí bheith ag plé le gach gnéithe eile i saol na scoile. Ar a bharr seo, níl tacaíocht nó treoir ar bith ar fáil atá dírithe ar Ghobharnóirí i nGaelscoileanna faoin bhealach is fearr le plé le riachtanais páistí atá i gcóras tumoideachais. Níl aon oiliúint i léith ar fáil do Ghobharnóirí Gaelscoileanna, taobh amuigh de sin atá déanta ag an earnáil féin. Fosta, tá an t-eolas atá ag cuid mhór Gobharnóirí ar Shainriachtanais Oideachais agus ar an tábhacht a bhaineann le diagnóis luath nó tacaíocht leanúnach don pháiste sin teoranta. Ciallaíonn na rudaí seo ar fad go bhfuil comhairle agus tacaíocht de dhíth le cinntiú gur féidir le Gobharnóirí na dualgais atá orthu, fiú sa chóras mar atá anois, a chomhlíonadh.

Clause 1: Duty of the Authority to have regard to views of the child

Where a child is already enrolled in an Irish-medium school and is being consulted on the decisions surrounding their special educational needs, it should be made clear to that child – as part of the necessary information they receive - that they will receive all the same support and assistance in an Irish-medium school, through Irish, as they would receive if they were to be enrolled anywhere else.

Clause 2: Duty of Authority to publish plans relating to its arrangements for special educational provision

The Authority must consider the needs of pupils in Irish-medium schools as a distinct part of their overall plan. It is not enough to simply apply the measures in English-medium schools to schools in the Irish-medium sector also. This fails to take into consideration the additional elements of learning in an immersion environment.

Clause 3: Duties of Boards of Governors in relation to pupils with special educational needs

The proposals to increase the duties on members of Boards of Governors in relation to Special Educational Needs is concerning, as there is a great deal of pressure on Governors to deal with so many other matters in any given school. In addition to this, no support or guidance is currently available to Governors in Irish-medium schools in how best to meet the needs of children in an immersion education system. There is no bespoke training available for Governors of Irish-medium schools, other than that developed by the sector itself. Also, the knowledge that most Governors will have of Special Educational Needs, the importance of early diagnosis or the necessity of continual support for that child is limited. All of this means that it is essential that proper guidance and support is put in place to ensure that the duties on Governors, even as they currently stand, can be properly carried out.

Cuireann foráil 3(2)(c) dualgas ar Bhoird Gobharnóirí comhordaítheoir tacaíochta foghlama a cheapadh, agus is dócha gur gá go mbeidh cáilíochtaí nó táithí áirithe ag an duine sin. Is mór an éileamh é seo, agus thioctadh leis an fhoráil seo deacrachtaí a chruthú d'earnáil atá comh óg is atá earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta faoi láthair. Tá tacaíocht agus cuidiú dírithe de dhíth le cinntiú go bhfuil na scileanna agus an t-eolas cuí ag Boird Gobharnóirí agus ag comh-ordaítheoirí tacaíochta foghlama leis na dualgais seo a chomhlíonadh mar is ceart.

Clause 4: Duty of Authority to request help from health and social care bodies

Where help is sought from health and social care bodies in the delivery of support to a pupil with Special Educational Needs, all efforts should be made to ensure that this support can be delivered through the medium of Irish and in a way which is sensitive to the needs of a pupil in an immersion education system.

Clause 8: Mediation in connection with appeals

An independent person appointed to provide mediation services to those seeking an appeal who are in the Irish-medium sector should have knowledge and understanding of the Irish-medium education system.

Clause 3(2)(c) places a duty on Boards of Governors to appoint a learning support co-ordinator, who may be required by regulations to have particular qualifications or experience. This is a very demanding provision which could cause difficulties in the comparatively young Irish-medium education sector. Tailored support and assistance is needed to ensure that both Boards of Governors and Learning Support Co-ordinators in Irish-medium schools can gain the necessary skills and knowledge to properly and effectively carry out these functions.

Foráil 4: Dualgas an Údaráis cuidiú a lorg ó chomhlachtaí sláinte agus cúram sóisialta
Nuait atá cuidiú á lorg ó chomhlachtaí sláinte nó cúram sóisialta i dtaca le soláthar tacaíochta do scoláire le Sainriachtanais Oideachais, ba chóir go ndéanfar gach iarracht le cinntiú gur féidir an tacaíocht seo a sholáthar trí mheán na Gaeilge agus ar bhealach atá aideallach ar riachtanais an pháiste i gcóras tumoideachais.

Foráil 8: Idirghabháil i dtaca le hAcomhairc
Ba chóir go mbeadh tuiscint ar an Ghaeloideachas ag cibé duine neamhspléach atá ceaptha le seirbhísí idirghabhála a chur ar fáil do dhaoine atá ar lorg achomhairc más rud go bhfuil siad in earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta.