
Consultation on Proposal for a draft Education
(Northern Ireland) Order

RESPONSE BOOKLET

December 2005

**Responses will not be accepted after
TUESDAY, 7 MARCH 2006**

Please note that to ensure that your comments are taken into account you **MUST** fully complete **SECTIONS 1 and 2** if you are making an individual response, or **SECTIONS 1 and 3** if you are responding on behalf of an organisation.

It is important that you write clearly and legibly. We would ask you to use black pen and **BLOCK CAPITALS** at all times.

.....

SECTION 1

Name of Organisation: Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

PART II – THE CURRICULUM

General Duty, Statutory requirements relating to curriculum, Duties relating to the curriculum

Articles 3 to 13, together with **Schedule 1**, are revised requirements on Boards of Governors and Principals as to the curriculum and assessment in grant-aided schools. The curriculum must include religious education (this requirement is unchanged), the relevant areas of learning set out in Schedule 1, and must ensure that pupils acquire and develop the specific cross-curricular skills of communication, using mathematics and using ICT and any other skills specified by the Department. The Department of Education will specify the minimum content for each area of learning, and levels of progression for the cross-curricular skills. The Department will also specify the arrangements for assessing pupils in each school year, which will include a requirement for the cross-curricular skills to be assessed using the levels of progression.

(A) If you support what these Articles are designed to do, please say why:

“Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports these articles because they allow schools to provide pupils with a broad curriculum. They allow teachers and schools to alter the material taught to pupils and adapt it to suit the students in a framework that will ensure the best interests of the pupils in relation to skills, information, and social and moral development.

This foundation stage will give schools the opportunity to cater for the wide educational needs of pupils and the child’s integrated development. This foundation stage will give schools the opportunity to allow children to develop at their own pace and it will allow schools to not put too much emphasis on the development of reading, writing and numeracy skills.

(B) If you do not support all or part of what these Articles are designed to do, please say what your objections are and give your reasons:

'3.

(2)

The definition of “what is an Irish speaking school”, based on legislation that was previously enacted, is unsatisfactory. It will be difficult to work out which half of the teaching will be carried out entirely in Irish.

It is unclear why Religious Education is referred to here as part of the definition.

The way that half of the teaching will be defined could possibly affect the provision which will be made in Irish language units where the teaching only affects some of the pupils and where not all subjects are available through the medium of Irish. Definition of the main areas of the curriculum and the key stages would be better.

Schedules

Schedule 1

Areas of Learning and the Contributory Elements

Part 1

Foundation Stage & Key Stages 1 and 2

It is a cause of concern for Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta that Irish in Irish medium-schooling is not specifically mentioned under “contributory elements” in “Language and literacy” learning areas at the foundation stage and at Key Stages 1 and 2. Although it may be assumed that “Talking and listening; Reading; Writing” can be in any language, given the fact that it is a curriculum for the English language system, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta strongly believes that it should be specifically stated in the legislation that “Irish in an Irish-medium school” is included at the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1 and 2.

In relation to Article 12. – (8) Boards of governors shall send a copy of each statement made by them under article (1) (b) to Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta with regard to Irish-medium education provision. This is very important with regard to Irish-medium post-primary education whilst Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta is attempting to co-ordinate the Education Framework in the Irish-medium schooling system.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta cannot co-ordinate the provision of subjects, both vocational subjects and academic subjects without knowing about arrangements being made by schools about the curriculum.

(C) If you have made comments in (B), or for some other reason think that these Articles need to be changed, please state below what changes should be made:

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta proposes the following wording for Part II The Curriculum 3. (2)

3.

(2) For the purposes of this Part a school is an Irish-medium school if the teaching of the minimum content of all areas of learning other than that called Language and literacy is conducted at each of the key stages mainly in Irish and the “school” includes part of a school.

Schedules

Schedule 1

Areas of Learning and the Contributory Elements

Part 1

Foundation Stage & Key Stages 1 and 2

In the column “Contributory Elements” for Language and literacy insert

(in Irish in Irish-medium schools) after each of the three elements mentioned.

PART II – THE CURRICULUM

Access to Courses for Older Pupils

Articles 18 to 22 are new requirements on schools to provide access to a wider range of courses known as the Entitlement Framework. The number of courses to which schools must provide access for pupils in Key Stage 4 and for those over compulsory school age will be specified by the Department. At least one third of these courses must be general and at least one third applied. The Department will issue lists of general and applied courses and these will be revised as necessary. The Department will be able to modify or disapply these requirements as they apply to individual schools or categories of schools.

Boards of Governors will have a new power to enter into arrangements with other schools, FE colleges and other providers approved by the Department to provide that access. In making such arrangements, Boards of Governors may include specified terms and conditions, and must take account of guidance issued by the Department. Correspondingly, FE colleges will be able to provide secondary education under arrangements entered into with schools.

(A) If you support what these Articles are designed to do, please say why:

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports these articles because they broaden the education that will be available to young people, equal emphasis is placed on general subjects and academic subjects and all pupils will have access to a wide range of subjects from the two types according to their needs in each school.

The wide range of subjects available to pupils will concur with the needs of society and as a result, more employment opportunities will be available to young people and employers will have access to young people with the wide range of skills and abilities required to compete in the world economy.

This legislation will allow schools to work with each other and with further educational colleges to cater for the needs of their children.

The legislation gives the DE the opportunity to allow a school not to adhere to the articles in particular circumstances and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports this.

(B) If you do not support all or part of what these Articles are designed to do, please say what your objections are and give your reasons:

B

Under Exceptions

22. -

(2) The DE only has to consult with the Education and Library Boards and CCMS.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta proposes that permission for the DE to consult with other relevant organisations be mentioned in the article.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta does not support article 18.–(1)(d) which makes a distinction between Irish as a modern European language and other languages. Irish will soon be an official language of the European Community and there should be a course available in Irish in a school at Key Stage 4 to fulfil the provisions of this article.

There is a severe shortage in the Irish-medium sector in the North and in the English language sector in relation to teachers who have Irish. The shortage would be much worse if this part of the article is implemented as it is.

(C) If you have made comments in (B), or for some other reason think that these Articles need to be changed, please state below what changes should be made:

Under Exceptions 22. – See B above

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta proposes the following wording for Article 18.–(1)(d) “at least one shall be a course in an Official Language of the European Community (other than English and Irish in Irish-medium school)”.

PART III – MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY

Admissions

Articles 27 to 29 provide for all post-primary schools to use similar arrangements for admitting pupils. All grant-aided schools must have admissions criteria, and where schools receive more applications than they have places, they will use their admissions criteria to determine who shall be admitted. All post-primary schools will draw up their admissions criteria from a menu of criteria specified in regulations made by the Department. Schools will be prohibited from using any form of academic selection based on the ability or aptitude of the child. The regulations may specify criteria which may, or may not, be used, and may also specify the order in which criteria must be used. The Department is required to consult post-primary schools and other bodies before making such regulations.

The Department will also make regulations about the admission to post-primary schools of pupils with exceptional circumstances. The regulations will specify the meaning of exceptional circumstances and provide for a body to be established to consider such admissions. Pupils with exceptional circumstances who are admitted to a school will be regarded as additional to the admissions number for the school.

(A) If you support what these Articles are designed to do, please say why:

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports these articles because they will ensure that the same educational opportunities will be made available to each child and in each school.

Moreover, these articles will lessen the distinction currently made between vocational education and academic education. It will lessen the bad reputation schools have because they are not grammar schools and it will lessen the discrimination against children when leaving primary education.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports these articles because they will ensure better educational provision for more people and they will allow children and their parents to select schools rather than schools selecting children. In turn our education system will be focused on the needs of a child rather than the needs of schools.

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports the abolishment of academic assessment as an entry criteria for schools. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports these articles that will ensure that schools are not allowed to use academic criteria to select children.

These articles will ensure that children do not feel as though they have failed their schooling or education at a very early age in life. They will ensure that each child is treated fairly in the future regardless of their intellectual ability and that children from different backgrounds will have the same educational and development opportunities regardless of their abilities.

(B) If you do not support all or part of what these Articles are designed to do, please say what your objections are and give your reasons:

'Admissions criteria

28.

16. –

(2)

These articles should be approved so that any person or organisation that is involved with the community which the school is catering for can make proposals regarding criteria and that the school's board of governors should pay attention to these submissions.

This will allow organisations such as Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta to make submissions to boards of governors of schools that provide Irish-medium education.

This is very important with regard to Irish-medium education since post-primary education provision is catering for a very wide area. Because of this, children could leave an Irish-medium primary school without Irish-medium post-primary provision as a result of unilateral amendments for entry criteria of an Irish-medium post-primary provider.

If Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta is allowed to make submissions to the board of governors and to the DE, the educational welfare of children in the Irish-medium sector will be safeguarded.

PART III – MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY

Suspension and expulsion of pupils from grant-aided schools

Articles 30 to 33 require the Department to prepare a common scheme for the suspension and expulsion of pupils in all grant-aided schools, which must be followed by Education and Library Boards and Boards of Governors.

Education and Library Boards will become the expelling authority for all grant-aided schools in their area. Regulations made by the Department will provide arrangements for the consideration of appeals against suspensions and for a tribunal to be set up to consider appeals against expulsions. The education of a suspended pupil will be the responsibility of the school and, in circumstances determined by the Department, the Education and Library Board can provide assistance to the school in providing that education.

(A) If you support what these Articles are designed to do, please say why:

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports these articles because they will ensure that each child will be treated the same in the future with regard to suspension or expulsion. They will ensure that the conditions regarding expulsion and suspension are not reliant on boards of governors from school to school or an education and library board. In this way, all children will be treated fairly in the future regardless of the child's background, school or area in which he/she lives.