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An Comhchoiste um Oideachas agus Scileanna

Tuarascáil maidir leis na Dúshláin atá roimh Scoileanna ar Oileáin

Feabhra 2018

Joint Committee on Education and Skills

Report on Challenges Facing Island Schools

February 2018

32/ES/10



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Chairman's Foreword

In 2017, the Committee agreed that Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh should act as Rapporteur on the topic of the 'Challenges Facing our Island Schools' and to prepare a report for the Committee's consideration.

The Committee agreed to hold a public hearing in December 2017 and hear from those who made submissions to further elaborate on some of the main points raised by them. The public hearing took place on 19th December 2017 and the transcript is available on the Oireachtas website [www.oireachtas.ie].

I was very proud to chair the public hearing where it was absolutely clear that the island schools face a unique set of challenges and any additional support needed to support their essential work should be made available.

I want to congratulate Senator Ó Clochartaigh on his commitment to this topic and for the significant work he has undertaken to bring such a comprehensive report to the Committee.

I also want to pay tribute to the teachers, parents, students and everyone involved in meeting the unique set of challenges faced each day on islands.

The Committee, at its meeting on 20 February 2018 formally adopted this Report together with its recommendations.

Fiona O'Loughlin

Fiona O'Loughlin T.D.
Chairman
February 2018



Executive Summary



Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh (IND)
Rapporteur

Island schools have a unique and crucial role in maintaining the fabric of their communities. The retention of vibrant school communities with appropriate resources is essential to maintaining the overall sustainability of our offshore islands. These islands are a very important part of our rich heritage and culture and are rightly promoted as an important asset for us as a nation.

This report has come about as a result of a committed campaign by island communities, educational representatives and other stakeholders to highlight the specific and unique challenges that these schools face. They need support from the state to overcome these challenges.

We outline specific recommendations throughout this Report which we call on the Minister for Education and Skills to implement, to help ensure the viability of these schools. The recommendations are specific to island schools. They would not constitute any substantial outlay for the department in the context of its overall budget allocation. Some are merely minor changes to policy which are small in the overall scheme of things, but would ensure major improvements in the sustainability of these schools.

I would like to acknowledge the breadth of support I received in the compilation of this report. Firstly, the very generous co-operation of the Committee and the Members was key to bringing this Report to fruition and I thank them for that. I would also like to thank the Committee secretariat for their professionalism, courtesy and invaluable practical advice throughout the process. The Library and Research service in the Houses of the Oireachtas also provided us with an excellent and detailed overview of the sector which is extremely useful and is available at Appendix C to this report.

I would like to also thank the Rannóg an Aistriúcháin [Translation Department] in the Houses of the Oireachtas for assistance in relation to translation services during the hearings and for the preparation of the final report.

I want to sincerely thank Ursula Ní Shabhaois, who drafted the Report with me and whose hard work and diligence within a tight timeframe ensured the timely publishing of the report before you.

Our greatest debt of gratitude however, is owed to those schools, organisations and individuals who took the time to send in such considered submissions and to the witnesses who came before us and put the case for reform to us in such a passionate, clear and forthright manner. They are a great example of the dedication, professionalism and commitment of all of the people who serve in and support our islands schools. These schools punch above their weight in terms of academic, social and cultural achievements. They are not making unreasonable demands. They need the support of all members of the Houses of the Oireachtas to have these pragmatic changes implemented quickly.

I trust that the Minister for Education and Skills will act accordingly, take our modest proposals on board in full and reverse the inequalities in the current system so that the future of our island schools is put on a much sounder footing for generations to come.

Summary of Recommendations

1. That the allowance for teachers in island schools be reinstated to recognise the additional pressures and constraints of the role

The removal of the allowance for teachers in offshore island schools in 2012 has meant that the additional challenges and real costs for those teaching in an island school are no longer recognised by the Department. Additional costs for travel and accommodation falling to teaching staff has created difficulties for schools in accessing and retaining suitably qualified and experienced teachers and has led to a high rate of staff turnover. The reinstatement of this allowance would recognise the additional challenges these teachers face and encourage suitably qualified candidates to apply for teaching posts on island schools.

2. That school budgets should be increased by at least €20,000 for each post-primary secondary school on an offshore island, to reflect the actual running costs of that school

The allocation of school budgets must take into account the real costs incurred by schools on offshore islands in providing high quality education to their pupils. The additional costs incurred by schools for travel, school outings, cargo costs, school repairs and more should be recognised in an additional allocation in school budgets to ensure that schools can operate without persistent and unavoidable financial concerns.

3. That the formula for teacher allocation on island schools be amended and numbers increased to reflect the unique needs of island schools

Enrolment figures for offshore island schools are, and will be, limited due to their location. This should not put the school at a disadvantage in terms of sufficient teaching posts across all appropriate subjects. The current formula for allocating teachers to schools based on distance is unworkable and does not sufficiently reflect the unique needs of island schools.

4. That the Minister investigates the possibility of extending the scholarship scheme for island schools and removing the exclusion of Gaeltacht pupils from the eligibility criteria, including liaising with cabinet colleagues where necessary to make this possible

The benefits of the scholarships provided to island schools for pupils from the mainland has been noted by many schools and other stakeholders. Not only does the scheme have a positive impact on schools' enrolment figures and is beneficial to the Irish language skills of pupils who are awarded these scholarships, but it also provides a valuable personal and social education to pupils on the scheme. The potential for extending this scheme to include 60 pupils per year, increased from the current figure of 30, would be a cost-effective method of supporting island schools while also providing important opportunities for mainland pupils. When the additional personal and social benefits of the scholarship scheme are taken into account, there seems to be little rationale for excluding Gaeltacht students on the mainland from applying for this scheme also and we recommend that they should be eligible to apply.

5. That independent school status be granted to Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin

The case for independent school status for Coláiste Eoin, Inis Meáin, has been clearly articulated by many stakeholders. The rationale for supporting the school's application for independent status includes improving the management of the school, enabling the school to achieve DEIS status, and bringing the school into line in terms of status and resources with other island post-primary schools.

6. That DEIS status to be awarded to the five post-primary island schools

The benefits of DEIS status have been noted by many schools and stakeholders. The amendment of the eligibility criteria to address the needs of island schools would be greatly beneficial to island schools. Therefore, we propose that post primary schools on offshore islands should qualify automatically for DEIS status.

7. That a specific policy to address the needs of island schools is drafted and implemented

The unique needs of island schools are numerous and varied. The implementation of a bespoke policy by the Department of Education and Skills for them would address the unique situation in which island schools currently find themselves and rectify the various inequities in the system highlighted by witnesses to the committee.

8. That a system of 'island proofing' be implemented for legislation, policies and initiatives produced by the Department of Education and Skills in the future

In the absence of a specific government policy for island schools, it is extremely important that the implementation of other government policies or initiatives ensures that the particular circumstances of island schools are taken into consideration. 'Island proofing' is a method by which each Department policy or initiative would undergo an additional step in the formulation process where the impact on island schools would be assessed to determine whether or not island schools could avail fully of the opportunities created by a new initiative or if there is the potential for a new policy or initiative to have a detrimental impact on island schools in particular.

Introduction

Island schools face a particular set of challenges and difficulties due to their geographic and remote location. The Joint Committee on Education and Skills agreed to appoint Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh as Rapporteur on this topic and adopted this Report which aims to address and alleviate the concerns of island schools and to ensure that the education provided to pupils is of as high a standard as that found in any other mainland school. Pupils or staff in island schools should not find themselves disadvantaged either as a result of being located in an island school.

The purpose of this Report is:

- To investigate why and in what way island schools face additional challenges;
- To receive evidence from island schools and other stakeholders as to the challenges currently faced; and
- To make recommendations which will address the concerns of island schools and mitigate the challenges they face.

Current Policy Framework

There are currently 12 island primary schools and five post-primary schools in the State, one of which operates under the auspices of a mainland school. Although there is currently no national strategy of policy framework document for island schools, the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 and the Value for Money Review of Small Primary Schools (2013) impact island schools in a variety of ways. Although elements of these policies impact on island schools, no measures are outlined in either policy document specifically to address the needs of island schools.

The overarching policy goal of the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 is:

“to ensure the availability of a high quality and relevant Irish-medium educational experience of all young people living in Gaeltacht areas and in this way to support the use of Irish as the main language of families and of Gaeltacht communities.” (p.7)

The recommendations made in the Gaeltacht Education Policy and the Value for Money Review of Small Primary Schools (2013) necessitate that the particular circumstances of island schools are taken into account.

Budget 2017 introduced improved allocation policies for island and small primary school e.g. an additional teacher for one-teacher island schools where a primary school is the only teacher on the island (Circular 0017/2017). However a range of other challenges are still faced by island schools which are not sufficiently addressed by this measure alone.

Teacher Allocation

Teacher allocations are approved annually in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment. There are some specific allocation guidelines for island schools.

In post-primary schools, in addition to teacher allocations based largely on pupil/teacher ratios, an ex-quota allocation of one teaching post is also allocated to island schools (Circular 0012/2017). Some additional supports available to support island education are outlined in the paper below e.g. remote area boarding grant.

Stakeholder groups, particularly the Education and Training Board sector which manages island post-primary schools, are advocating for a range of improved supports in areas such as teaching allocation, accessing and retaining staff, enhanced school budgets, enrolment and a number of other areas. A list of the submissions made to the Committee, and where to access them, which support these recommendations can be found in Appendix D of this Report.

As all island schools are, by their very nature, small schools, it is understandable that they play an integral role in their communities. This role needs to be recognised and protected.

The designation of small school status by the Department of Education and Skills is important for many island schools as it entitles them to certain benefits, including in terms of a more favourable teaching allocation. However, some of Ireland's smallest post-primary schools are yet to be granted this status despite their low enrolment figures, which precludes them from receiving this additional support.

Small School Status

A 2001 report noted that although some island schools fit the criteria for small school status, they have not yet been granted this status, meaning that the benefits of such status have been lost to them. The Report of the Expert Group to the Minister for Education and Science, (DES, 2001, P/85-87) recommends that these schools be given this status which then affords them one extra teaching post as an entitlement, rather than as a concessionary allocation.

Two island schools find themselves in this position:

- Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr
- Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin

Many of the submissions received by the committee noted the important role of island schools in community life. In particular, the submission from Coláiste Naomh Eoin on Inis Meáin highlights the positive impact that the secondary school has had on community life on the island. It notes that the importance of the school is not only educational, but that it also contributes to the sustainability of community life on the island.

Island schools face the same challenges as other 'small-schools' while also being faced with what witness submissions described as 'inordinate and unique challenges' due to their island locations.

Evidence Gathering

The Oireachtas Library and Research Service produced a briefing paper, *Challenges Facing Primary and Post-Primary Island Schools*, for the Committee in June 2017. The briefing paper summarised the current policy context of island schools and provided a statistical overview of the 12 island primary and 5 post-primary island schools. Also included is an overview of secondary literature and comparative perspectives with island schools in other counties. The briefing paper concludes by highlighting some of the key issues which have arisen for island schools, as evidenced by the secondary research and previously made stakeholder submissions.

The full Library and Research Report can be found at Appendix C.

Outlined below are a series of issues raised through the evidence that was submitted by stakeholders during this report process. The evidence put forward was in the form of both oral evidence given at committee meetings and written submissions.

In total, seven oral evidence submissions were made at Committee meetings and nine written submissions were received. A full list of the submissions made and links on where to access them can be found at Appendix D.

A series of recommendations are also made by this report which aims to address the concerns of island schools and rectify the issues which the evidence has shown that they face.

Issues Raised

1. Accessing and retaining teaching staff

The additional challenges of island life mean that accessing and retaining suitably qualified and experienced teaching staff proves difficult for many island schools. The removal of the allowances for island school staff and for Gaeltacht school staff in 2012 means that the additional challenges faced by teachers on islands, or in Gaeltacht schools, are no longer recognised by the Department nor mitigated in any way.

Staff in island schools face additional travel costs in commuting to and from the island, if that is possible. And in instances where that is not possible, such as on Tory island, teachers must rent accommodation while teaching there, in addition to their rent or mortgage costs at home on the mainland. Furthermore, staff are often storm-bound on the islands, or do not avail of holidays when they must travel to an island the day before they teach (and even that is only if weather permits).

No provision is made for the hours spent travelling by part-time teachers or teachers with shared posts on island schools. Accessing substitute teachers or teachers qualified to cope with special educational needs also creates huge challenges due to the nature of teaching in an island school, the additional costs of accommodation and travel. This increases the pressure on schools, as more time and resources need to be spent to recruit suitable staff and the committee recommends that this should be addressed in order to ease this burden on staff and boards of management.

Opportunities for continuous professional development in island schools are rare. Teachers must make longer journeys, at greater costs than their mainland colleagues, to access these opportunities. Teachers who do not avail of these opportunities run the risk of becoming professionally isolated and missing out on training and upskilling opportunities that are available to teachers elsewhere.

In order to lessen the burden on schools recruiting staff and the teachers working in those schools, measures should be taken to assist with the additional challenges faced by island schools in this regard.

Recommendation 1:

That the allowance for teachers in island schools be reinstated to recognise the additional pressures and constraints pertaining to the role

2. Inadequate School Budgets

Currently, schools budgets do not reflect the reality facing island schools and the additional costs that they incur in order to operate normally. As with all small schools, island schools face additional challenges due to their size. Options sometimes available to other small schools such as consolidation, or restructuring, are simply not feasible solutions for island schools, and so their concerns need to be addressed in other ways.

Additional costs incurred include things such as cargo transport, travel costs, school servicing and repairs and other additional costs. Any event, which involves a trip to the mainland attracts additional costs and possibly overnight stays. These costs are all unavoidable for island schools. Other small schools, when faced with financial difficulties, may turn to their local community for support through fundraising events, or through contact with local businesses who can provide sponsorship. Island schools' options in this regard are much more limited.

All island schools face additional challenges due to accessibility constraints. Dependence on ferry and air services means that commutes for staff, school trips, the delivery of resources and school visits are all limited and generate additional costs for these schools.

All of the island schools in Ireland are on the Atlantic coast and face harsh weather conditions. Not only does this necessitate the need for more frequent repair work, but the geographic location of these schools means that these repairs are more expensive to do than they would be for schools on the mainland.

Secondary schools, in particular, are adversely impacted by their island location, as any school event necessitates travel costs for both teachers and pupils; accommodation costs are frequent and island schools do not receive the same amount of visitors from other education agencies as other schools do. A failure to address the real needs of the island schools places pupils at a disadvantage because their schools are not in a position to provide the same range of opportunities for pupils as other schools can provide.

Recommendation 2:

That school budgets should be increased by at least €20,000 for each post-primary secondary school to reflect the actual running costs of that school

3. Teacher Allocation

The current allocation of teaching posts based on school enrolment figures is unsuitable and inequitable for island schools and fails to recognise the unique conditions in which they operate.

Island schools, by their very nature, have low enrolment figures. But, as is addressed by many of the submissions that were received by the committee, schools are still obliged to provide a full curriculum for these students. Basing teacher allocations on pupil enrolment means that schools struggle to provide the required range of subjects, or the minimum 28 hour instruction week per pupil, as required by the Department of Education and Skills.

Many of the submissions to the committee noted the unsuitability of the criteria for 'Co-Educational Single Catchment Area' additional teacher allocation of 0.5 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) teachers, which is available for standalone schools, where no other education provision is available within approximately 32 kilometres. As the ETBI notes,

"While, geographically, island schools may not exceed the required minimum distance from other schools for this allocation, as measured by the Department, the real challenge of accessing the island schools is not recognised, as no transport links exist between island post-primary schools. Consequently, as schools that exist on other islands or on the mainland are not accessible, the co-ed single catchment of 0/4 WRE should be available to all island schools."

The teacher allocation formula should be amended in order to reflect the practical needs of island schools and to ensure that the policy works in favour of small schools, as was always intended, rather than disadvantaging them.

Recommendation 3:

That the formula for teacher allocation on island schools to be amended and increased to reflect the needs of offshore island schools

4. Enrolment and Scholarship Schemes

Many submissions to the Committee from both schools and ETB's noted the importance of the scholarship scheme for island schools. The scholarship scheme enables pupils from mainland schools to spend a term in an island school, in order to improve their Irish language skills.

The benefits of this scheme, administered by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, go far beyond linguistic support for the pupils in receipt of the scholarship. The benefits for the pupils who spend time in an island school as part of this scheme are not only educational, but

also play an important role in that pupil's personal and social development. In addition to this, the scheme plays an important role in bolstering an island school's enrolment figures, which in turn allows the school to qualify for additional supports and resources.

As it currently stands, only mainland pupils from outside the Gaeltacht are eligible for these scholarships. Submissions received noted that it would be beneficial for Gaeltacht students to also be able to avail of these schemes, as the benefits of the scheme go far beyond improving the pupil's Irish language skills. Pupils in Gaeltacht areas could greatly benefit from these scholarships and the schools do not believe that there is any clear rationale for excluding them from applying.

Many of the submissions received suggested that the extension of the scheme would be beneficial both to the island schools and to the pupils involved in the scheme.

Recommendation 4:

That the Minister investigates the possibility of extending the scholarship scheme and removing the exclusion of Gaeltacht pupils from the eligibility criteria, including liaising with cabinet colleagues where necessary to make this possible

5. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin

Coláiste Naomh Eoin on Inis Meáin is currently managed by a mainland school, Coláiste Cholmcille, Indreabhán, which is an hour away by means of a sea journey and a further 18 kilometres by road. This management structure, the school claims, is no longer suitable for the school and it is calling for independent status to be granted. Submissions received state that the status quo is detrimental to both schools involved in this arrangement and make the case for independent status to be bestowed on Coláiste Naomh Eoin. Currently, Coláiste Naomh Eoin is the only school in Ireland that has only one management post sanctioned by the Department of Education & Skills, that of 'Múinteoir i bhFeighil' (Teacher in Charge), and the application for independent status seeks to bring Coláiste Naomh Eoin into line with other post-primary island schools.

An application for independent status was lodged with the Department of Education and Skills in 2017.

Recommendation 5:

That independent status be granted to Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin

6. DEIS Status

The vision for DEIS, as set out in the DEIS Plan 2017 is

“Education to more fully become a proven pathway to better opportunities for those in communities at risk of disadvantage and social exclusion.”

The aim of the DEIS scheme is to ensure that schools which are disadvantaged receive the necessary support and resources to address their needs, and so island schools which find themselves at a disadvantage due to their location and the additional challenges which they face as a result, should be included in such a scheme.

Many of the submissions received noted the importance and desirability of DEIS status being awarded to island schools. The criteria for being awarded DEIS status did not, as the submissions received noted, take into account the particular situations of island schools, and therefore schools which would greatly benefit from DEIS status are not eligible, in spite of the clear disadvantage at which they find themselves. The GRETB has called for DEIS status to be awarded to all offshore island post-primary schools - five in total. The granting of this status would entitle these schools to greater supports, in line with other disadvantaged schools in the country, ending the current anomaly preventing them from accessing this support.

Recommendation 6:

That DEIS status to be awarded to the five post-primary island schools

7. That a specific policy to address the needs of island schools is drafted and implemented

Many of the submissions received by the Committee noted that island schools frequently do not fall easily into categories set out by DES policy for support for disadvantaged schools. The use of tools, such as the physical distance between schools to determine whether support should be available, or basing the allocation of teachers and other resources on school enrolment, is simply not an equitable model for schools on offshore islands. Such approaches to policy making fail to recognise and address the unique circumstances island schools face. The formulation of a specific policy for island schools, which addresses their particular circumstances in a strategic and comprehensive manner, would ensure that island schools are no longer overlooked and disadvantaged by government policy.

Recommendation 7:

That a specific policy to address the needs of island schools is drafted and implemented

8. Island Proofing of Departmental Policies and Initiatives

Many of the submissions received by the Committee as part of this process showed that there is a consistent lack of recognition of the particular needs and circumstances facing island schools. Budgetary decisions are taken, policies are implemented and other changes are made without sufficient attention being given to how these decisions will impact island schools. The role that island schools play in their communities is highly important and the challenges they face are currently not being addressed properly.

Island proofing of legislation would involve ensuring that policies being formulated and decisions being taken by the Department of Education and Skills are assessed to ensure that island schools will not be adversely affected by their implementation, or that such schools will be in a position to fully avail of the opportunities presented by such developments. This would ensure that educational policy would embrace the diversity of island schools rather than have to be 'fixed' at a later stage when they are seen to be inequitable, or impractical to implement, for island schools.

Recommendation 8:

That a system of 'island proofing' be implemented for legislation, policies and initiatives produced by the Department of Education and Skills in the future

Conclusion

Island schools, by their very nature, face more challenges than schools on the mainland. In addition to the barriers created by their island status, many of these schools also contend with the additional disadvantages that they are also 'small', or Gaeltacht schools. These difficulties can only be overcome by recognition from the Department of Education and Skills that they are real and through the implementation of specific policy changes, as well as the allocation of extra resources, to address these anomalies.

In the absence of a specific government policy on the management of and provision of education for island schools, it is important that all policies or initiatives undertaken by Department of Education and Skills are cognisant of the additional considerations which island schools must take into account in their day to day activities.

The practice of 'island-proofing' new policies would ensure that future Departmental initiatives which have the potential to adversely impact island schools do not, and this would ensure that island schools could enjoy the full benefits of such policies and initiatives.

The Committee calls on the Minister for Education & Skills and the Government to implement all of the recommendations in this report and if the responsibility for the implementation falls wholly, or in part, outside of his remit, that he would liaise with his Cabinet colleagues to encourage their implementation in full.

Appendix A - List of Members

Deputies: Thomas Byrne (FF)
Kathleen Funchion (SF)
Josepha Madigan (FG)
Catherine Martin (GP)
Tony McLoughlin (FG)
Fiona O'Loughlin (FF) [Chair]
Jan O'Sullivan (Lab)

Senators: Maria Byrne (FG)
Robbie Gallagher (FF)
Trevor Ó Clochartaigh (Ind)
Lynn Ruane (Ind)

Notes:

1. Deputies nominated by the Dáil Committee of Selection and appointed by Order of the Dáil on 16 June 2016.
2. Senators nominated by the Seanad Committee of Selection and appointed by Order of the Seanad on 22 July 2016
3. Deputies Carol Nolan, Ciaran Cannon, Joan Burton, and Jim Daly discharged and Deputies Kathleen Funchion, Tony McLoughlin, Jan O'Sullivan, and Josepha Madigan nominated to serve in their stead by the Twelfth Report of the Dáil Committee of Selection as agreed by Dáil Éireann on 3 October 2017.

Appendix B – Orders of Reference

a. Functions of the Committee – derived from Standing Orders [DSO 84A; SSO 70A]

- (1) The Select Committee shall consider and report to the Dáil on—
 - (a) such aspects of the expenditure, administration and policy of a Government Department or Departments and associated public bodies as the Committee may select, and
 - (b) European Union matters within the remit of the relevant Department or Departments.
- (2) **The** Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann for the purposes of the functions set out in this Standing Order, other than at paragraph (3), and to report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.
- (3) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments, such—
 - (a) Bills,
 - (b) proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 187,
 - (c) Estimates for Public Services, and
 - (d) other mattersas shall be referred to the Select Committee by the Dáil, and
 - (e) Annual Output Statements including performance, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public monies, and
 - (f) such Value for Money and Policy Reviews as the Select Committee may select.
- (4) The Joint Committee may consider the following matters in respect of the relevant Department or Departments and associated public bodies:

(a) matters of policy and governance for which the Minister is officially responsible,

(b) public affairs administered by the Department,

(c) policy issues arising from Value for Money and Policy Reviews conducted or commissioned by the Department,

(d) Government policy and governance in respect of bodies under the aegis of the Department,

(e) policy and governance issues concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by a member of the Government or the Oireachtas,

(f) the general scheme or draft heads of any Bill,

(g) any post-enactment report laid before either House or both Houses by a member of the Government or Minister of State on any Bill enacted by the Houses of the Oireachtas,

(h) statutory instruments, including those laid or laid in draft before either House or both Houses and those made under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009,

(i) strategy statements laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas pursuant to the Public Service Management Act 1997,

(j) annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law, and laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, of the Department or bodies referred to in subparagraphs (d) and (e) and the overall performance and operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of such bodies, and

(k) such other matters as may be referred to it by the Dáil from time to time.

(5) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments—

(a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 114, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,

(b) other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,

(c) non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, and

(d) matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant EU Council of Ministers and the outcome of such meetings.

(6) The Chairman of the Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order, who shall be a member of Dáil Éireann, shall also be the Chairman of the Select Committee.

(7) The following may attend meetings of the Select or Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order, for the purposes of the functions set out in paragraph (5) and may take part in proceedings without having a right to vote or to move motions and amendments:

(a) Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland, including Northern Ireland,

(b) Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and

(c) at the invitation of the Committee, other Members of the European Parliament.

b. Scope and Context of Activities of Committees (as derived from Standing Orders) [DSO 84; SSO 70]

- (1) The Joint Committee may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders.
- (2) Such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Dáil and/or Seanad.
- (3) The Joint Committee shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to Standing Order 186 and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993.
- (4) The Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by—
 - (a) a member of the Government or a Minister of State, or
 - (b) the principal office-holder of a body under the aegis of a Department or which is partly or wholly funded by the State or established or appointed by a member of the Government or by the Oireachtas:

Provided that the Chairman may appeal any such request made to the Ceannt Comhairle / Cathaoirleach whose decision shall be final.

- (5) It shall be an instruction to all Select Committees to which Bills are referred that they shall ensure that not more than two Select Committees shall meet to consider a Bill on any given day, unless the Dáil, after due notice given by the Chairman of the Select Committee, waives this instruction on motion made by the Taoiseach pursuant to Dáil Standing Order 28. The Chairmen of Select Committees shall have responsibility for compliance with this instruction.

Appendix C - Library and Research Briefing Paper



Briefing Paper on

Challenges facing Primary and Post-primary Island schools

Prepared for the Rapporteur to Joint Committee on Education and Skills,
Senator Trevor Ó Clochartaigh.

The context to the drafting of this Research Paper

This paper aims to facilitate discussion regarding the above issue. This document is intended to be impartial and is mainly based on research from secondary sources. This document is accurate as of the date of publication.

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Séanadh Dílithiúil

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1. Summary points

- There are currently 12 island primary schools and five post-primary island schools, one of which operates under the auspices of a mainland school;
- There is no national strategy or policy framework specifically for island schools;
- However, all island schools are small schools, and the majority are also Gaeltacht schools. Hence the [Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022](#) and the [Value for Money Review of Small Primary Schools \(2013\)](#) may be relevant and these are briefly outlined in this paper;
- Teacher allocations are approved annually in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment. There are some specific allocation policies for island schools;
- Budget 2017 introduced improved allocation policies for island and small primary schools e.g. an additional teacher for one-teacher island schools where a primary school is the only teacher on the island ([Circular 0017/2017](#));
- In post-primary schools, in addition to teacher allocations based largely on pupil teacher ratios, an ex-quota allocation of one teaching post is also allocated to island schools ([Circular 0012/2017](#)). Some additional supports available to support island education are outlined in the paper below e.g. remote area boarding grant;
- Stakeholder groups, particularly the Education and Training Board sector which manages island post-primary schools, are advocating for a range of improved supports around such areas as teaching allocation; accessing and retaining staff; inadequate school budget; enrolment and a number of other areas;
- The secondary and comparative literature indicates that many of the challenges facing Ireland's island schools are common to small, and/or rural and remote schools in Europe;
- Key issues which the Joint Committee may wish to consider include (if these are supported by the submissions process):
 - The wider challenges of island life;
 - The wider role of schools in the community;
 - The impact of population change on enrolment;
 - The challenges of second level education;
 - Accessing and retaining teaching staff;
 - Professional development for teachers; and
 - Resource issues including teacher allocation, school budgets, DEIS status and other aspects

2. Introduction

Ireland's island schools face a variety of challenges, many arising from their remote location off Ireland's western shores. This briefing paper provides background information to assist the Rapporteur for the Joint Committee on Education and Skills in preparing a report for the Committee on the topic.

The paper provides a concise statistical overview, and outlines the policy context, in particular focusing on teacher allocation policies and resource issues. Comparative material on the topic was limited, but the paper provides some sources from the secondary literature.

Finally, some key issues are identified from stakeholder and comparative sources. These are indicative and will need to be reviewed following the receipt of submissions on the topic. It might be noted that stakeholder material is very limited, apart from GRETB material. Hence the submissions process might be a particularly important exercise.

3. Statistical overview

Table 1 below provides Census data for 2011 and 2016 for Ireland's **inhabited off shore islands**. The data show a small overall decrease in island population of 5%. However, trends differ across islands. While some island populations have increased (e.g. Cléire, 18.5%; Inis Meáin, 16.6%), there has been a decrease in others (e.g. Inisturk, -3.8%; Bere - 22.7%).

It is important to note that population increases/decreases may not necessarily lead to matching trends in school enrolments, as it is the trend in the school-age population which is the key factor. However, Census data at this level is not available.¹

Table 1: offshore island population, 2011 and 2016

County	Island	Population 2011	Population 2016	% change
Co. Donegal	Árainn Mhór*	514	469	-8.8
	Inis Bó Finne*	11	2	-81.8
	Inis Fraoigh*	2	0	-100.0
	Toraigh*	144	119	-17.4
	Gabhla*	15	5	-66.7
Co. Sligo	Coney	2	3	50.0
Co. Mayo	Clare Island	168	159	-5.4
	Inis Bigil*	25	18	-28.0
	Inishcottle	5	0	-100.0

¹ Due to disclosure reasons the CSO do not post any information on age groups of inhabited islands by individual island (information provided by CSO to L&RS).

County	Island	Population 2011	Population 2016	% change
	Inishlyre	4	4	0.0
	Inisturk	53	51	-3.8
	Clynish	4	4	0.0
Co. Galway	Inishbofin	160	175	9.4
	Árainn*	845	762	-9.8
	Inis Oírr*	249	281	12.9
	Inis Meáin*	157	183	16.6
	Inis Bearacháin*	1	0	-100.0
	Inis Treabhair*	1	0	-100.0
	Inse Ghainimh*	2	2	0.0
	Omey	1	2	100.0
Co. Cork	Bere	216	167	-22.7
	Cléire*	124	147	18.5
	Dursey	3	4	33.3
	Heir	29	28	-3.4
	Long	10	20	100.0
	Sherkin	114	111	-2.6
	Whiddy	20	18	-10.0
Total		2879	2734	-5.0
	*Gaeltacht Islands			

Source: [Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs](#).

Island primary schools

Currently there are 12 island primary schools on ten islands (see table 2). This is a reduction from 13 schools from 2016, following the closure of Sherkin island primary school at the end of the 2015/16 school year.

Table 2 presents enrolment data for September 2016 for these schools. In total, there were 203 students enrolled in all island primary schools.

Table 2: Enrolment data for island primary schools, September 2016

County	Roll No.	School	Island	Enrolment September 2016 ²
Cork	19525R	SN Mhichil Naofa	Bere island	20
	14303U	SN Inis Cleire	Oilean Chleire	14
Donegal	15955W	SN Arainn Mhór 1	Arainn Mhor	18
	16384K	SN Árainn Mhór 2	Arainn Mhor	16

² Information from Department of Education and Skills website here.

County	Roll No.	School	Island	Enrolment September 2016 ²
	05164I	SN Naomh Cholmcille	Oileann Thorai	7
Mayo	13311O	St Patricks N.S.	Clare Island	22
	13174H	S N Naomh Columba	Inishturk	3
Galway	20210W	SN Eoin Pol II	Inis Mor	17
	17456O	SN Ronain	Inis Mor	42
	17289V	S N Caomhain	Inis Oirthir	24
	12339I	SN Inis Meadhoin	Arainn	8
	13927H	Inishbofin N S	Inishbofin	12
Total enrolment				203

Source: Compiled by L&RS based on data from [Department of Education and Skills website](#), and additional data provided by Department directly to L&RS.

Post-primary schools

There are currently four post-primary schools, one of which, on Inis Meáin operates under the auspices of a mainland school (see table 3).³ Island post-primary schools are managed by the Education and Training Board Ireland (ETBI), sector specifically the Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) and the Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB).

The GRETB have outlined a number of challenges facing these schools which are outlined further below. Amongst these is call for official independent school status for Colaiste Naomh Eoin in Inis Meáin, Co. Galway which is currently administered by a mainland school.

Table 3 below presents enrolment data for island post-primary schools. Total enrolment at this level was 226 students in September 2016, more than the 2013 primary school students counted above.

³ This was opened in 2003 under the auspices of Colaiste Cholmcille and the County Galway Vocational Education Committee – see school website [here](#).

Table 3: Island Post-primary schools, 2016/17

County	Roll No	School name	Island	Enrolment
Donegal	71244F	Gairmscoil mhic	Árainn	105
		Diarmada	Mhór	
Donegal	76079S	Coláiste Phobail	Tory	4
		Cholmcille	Island	
Galway	71370K	Coláiste Ghobnait	Inis Oírr	28
Galway	71300M	Coláiste Naomh	Inis Mór	57
		Éinne		
Galway	<i>Under the auspices of Coláiste Cholmcille, Indreahhá.</i>	<i>Coláiste Naomh</i>	<i>Inis</i>	32
		<i>Eoin</i>	<i>Meáin</i>	
Total				226

Source: Compiled by L&RS based on data from [Department of Education and Skills website](#), and additional data provided by Department directly to L&RS.

Policy context

No specific policy framework or strategy encompassing island schools could be identified, (although as outlined further below there are specific supports and teacher allocations policies for such schools).

However, all island schools are small schools, and the majority are also Gaeltacht schools. Hence this section briefly reviews the [Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022](#) and the [Value for Money Review of Small Primary Schools \(2013\)](#).

Teacher allocation policies and financial supports are then briefly outlined. Stakeholder groups have critiqued aspects of current support policies for island schools, and some key elements of this critique are set out below.

Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022

The [Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022](#) was published in October 2016.⁴ The overarching goal of the Policy is:

“to ensure the availability of a high quality and relevant Irish-medium educational experience for all young people living in Gaeltacht areas and in this way to support the use of Irish as the main language of families and of Gaeltacht communities.” (p.7).

⁴ Department of Education and Skills (2016) [Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022](#)

The *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022* does not specifically reference island schools. However, there may potentially be implications or benefits from the policy, such as additional teaching and other resources, should any island schools qualify as a Gaeltacht school under the policy.

The Policy:

- “Sets out a **vision for Gaeltacht education** that recognises the role that schools and early-years settings play in providing high quality Irish-medium education and in fostering Irish-language proficiency and usage in the wider Gaeltacht community
- Aims to **support and improve the quality of Irish-medium instruction in Gaeltacht schools and pre-schools**, so as to **ensure that Irish-medium instruction is the first choice of parents in each of the Gaeltacht areas**
- Sets out a comprehensive **range of interlinked actions to ensure the availability of a high quality and relevant Irish-medium educational experience for all young people living in Gaeltacht areas** and in this way to support the use of Irish as the main language of Gaeltacht communities
- Introduces a policy whereby **schools located in Gaeltacht planning areas can opt to seek recognition as a Gaeltacht school** – a Gaeltacht school will be a school where the school commits to delivering all curriculum areas and subjects through the medium of Irish and engages with the community in the Gaeltacht language planning process. Schools that opt for Gaeltacht school status will have up to five years to achieve this status. These schools will gain access to packages of additional teaching and other resources in a staged way as they demonstrate progress towards Gaeltacht school status.
- Seeks to **align the work of Gaeltacht schools closely with the language planning process** under the [Gaeltacht Act](#).⁵

Value for Money Review of Small Primary Schools (2013)

All island primary schools are small schools (defined as those with fewer than 50 pupils) and as such were considered as part of the [Value for Money Review of Small Primary Schools \(2013\)](#) (VFM Review).⁶

⁵ Department of Education and Skills [Press release 28 October 2016](#) ‘Government Launches Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022’

⁶ Department of Education and Skills (2013) [Value for Money Review of Small Primary Schools \(2013\)](#)

Although dated 2013, the Review (which was commissioned in 2010) was not published until 2015.⁷ In a reply to a PQ in March 2015, the then Minister for Education Jan O’Sullivan T.D. stated that she did not agree with the Report’s recommendations:

“I consider that the report of the value for money review of small primary schools provides a solid research basis for future discussions regarding small schools. It outlines the number, type and location of small schools and this information is very useful in considering any re-organisation proposals. In many parts of our country, small schools play a central part in local communities, particularly in the case of remote and isolated communities. **I do not agree with the report's recommendations because they do not have sufficient regard to the question of a school's role in community sustainability.**”⁸ (Emphasis added by L&RS)

In February 2015, Minister O’Sullivan outlined new policies in relation to supporting the sustainability of small schools, which had two key elements:

- Improved changes to the staffing schedule for some small schools;
- A voluntary protocol for future sustainability for one teacher schools with reducing enrolments;

Further details are available [here](#). Commenting on this new policy approach, Minister O’Sullivan said:

"In many parts of our country, small schools play a central part of local communities. As someone who attended a small school myself, I am particularly conscious of the importance of this social infrastructure to rural communities, and particularly the most isolated communities".

The Minister is also committed to preserving parental choice and recognises the need to sustain local communities, particularly dispersed and remote communities, who have close affinity to, and identity with, their local schools.”⁹

The Minister also confirmed that the Government would not be proceeding with the recommendations of the VFM Report. Nonetheless, the context and recommendations of the Review shed some light on different perspectives on the future of small schools, including island schools, and it is briefly discussed below.

Context of the VFM review

The context of the VFM review is set out in the report as a requirement for additional pupil places due to demographic growth, severe budgetary constraints, and a requirement to use

⁷ *Irish Examiner* [“Review of Small Primary Schools: Empty desks no longer a threat”](#) February 20th 2015

⁸ Reply of the Minister for Education and Skills to PQ Reference: [8834/15 Tuesday, 3rd March, 2015](#).

⁹ Department of Education and Skills [Press Release 17 February 2015](#): ‘Minister O’Sullivan outlines new policy to support sustainable school communities’

resources as efficiently as possible (Department of Education and Skills, April 2013, p.1).

Small schools incur higher per-pupil expenditure than larger schools:

“Ireland has a high proportion of primary schools relative to its population and has a high proportion of small primary schools. The smaller schools have generally lower pupil numbers per classroom teacher. As a result, small schools incur a higher level of per-pupil expenditure than that generally spent on pupils in larger primary schools.” (Department of Education and Skills, April 2013, p. 1)

The Review divided small schools into seven main groups, of which island schools were constituted as a single group (group 4) of (at the time) 13 schools on eleven off-shore islands. Island schools constituted 2% of the total of small schools identified in the Review.

The VFM review noted in relation to a public consultation process:

“A large response of 1,065 submissions was received. Many submissions expressed concerns about the Review. Chief among the issues raised were:

- Importance of the small school to community
- Distance children have to travel to school
- Importance of the small Gaeltacht schools to the preservation and promotion of the Irish language
- Importance of the small minority denominational school. (Department of Education and Skills, 2013, P.3)”

The Review examined a number of issues around the value of small schools including (amongst other matters) the effectiveness of educational outcomes, whether it was possible to have a more efficient organisation of provision, the cost premium per pupil, and how re-organisation could be achieved. The Review found that small schools of themselves did not guarantee more favourable educational outcomes, and that there was a substantial per pupil cost premium, such that “better organisation would result in greater efficiency in expenditure and a more equitable and sustainable model for the future” (Department of Education and Skills, 2013, p.9).

Amongst the recommendations was that the Department of Education (DES) should articulate a policy on a preferred minimum size of existing schools, and the Review suggested a preferred minimum size of four mainstream classroom teachers. In practical terms this means that the Committee recommended that “efforts towards re-organisations should be directed at small schools which are within 8km (5 mile) distance of another school of the same type. This approach should safeguard against the concerns expressed about the Review and aims to be reasonable and practical for today’s Ireland.” (p.5). The Review

recommended minimum enrolment thresholds below which recognition would be withdrawn from small schools (p.16 Recommendation 4).

Island schools and the VFM review

The VFM review recognised that there is a case for 1- and 2-teacher schools in isolated areas to be retained (where communities wish to retain such schools), for example, in the case of island schools where the school is the only school on that island (p. 200). The review further stated that “recommendations of this report categorise small schools based on their proximity to neighbouring schools. Island schools, which are the only remaining primary school on the island, are excluded from these recommendations.”

The Review also stated that re-organisation could be a possibility in the case of the two islands which had more than one school (p.6). In relation to recommendations around minimum enrolment thresholds (Recommendation 4), the Review recommended that the relevant pupil threshold in the case of island schools which are the only primary school in the island should be considered on a case by case basis by the Department of Education and Skills.

Teacher allocation and financial supports

This section reviews teacher allocation policies, and also outlines some of the key wider supports for island schools. However, note that this section is not intended to be exhaustive of all supports to island schools – for example, it does not address overall school budgets, among other matters. The Department provides funding and additional supports to primary and post-primary schools through per capita and other grant schemes, and information on these is available [here](#).

Teacher allocation policy: overview

The website of Department of Education and Skills sets out [the general context of teacher allocations](#) as follows:

“Teacher allocations are approved annually in accordance with established rules based on recognised pupil enrolment.

The Department allocates staffing resources to primary, secondary, community and comprehensive schools and ETB schools (through Education and Training Boards – ETBs). This includes:

- Allocation of mainstream primary classroom teaching resources to schools
- Allocation of teaching resources to second level schools and ETBs
- Allocation of other teaching resources to schools such as the combined General Allocation Model/English as an Additional Language (GAM/EAL) allocation and resource teaching posts
- Redeployment of teachers in accordance with the relevant redeployment schemes.”

A new model of allocating learning Support and SEN provisions will be implemented from September 2017 – information on this is available [here](#).

The allocation process also includes an appeals mechanism under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. The Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

Some of the specific current rules are outlined in respect of primary and post-primary schools below – however this is not intended to be an exhaustive account of the allocation process.

Teacher allocation: primary level

Staffing arrangements for the 2017/18 school here are outlined in [Circular 0017/2017](#). In relation to mainstream classroom teaching posts, the primary staffing schedule operates on the basis of a general average of 1 classroom teacher for every 27 pupils. Lower thresholds apply for DEIS Band 1 schools – see [here](#) for details. There are specific allocations for special needs allocations. Appendix A sets out the staffing schedule for the 2017/18 school year for appointment and retention of mainstream class teachers in ordinary schools, Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht national schools and an extract from this is set out in Table 1 (over).

Table 1: Schedule of Enrolment of Pupils Governing the Appointment and Retention of Mainstream Class Teachers in Ordinary Schools, Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht National Schools for the 2017/18 school year

STAFFING SCHEDULE FOR 2017/18 SCHOOL YEAR			
Principal plus mainstream classroom teachers (MCT) as follows:		Ordinary Schools & Gaelscoileanna Appointment & Retention	Gaeltacht Schools
Appointment		Retention	
P+1	19 *	19 *	18
P+2	55 **	55	52
P+3	85***	85	82
Rows below (i.e. P+4 to P+30) not included.			

* A threshold of 18 pupils will apply for the retention of the existing 2nd mainstream classroom teacher (i.e. P+1). Separately, a threshold of 15 pupils will apply for the appointment and retention of the 2nd mainstream classroom teacher (i.e. P+1) for those schools situated 8km or more from the nearest school of the same type of patronage/language of instruction. ** A threshold of 52 pupils will apply for the retention of the existing 3rd mainstream classroom teacher (i.e. P+2).*** A threshold of 82 pupils will apply for the retention of the existing 4th mainstream classroom teacher (i.e.P+3).

There are **specific rules for island schools** set out in the Circular. As outlined below, Budget 2017 adjusted the staffing schedule for one teacher schools (see [here](#)).

“4. Island Schools

One Teacher Island Schools (ie. Principal only)

As announced in Budget 2017, where a primary school is the only school on the island, a second mainstream teacher will be allocated to the school with effect from September 2017. The relevant schools will be contacted directly by the Department.

Three Teacher Island Schools (ie. P+2)

In the event that a reduction in the pupil numbers of an island school will result in the loss of the third classroom post, the third post may be retained, subject to the total number of pupils in the school being 45 or above and the school being the only primary school on the island.” (Extract from [Circular 0017/2017.](#))

Additionally, in relation to single teacher schools generally with an enrolment of 15 or more pupils the school can apply to the staffing Appeal Board for a second post where the single teacher has children across six or more class groups.¹⁰

Teacher allocation: post-primary level

In relation to island post-primary schools, teacher allocation criteria are set out in [Circular 0012/2017](#), *Education and Training Boards Approved Allocation of Teaching Posts 2017/18 school year*. For ordinary enrolment in free scheme post primary schools, from September

¹⁰ See reply of the Minister for Education and Skills to [PQ Ref 17792/17 on 11 April 2017](#).

2017 the standard schedule will revert to a pupil teacher ratio of 19:1. Each recognised school is allocated a post in respect of a Principal, and there are Deputy Principal allocations relating to pupil enrolment. There are additional allocations in regard of Junior Cycle reforms, special educational needs, guidance provision and other elements.

There are also additional resources relevant for island post-primary schools as follows:

- **Ex-quota allocation of one teaching posts:** In addition to teacher allocations based largely on pupil teacher ratios, an ex-quota allocation of one teaching post is also allocated to Island schools. In reply to a PQ in February 2017, the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton T.D., stated that there was no change to this allocation in respect of the 2017/18 school year.¹¹
- **Additional short-term curricular support:** This was outlined in recent PQ as follows:

“At post primary level and in accordance with existing arrangements, where a school management authority is unable to meet its curricular commitments within its approved allocation, my Department considers applications for additional short term support i.e., curricular concessions. Short term support is needed (normally for one year but not exceeding 2/3 school years) to enable the school authority to respond to the identified difficulty in meeting essential curricular commitments to pupils within the normal staffing allocation.”¹²

- **Co-Educational single catchment area:** In an agreement reached with the Education Partners for the 2010/11 school year, the Department provided additional posts targeted at co-educational schools in single post-primary catchment areas and at schools that join together with other local post primary schools to increase subject choice in a town. These schools were allocated an additional 0.5 WTE post in the 2010/11 school year to enable the schools to maximise the range of subject choice available to their pupils. These schools will continue to receive this allocation in 2017/18.¹³ However, not all islands are in receipt of this allowance – it is available to stand-alone schools, where no other educational provision is available within approximately 32kms and geographically, island schools may not exceed this minimum distance requirement.¹⁴

¹¹ Reply of the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton T.D., to [PQ Reference 8134/17, 21 February 2017](#).

¹² Reply of the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton T.D., to [PQ Reference 8134/17, 21 February 2017](#).

¹³ Reply of the Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O’Sullivan T.D. to [PQ Reference 43882/15, 9th December, 2015](#).

¹⁴ ‘Challenges of Post-primary Education for Island Schools – June 2017’ GRETB Submission to the Joint Committee on Education and Skills.

- **Small school posts:** a number of ETBs receive additional allocation under this heading, but not all island schools qualify;¹⁵
- **Island allowance:** this was initially introduced in 1964 to attract qualified teachers to schools located on islands. The allowance was withdrawn for new entrants from February 2012. See [Circular 0008/2013](#), issued by the Department of Education and Skills, which dealt with *Budget 2012 – Public Service-Wide Review of Allowances and Premium Payments*.¹⁶
- **Remote Areas Boarding Grant:** Under the [Remote Area Grant scheme](#) funding is available to support pupils who live far from a school providing suitable free second-level education. Pupils living on offshore islands which do not have a school providing suitable free second-level education may qualify for assistance under the scheme. Read more about the [Remote Areas Boarding Grant](#).
- **Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge:** The Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs provides a grant in respect of a small number of approved students from outside the Gaeltacht who attend second-level schools on Gaeltacht Islands over the course of a school-year – see [here](#) for further details.

ETB advocacy

As noted above, the 5 island postprimary schools are managed by the Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) and Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB).

The ETB sector has campaigned for some time on the issue of resources and supports for this sector - see for example Ní Donnacha (2016) and Ní Fhatharta (2015).¹⁷

In a briefing to Members of the Oireachtas in May 2017¹⁸, GRETB outlined seven key challenges (along with proposed solutions) for five island post-primary schools, and these are summarised in Table 4 (over).

¹⁵ 'Challenges of Post-primary Education for Island Schools – June 2017' GRETB Submission to the Joint Committee on Education and Skills;

¹⁶ See also reply of the Minister for Education and Skills, Minister Jan O'Sullivan, to [PQ Ref 46215/15, 17th December 2015](#).

¹⁷ Ní Dhonnacha, B. (2016) 'Iarbhunscóil ar Oileán – Dúshlán ar Leith/Offshore Island post-primary school – a unique challenge' in [ETBI Magazine](#), Issue 1 2016, pp. 12-13 and Ní Fhatharta, M. (2015) 'Iarbhunscóil ar Oileán – Dúshlán ar Leith/Offshore Island post-primary school – a unique challenge' at ETBI Conference 2015. See also *President's Response to Minister for Education and Skills TUI Annual Congress 2017 Wednesday 19th April, 2017*

¹⁸ Provided to the L&RS by the Rapporteur of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills.

Table 4: Summary of GRETB advocacy on challenges facing island schools

Challenge	Description	Solution	Estimated Cost
Teaching allocation	Current model inadequate for island challenges. New model of delivering learning support and SEN post-2019 may reduce allocation further	Core teacher allocation increase from 1 to 2.5 WTE (1.5 extra in 5 schools)	€327,090 (at basic point 10 scale)
Accessing and retaining teaching staff	Extremely challenging to recruit to island	Return of island allowance of €1,600	€16,000 (10 WTEs at €1,600)
Inadequate school budget	Budgets do not reflect island additional costs	Increase in school budget of €20,000 per school	€100,000 p.a. in Other Non Pay (ONP)
Enrolment and Scoláireachtaí	Scholarship placements increase student numbers and hence number of teachers	Increase Roinnn na Gaeltachta scholarships from 30 to 60	€150,000 p.a.
Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin	Coláiste Naomh Eoin is administered from mainland by Coláiste Cholmcille	Grant official independent school status to Coláiste Naomh Eoin	None provided
DEIS status for island schools	Additional hardship and disadvantage facing island schools	Award DEIS status	None provided
Accessibility	Inadequate transport to and from three Aran islands	Adequate state-funded PSO access	None provided
Total cost			€590,905 across two Government departments

Source: compiled by L&RS from GRETB *'Challenges of Post-Primary Education for Island Schools – May 2017'*

4. Secondary literature and comparative perspectives

As outlined in the scoping note, there is a limited secondary literature on island schools, either in Ireland or abroad.¹⁹ A number of examples are briefly described here, but no overall synthesis or analysis is provided. However, where possible, material from the studies has been linked to key issues identified in the final section of the paper.

The most recent relevant study identified is the following case-study of Clare island primary school, which provides some brief comparative material:

Gill, P.E. and Kelly, G. (2016) "[Case-study of how an island school contributes to communal sustainability, viability and vitality](#)" Paper presented to Network 14 – rural schools as hubs for the Socio-Educational Development of the Community European Educational Research Conference (ECER2016) Dublin (available [here](#)).

The following extract provides a useful overview of the context of the study:

“Island studies, important in the history of science, have rarely focused on the role of small schools on offshore islands, not least because there is no agreed definition of a ‘small school’. Demographic trends and rationalization principles put increasing pressure on national, regional and local authorities to make consolidation choices about school size policies. In these considerations, diseconomic and disbenefit arguments are made pertaining to the retention of small schools. In Norway and Sweden, due to the geographical dispersion of the population, policy makers have accepted that in maintaining communities in sparsely populated areas higher costs associated with maintaining education in rural and remote areas are inevitable and acceptable, while Iceland views schooling in rural areas as a national responsibility. There is little information available about pupil outcomes in small multi-grade classes in the Irish context. Small schools are frequently objected to as being non-viable, being unable to provide an adequate curriculum, being socially disadvantageous and by being generally inefficient. While smaller schools face economies of scale there is evidence that small size yields some achievement advantages. How does a small island school promote the participation and engagement of families and the community? The present study examines the role played by the single primary school on one of Ireland’s offshore islands. While a process of “learning and leaving” is not an uncommon island experience, some studies have suggested that small rural schools can have integrative benefits for the local community helping to promote local vibrancy and community viability. In this descriptive case-study vulnerability mapping is used to expose threats to the island school. The dynamics of diaspora (dis)engagement and (dis)affection are examined through the curricula vitae of alumni. It is argued that the modern diaspora is uniquely different from the diaspora of earlier generations. The island school nurturing of local memories and histories is explored through the example of the schoolchildren’s annual Christmas concert.

¹⁹ See for example discussion to this effect in Gill and Kelly (2016). To locate the relevant literature, this paper relied on online search portals and databases (e.g. Google Scholar and ProQuest Social science premium Collection), and a search of official and key stakeholder websites. A combination of different keywords were used: including off-shore island schools, island schools, small and remote schools, rural and remote schools in combination with descriptive terms such as ‘challenges’ ‘sustainability’ ‘problems’ and ‘resources’.

Demographic drivers such as birth rates and ageing population are examined. This island's experience is as an example of the 'new mosaic of rural regions' in Europe, where communal sustainability, viability and vitality often hinges on the attractiveness of a particular living space. While perceived "attractive" environments may drive immigration, the absence of a primary school would diminish the attractiveness of an island as a place for young families. The symbolic capital of island life is examined. Headship, local management and multi-grade teaching challenges are explored."

Some elements of the study to note are:

The study locates a single island school in the wider demographic context, outlining demographic decline, but in some cases, small population increases:

- Definitions of what constitutes a 'small' school vary from country to country. Examples from New Zealand, Scotland, Sweden and Australia are provided;
- Population trends and enrolment data on Irish islands are examined. The islands were all "comparatively isolated, are truly 'offshore' and all face the Atlantic ocean";
- The study noted that "the geographic location of these islands sets them apart, for instance, from Swedish, Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Danish, German and Dutch islands"
- The study describes how one school (on Clare island) acts as a 'community hub' and argues that it is an essential part, or a cog "on which the whole machinery of rural sustainability rests";

European Small Islands Network (ESIN): *Meeting the Challenges of Small Islands*

The European Small Islands Network [ESIN](#) "is the voice of 359,357 islanders on 1,640 small islands", including in Ireland via Comhdhail Oileain na hEireann (Irish Islands Federation), www.oileain.ie, the representative organisation of inhabited offshore islands of Ireland.

A 2007 ESIN publication, [Meeting the Challenges of Small Islands](#)²⁰ reviewed challenges and best practice facing islands under 18 themes, including education. On each theme, current challenges, examples of good practice, and success factors were identified.

In relation to island education it is clear that many issues facing Ireland's island schools are common to other European islands. The Report notes that:

"...overall sustainability is dependent upon having access to schools in order to maintain populations as well as attract newcomers. In micro-communities such as islands, the school functions as one of the most important social, cultural and community institutions in addition to its educational role." (ESIN, 2007, p. 36).

²⁰ European Small Islands network (ESIN) 2007 [Meeting the Challenges of Small Islands](#)

Challenges identified include: attracting new teachers; vulnerability to government and municipal budget cuts; and the provision of second level education:

“Innovative delivery of second level education need not be the major challenge it once was in the light of technological advances” (ESIN, 2007, p.37).

Amongst the examples of good practice were:

- A Danish Small Island teachers network to plan and develop educational practices and share resources;
- Scholarships in Ireland for mainland pupils to study on the island and live with island families and
- Having an outreach campus of a mainland school on an island (Inis Meáin) with students being able to attend classes off the island if it is not feasible to provide a particular course locally;
- *(the latter two examples are discussed in this paper above – note however GRETB advocacy arguing for independent status for school on Inis Meáin)*

Success factors were:

- “Small island schools are crucial for maintaining populations as well as attracting newcomers;
- Island schools have significant, multi-faceted roles, and are more than just educational facilities
- Island pupils continue to attain high standards of achievement
- Networks enable teachers to develop pedagogical methods and tools, whilst providing support for existing members as well as new island teachers
- Provision of second level education on small islands is possible by using innovative models.” (ESIN, 2007, p.37).

Additional comparative literature

Literature on island schools is scarce, but there is a larger literature on small schools, and (in particular) a literature on rural and remote schools, some of which may have some useful points.

For example a 2014 [OECD working paper comprising a literature review of school size policies](#)²¹ included a discussion of issues affecting rural and remote areas (focusing on effectiveness). It noted that the subject of school size is “particularly salient in remote and rural areas where the viability of small schools has been questioned.” (Ares Abalde, 2014, Abstract). Points made in the study include:

²¹ Ares Abalde, M. (2014), “[School Size Policies: A Literature Review](#)”, *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 106, OECD

- The sustainability of small schools is threatened by falling rolls, and many small schools across the OECD have been closed or consolidated over the last few decades;
- School restructuring as a means to have larger schools or to confront underutilised schools has frequently taken the form of consolidation. In some circumstances school consolidation or restructuring can be very problematic or even unfeasible;
- In areas with low population density, increasing school size may not be an option for policy-makers. “This is the situation in many rural and remote areas, where schools facing declining rolls do not have the possibility of attracting more students, and where consolidation may be problematic for different reasons such as travel distances and lack of adequate facilities.” (p.5).
- Specific issues identified in relation to rural and remote areas included:
 - Professional development for teachers;
 - Teaching staff shortages;
 - Challenges providing quality special education.

A 2014 study [Profiles of Isolated Communities and ways into integration](#)²² looked at issues around school sustainability in isolated communities. In defining ‘remote’ regions it noted that specific cases of isolated communities included the small islands in the ESIN network, and specifically referencing the inhabited Irish islands. Challenges identified generally for isolated communities include:

- Limited natural resources;
- Diseconomies of scale in infrastructure development and service provision;
- Isolation issues such as the cost of transport and vulnerability to impact of natural disasters;

The study noted that “With a low population density, many of these communities receive little attention from central government and as a result often suffer from insufficient support and poor provision of basic infrastructure and services.” (Liarakou et al 2014, p.5).

The study also identified a number of issues specifically around school sustainability, noting that “The sustainability of small remote communities and schools are interrelated in that the

²² Liarakou, G., Gavrilakis, C., and Flogaitis, E. (2014) [Profiles of Isolated Communities and ways into integration](#) ENSI. The study was funded by CoDeS - School and Community Collaboration for Sustainable Development – see [here](#) for further information.

the demographic and socio-economic issues faced by isolated communities are strongly linked with the consolidation, even the closure of schools, and vice versa.” (Liarakou et al, 2014 p.9). Specific issues identified for school sustainability in isolated communities included:

- Decline, consolidation or closure due to a decrease in the student population or cost;
- Centralisation of education in metropolitan areas may mean parents relocating permanently or temporarily into urban centres;
- May have narrow scope of curriculum and instructional practices;
- Often experience high teacher turnover;
- May find it difficult to attract and retain staff;
- Are expensive to run and may experience consolidation or closure on cost-cutting grounds (Liarakou et al 2014 pp.9-12)

Finally, the study concludes with some recommendations for addressing the problems of remote schools (pp.59-67). In the time available it was not possible to include these, but it might be useful to review these in relation to the further work of the Committee.

5. Key issues

The following are some suggested issues – there are not in any particular order, and not all may be equally relevant. This should be considered an indicative list to be re-visited once the Committee has received submissions.

Wider Challenges to island life: there are a range of challenges which small islands may face, which may impact on educational provision. These include such matters as transport and accessibility, and linked to this, often poor provision of basic infrastructure and services (Liarakou et al, 2014).

Wider role of schools in the community: the community role of schools is explored in Gill and Kelly (2016). Additionally, Lirakou et al (2014 p.12) argue that as rural and especially remote schools are often the ‘only major organisation or government service remaining in remote areas, its role in the community needs to be reconsidered. In addition to meeting the educational needs of its students, it should also contribute to a local community in a more direct way.’ However, they also note that “over the last few decades remote schools have partly lost their connection to local communities” GRETB (May 2017) note that GRETB is the biggest employer on the three Aran islands.

Population change and enrolment: problems around declining enrolment have been noted as a common and serious problem by various studies on island schools, small schools, and schools in remote communities (ESIN, 2007; Liarakou et al 2014; Ares Abalde, 2014; Gill and Kelly, 2016). Across the OECD, many small schools have been closed or consolidated (Ares Abalde, 2014). ESIN (2007) note that ‘the problem of being small’ creates a range of problems, and “crucial services such as schools, if left solely to population numbers ... would disappear from small islands.” (p.31). As noted above, Sherkin island school closed last year after 124 years in existence, following declining enrolment.

Second level education: this may be a particular challenge, as identified by ESIN (2007). Liarakou et al (2014) suggest that a problem for rural and remote schools may be “narrow scope of curriculum and instructional practices”, and it may be that difficulties with curriculum issues may be particularly pressing at second level.

Accessing and retaining teaching staff: This is noted as a problem by a number of sources e.g. GRETB (May 2017) and Ares Abalde (2014). Liarakou et al (2014 p.10) also note that remote schools often experience high teacher turnover, and note that attracting and retaining qualified teachers in rural schools is more difficult than in metropolitan and large regional inland cities. Ares Abalde (2014 p. 16) pointed to problems in providing quality special needs education. Additional issues relating to Irish language speaking teachers may be an issue also.

Professional development for teachers: In the OECD literature review of school size policies, Ares Abalde (2014, p.15-16) noted that the issue of professional development and the availability of a professional community was a frequent concern of policy makers and school staff in rural and remote schools. This reflects such factors as larger distances, transportation difficulties, a lack of opportunity for face-to-face collaboration or attendance at conferences. Initial teacher training may also be inadequate as it may focus on practices pertaining to larger schools (ibid). ESIN (2007) noted the use of a small island teachers’ network in Finland as an example of good practice. Ares Abalde (2014) notes that ICT can be used to facilitate professional development in remote areas and to reduce professional isolation (p.32). However, the digital divide between rural and urban areas is an obstacle to this, and to distance learning (ibid p. 32; see also Liarakou, 2014, p.6).

Resource issues: a number of sources note that there are higher costs associated with providing education on islands, or in rural and remote areas (Gill and Kelly, 2016). Resource issues include:

- **Teaching allocation:** as noted GRETB (May 2017) argue that the current model of teacher allocation does not address a key challenge, which is that “the provision of a required curriculum is dependent on the provision of a suitable teacher cohort but these pupils require a full curriculum. A small teaching allocation cannot provide the range of subjects that schools, pupils, parents or the minimum 28 hour instruction week per pupil as the Department of Education and Skills requires.” It might be noted that Budget 2017 provided improvements to teacher allocation to island primary schools as outlined above.
- **School budget:** this paper has not addressed this in any detail. GRETB (May 2017) argue that current budgets do not reflect the additional costs of cargo transport, travel costs, school servicing etc. Lirakou et al (2014) note that schools in remote areas often close or are consolidated because they are more expensive to run, and the VFM review also pointed to the cost premium of small schools.
- **DEIS status:** DEIS status is linked to greater resource allocation across a range of areas and GRETB (May 2017) advocate for DEIS status for all island post-primary schools. FAQs on DEIS criteria and supports available under DEIS are available [here](#) and information on the *DEIS Plan 2017* is available [here](#).

Appendix D

(i) Briefings before the Committee

ETBI, Committee Meeting, 19/12/2017

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/educationandskills/presentations/Opening-Statement-ETBI>

GRETB, Committee Meeting, 19/12/2017

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/educationandskills/presentations/R%C3%A1iteas-Tosaigh---GRETB.pdf>

DETB, Committee Meeting, 19/12/2017

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/educationandskills/presentations/Opening-Statement---Donegal-ETB.pdf>

Coláiste Ghobnait, Committee Meeting, 19/12/2017

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/educationandskills/presentations/R%C3%A1iteas-Tosaigh---Col%C3%A1iste-Ghobnait.pdf>

Coláiste Naomh Éinne, Committee Meeting, 19/12/2017

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/educationandskills/presentations/R%C3%A1iteas-Tosaigh---Col%C3%A1iste-Naomh-%C3%89inne.pdf>

Gaeloideachas, June 2017

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/educationandskills/presentations/2022-Aighneacht---Gaelscoileanna-Teo.pdf> 17-

INTO, 19/12/2017

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/educationandskills/presentations/Opening-Statement---INTO.pdf>

(ii) Written Submissions

1. Galway-Roscommon Education and Training Board
2. Comhar na nOileán, Inis Oírr
3. Donegal ETB
4. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin
5. Gaelscoileanna Teo
6. Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) [REVISED SUBMISSION]
7. ETBI
8. Donegal ETB
9. Follow-up submission to Donegal ETB's evidence to the Committee at meeting J26 on 19th December 2017

Dúshláin Scoileanna Iar-bhunoideachais ar na hOileáin – Meitheamh 2017

Aighneacht GRETB chuig Comhchoiste Oireachtais um Oideachas agus Scileanna, 2 Meitheamh 2017

Réamhrá: Riachtanas go gcruthófaí Polasaí um Oideachas ar Oileáin atá scoite amach ón gcósta

Tá an scoil i gcroílár phobail na n-oileán. D'oireasa na scoileanna, bunscoileanna agus scoileanna iar-bhunoideachais, bheadh na hoileáin i mbaol a mbánaithe. Níl ach cúig scoil iar-bhunoideachais ar oileáin na tíre. Tá dúshláin agus deacrachtaí ar leith ag na cúig scoil seo a bhaineann go sonrach le hoideachas ar oileáin agus a bhronnann mibhuntaiste ar leith ar phobail na scoileanna áirithe sin. Tá dúshláin ar leith ag na cúig scoil nach bhfuil cuimsithe ná réitithe ag aon Rannóg Stáit go dtí seo.

Tá géarghá le polasaí cuimsitheach, comhtháite maidir le soláthar, cothú agus daingniú fadtéarmach de sheirbhísí oideachais ar oileáin scoite amach ón gcósta, a bheith ag An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, ag Bord Oideachas agus Oiliúna na Gaillimhe agus Ros Comáin (GRETB), agus ag Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Dhún na nGall (DETB) agus Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Éireann (ETBI). Níl aon soiléireacht ón Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna maidir le cén polasaí atá acu i leith oideachas ar oileáin ag an bun leibhéal ná ag an leibhéal iarbhunoideachais. Níl soiléireacht do phobail na noileán cén duine ná cén rannóg sa Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna atá freagrach as oideachas ar oileáin scoite amach ón gcósta. De bharr na míshoiléireachta seo, is minic go dteann na deacrachtaí a ardaíonn pobail na noileán, boird bainistíochta na scoileanna ar oileán, agus na Boird Oideachais agus Oiliúna le freagreachtaí i leith scoileanna iarbhunoideachais ar oileáin, idir dhá stól sa Roinn. Tá iarrtha ag GRETB, DETB agus ag boird bainistíochta cuid de na hiarbhunscoileanna ar ETBI tacú leo chun riachtanas pholasaí a chur ina luí ar an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna. D'fhonn seo a bhaint amach, tá teagmháil déanta le European Small Islands Federation (ESIF) agus le European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) chun eolas a fháil ar cén cur chuige atá ag tíortha eile de chuid an Aontais Eorpaigh i leith oideachas ar oileáin, d'fhonn moltaí polasaí a chur os comhair an Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna ó thaobh cur chuige maidir le hoileáin na hÉireann. Tá seo uile sa chomhthéacs go bhfuil daonra oileán na hÉireann ag laghdú go leanúnach, aineoin daonra na tíre a bheith ag méadú.

Ní hionann dúshláin scoileanna na n-oileán agus dúshláin 'scoil bheag', cé go bhfuil cuid mhaith de na dúshláin chéanna i gceist. Caithfear dul i ngleic le dúshláin ar leith i scoileanna iar-bhunoideachais na n-oileán, chun soláthar oideachais cuí agus féarálte a chur ar fáil do dhaltai na scoileanna seo.

Tá réiteach ar cuid de na dúshláin seo ar bheagán infheistíochta.

1. Leithroinnt Múinteoirí

Dúshlán: Ní aithníonn an múnla leithroinnte múinteoirí, mar atá, riachtanais agus dúshlán scoileanna na n-oileán (idir an PTR agus leithroinnt eile). Is é nadúr scoileanna oileánda go mbeadh líon beag daltaí iontu, rud a chiallaíonn go bhfuil foirne teagaisc beaga iontu agus ní féidir curaclam oiriúnach, caighdeánach a chur ar fáil le dáileadh beag múinteoirí, ná go deimhin an tseachtain chaighdeánach de 28 uair do scoláirí a sholáthar chun cloí le rialacha na Roinne Oideachais agus Scileanna.

Níl aitheantas ‘Scoil Comh-oideachasúil in Abhantracht Scoile Singil’ ag gach iarbhunscoil oileánda (m.sh. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin), agus dá bharr níl an scoil sin ag fáil an leithroinnt de 0.5 WTE. Bronntar seo ar scoileanna atá astu féin gan aon scoil eile gar dóibh. Tugtar an t-aitheantas seo ar bhonn geografach i gcás nach bhfuil aon scoil eile laistigh de 32 km, ach ní aithnítear an dúshlán taistil atá ag scoil ar oileán. Ainneoin go bhféadfadh scoil eile a bheith ar oileán eile nó ar an mórthír, níl siad sin insroichte, agus dá réir ba cheart an 0.5 WTE seo a bheith ag gach ceann de na 5 scoil ar oileáin, seachas a bheith ag cuid díobh.

Tá iar-bhunscoileanna ar oileáin, atá scoite amach ón gcósta, faoi phátrúnacht agus faoi bhainistíocht GRETB agus DETB i measc na niarbhunscoileanna is lú ar fad sa tír. Go deimhin, tá Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr agus Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, Oileáin Árann, i measc na trí scoil Oileánda is lú, agus iad freisin i measc na 10 scoil is lú ar fad in Éirinn. In ainneoin seo, go dáta níl éirithe leo stádas nó aitheantas mar scoil bheag a bhaint amach ón Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, rud a bhronnfadh acmhainn teagaisc de 1.0 WTE ar gach scoil ar leith díobh. Réiteodh seo cuid mhaith de na deacrachtaí atá acu agus iad ag strachadh chun amchlár a chur le chéile. Tá an scoil is lú sa tír ar fad, atá suite ar Oileán Thoraigh, gan stádas oifigiúil mar scoil bheag ó DES.

I 2001, d’aithin grúpa saineolaithe coimisiúnaithe ag Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna go raibh 43 scoil bheag astu féin sa tír, gan aon scoil eile in aice leo, ach go raibh sé (6) cinn de na scoileanna beaga seo nach raibh stádas scoil bheag bronnta ag DES orthu, agus nach bhfuair said an 1.0 WTE múinteoir sa bhreis dá réir sin.

“The additional allocation in recent years to small schools of part-time hours in areas such as guidance, remedial teaching and home school liaison has been beneficial in supporting and extending the range of services which these schools can offer. These schools now need to be given some guarantee of curriculum protection in the form of additional core staffing, extra funding or other supports.

In the school year 2000/01, 144 second-level schools had enrolments below 250, a possible minimum viable enrolment. We are given to understand that approximately 43 of these would meet the criteria of small ‘stand-alone’.

.... *Similar schools not included in the above group may be given curricular concessions and we recommend that they be given a similar allocation of one extra teaching post as entitlement rather than as a concessionary allocation. We estimate that the number of schools in this category currently not receiving this additional allocation on entitlement amounts to six.*”

The allocation of Teachers to Second Level Schools – Report of the Expert Group to the Minister for Education and Science, (DES, 2001, P. 85-87).

Tarlaíonn sé go bhfuil na scoileanna seo a leanas de chuid GRETB ar oileáin amach ón gcósta gan stádas scoil bheag:

- Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin
- Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr

Tá iarratas déanta ar roinnt ócáidí thar na blianta ag GRETB ar DES, stádas mar Scoil Bheag a bhronnadh ar Choláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr agus ar Choláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, Árainn, toisc iad a bheith i measc na scoileanna is lú ar fad sa tír. Níl éirithe leo an stádas a bhaint amach, rud a choinníonn curaclam teoranta i bhfeidhm acu, atá níos cúnga ná scoileanna eile, toisc gur gá bhlianghrúpaí éagsúla a mhúineadh sa seomra ceánna ar an amchlár.

Tá contúirt ann go laghdóidh an múnlá nua maidir le leithroinnt & dáileadh uaireanta Tacaíochta Foghlama líon na múinteoirí sna scoileanna oileánda freisin thar am (ó 2019) le himeacht den 0.9 WTE leithroinnt teagaisc LS atá mar acmhainn reatha do gach scoil, beag beann ar chomh beag agus atá sí. Tá iarrtha ag ETBI agus ag GRETB ar DES athfhéachaint a dhéanamh ar thionchar den athrú seo ar na hiarbhunscoileanna is lú, na 5 scoileanna ar oileáin ina measc.

Réiteach Molta: Tá sé riachtanach go méadófaí an leithroinnt múinteoirí do scoil oileánda ó 1 WTE reatha go 2.5 WTE ex-quota (sin 1.5 WTE breise i 5 scoil). Is é an costas ar seo ná €327,090. Chinnteodh sé seo curaclam oiriúnach, deiseanna ar imeachtaí seach-churaclam agus chinnteodh sé sláinte & sábháilteacht daltaí agus foireann na scoileanna araon.

Iarrtar go gcuimseofaí gach ceann de na cúig scoil oileánda mar ‘Scoileanna comh-oideachasúla in abhantracht scoile singil’ agus go dtabharfaí an leithroinnt de 0.5 WTE a thagann leis an aitheantas seo don chúig iarbhunscoil oileánda. Chomh maith ba cheart ‘stadas mar Scoil Bheag’ a bhronnadh ar gach iarbhunscoil ar oileán, agus an leithroinnt de 1.0 WTE múinteoirí a thagann leis sin a bhronnadh.

2. Rochtain ar fhoireann chuí cháilithe

Dúshlán: Tá sé an-dúshlanach múinteoirí cuí cáilithe, inniúl sa Ghaeilge a aimsiú chun teagasc ar na hoileáin. Leis seo bíonn athraithe go bliantúil i measc foirne scoileanna oileánda. Tá costas sa bhreis ag baint le múineadh ar oileán, idir costas taistil, costas lóistín agus costas maireachtála.

Réiteach Molta: Tá sé riachtanach chun inmharthanacht na scoileanna oileánda a chinntiú go dtabharfaí ar ais an Liúntas Oileánda @ €1,600 do mhúinteoirí. Is é an costas a bheadh ar seo na €16,000 (10 WTE X €1,600), don mhéadú sa chostas múinteoirí atá ag teastáil. [Nóta: Choinnigh múinteoirí sa chóras roimh 2011 an liúntas seo ar bhonn pearsanta].

3. Buiséad Scoile Neamh Dóthaineach

Dúshlán: Ní aithnítear an costas breise atá ar scoileanna oileánda i leithdháileadh buiséid na scoileanna sin. Tá go leor costas sa bhreis ar scoil oileánda ach go háirithe costas taistil, costas laistis, costas breise deisiúcháin agus seirbhísí scoile. Tá costas ollmhór taistil ag baint le daltaí ag freastail ar imeachtaí ar an mór-thír, m.sh. cluichí, taispeántais, comórtais &rl, gnáth-imeachtaí scoile. Ní thugtar aon airgead breise do scoileanna ar oileáin, agus níl aon Pholasáí um Oideachas ar Oileán ag DES chun dul i ngleic leis an gceist seo.

Réiteach Molta: Tá sé riachtanach go méadófaí buiséad don scoil oileánda de €20,000. Is é an costas iomlán a bheadh ar seo ná €100,000, don chúig scoil.

4. Rollú agus Scoláireachtaí

Is é nadúr na scoileanna oileánda go bhfuil daonra beag daltaí iontu. Tá tionchar aige seo ar an gcuraclam, líon na múinteoirí agus dá bhri sin an líon deiseanna a chuirtear ar fáil do na daltaí. Faoi láthair, cuireann Roinn na Gaeltachta 30 scoláireacht ar fáil do na scoileanna iar-bhunoideachais ar thrí oileáin Árann.

Réiteach Molta: Teastaíonn méadú i líon na scoláireachtaí a chuirtear ar fáil ó 30 go dtí 60. Is é an costas a bheadh ar seo ná €150,000 (do Roinn na Gaeltachta).

5. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin: Stádas neamhspleách á lorg

Dúshlán: Déantar Coláiste Naomh Eoin a bhainistiú ó Choláiste Cholmcille, Indreabhán, ar an mór-thír. Ba shocrú é seo a rinneadh ag an am chun go bhféadfaí oideachas iar-bhuncoile a chur ar fáil in Inis Meáin. Níl an córas mar atá ag freastal ar riachtanais Choláiste Naomh Eoin san am i láthair. Go deimhin, tá an socrú reatha ag cur as don dá scoil, Coláiste Naomh Eoin agus Coláiste Cholmcille, Indreabhán.

Réiteach Molta: Iarrtar go mbronnfaí stádas neamhspleách ar Choláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin (ar an mbonn céanna agus atá cheana féin ag Coláiste Ghobnait Inis Oírr agus gach iarbhunscoil oileánda eile) agus go bhfaighidh an scoil sin an fhreagracht bainistíochta agus acmhainní, ach go háirithe Príomhoide agus P.O. Tánaisteach, nach bhfuil ann faoi láthair. Iarratas ar stádas neamhspleách do Choláiste Naomh Eoin seolta chuig An Roinn Oideachas agus Scileanna le linn Meithimh 2017.

6. Stádas DEIS do Scoileanna ar Oileáin:

Dúshlán: De bharr a bheith scoite amach ón gcósta, agus na míbhuntáistí a bhaineann leis seo, ba cheart stádas DEIS a bhromadh ar na cúig iarbhunscoil ar oileáin. Tugann drochaimsir tríd an Geimhreadh dúshlán bhreise do scoláirí agus múinteoirí a bhíonn ina leithéid de scoileanna.

Tugann an easpa seirbhísí scoile trí Ghaeilge go ginearálta dúshlán, agus míbhuntáiste ach go háirithe do scoileanna ar oileáin (NEPS; seirbhísí mheabhar shláinte; seirbhísí sláinte ginearálta).

Is annamh go mbacann institiúid ard oideachais le cuairt a thabhairt ar scoileanna ar oileáin, ná iad a a chur san áireamh dá gcuid imeachtaí. Ní fhaigheann scoileanna ar oileáin cuairteanna in-scoile ná seirbhísí oideachais ar ghnáth-nós iad do scoileanna ar an mór-thír.

Réiteach Molta: Bronn stádas DEIS ar iarbhunscoileanna ar oileáin.

7. Rochtain ar na hOileáin

Dúshlán: Níl an tseirbhís aeir ná an tseirbhís farantóireachta, mar atá, ag comhlíonadh riachtanais scoileanna na n-oileán.

Réiteach Molta: Iarrtar go gcuirfí seirbhísí taistil cuí, oiriúnach ar fáil, i gcomharliúcháin le GRETB, an fostaí is mó ar thír Oileáin Árann, chun riachtanais na scoileanna a shásamh agus chun go mbeidh cinnteacht don todhchaí. Is é pobal scoileanna GRETB an úsáideoir is mó de na seirbhísí taistil.

Conclúid

Is é mór-chostas chun dul i ngleic le roinnt de na mór-dúshlán a bhaineann leis an cúig iar-bhanscoil oileánda sa tír, ná €590,905 pa, ach d'athródh seo an saol ar na hoileáin agus na scoileanna ar na hoileáin ó bhonn. Thitfeadh an costas breise seo ar dhá Roinn Rialtais éagsúla, sé sin DES @ €440K agus Roinn na Gaeltachta @ €150K.

Aighneacht chuig an gComhchoiste um Oideachas agus Scileanna

Uaidh : Comhar na nOileán CTR,

Inis Oírr,

Árainn,

Co. na Gaillimhe.



Maidir le: Scoileanna agus Iar-bhunscoileanna ar na hOileáin.

Tá scoileanna ina gcroílár ag pobal ar bith agus níos bunúsaí fós i gcás mion-phobail oileánda. Ba mhaith le **Comhar na nOileán CTR**, cur leis an dioscúrsa faoi chúrsaí Oideachais ar na hOileáin, agus cur in iúl go bhfuil siad thar a bheith díomaíoch agus mí-shásta go bhfuil scoileanna oileánda fágtha amach as an Scéim DEIS gan trácht ar an neamshuim atá déanta 'sna polasaí iar-bhunscoileanna Gaeltachta do riachtanaisí na scoileanna oileánda.

Is léir nach n-aithnítear na dúshláin agus na constaicí ata ar scoileanna oileánda agus go bhfuil na bunscoileanna agus na h-iarbhunscoileanna ar cheann de na h-institiúidí is tábhachtaí atá againn.

Aríst agus aríst eile, tá muid ag rá, ní fheileann rialacha na mór-phobail leis na mion-phobail ar na hOileáin. Ní féidir leis an oileánach a chuid gasúir a thabhairt ag an gcéad Oileán eile mar sin teastaíonn na constaicí áirithe atá ar phobail na nOileáin a aithint i reachtaíocht na tíre.

Ní féidir na slait tomhais céanna a úsáid i gcás oileáin is atá á úsáid le scoileanna tuaithe eile.

Tá gá le deiseanna oideachasúla comhsheasmhach ina dtófar san áireamh leathroinnt múinteoirí/daltaí, cúrsaí taistil agus breis maoiniú.

Leithroinnt Mhúinteoireachta

Níor choir go mbeadh leithroinnt mhúinteoirí mar an gcéanna agus tomhaiste in aghaidh uimhreachta mar a bhíonn chuile áit eile sa tír. Tá dúshláin aisteacha roimh na príomhoidí ag iarradh a bheith ag pleanáil an churicalam agus an amchlár. Tá muid ag iarradh go n-ardófaí an dáileadh múinteoirí ex-cuota gach scoil oileánda ó 1.0 go 2.5 WTE.

Rochtain ar Fhoireann Mhúinteoireachta & Foireann a choinneáil

Iarraimid an Liúntais Teagaisc ar oileán de €1658 a ath-thosú.

Iarraimid go gcinnteofaí go bhfuil na seirbhísí aeir agus farrantóireachta curtha in oiriúint de na hoileáin agus na scoileanna

Buiséid

Ceann de na dúshláin is mó atá roimh na scoileanna atá ar oileáin ná na constaicí a bhaineann le cúrsaí airgid agus maoinithe. Tá trí oiread costas ar aon rud ar na hoileáin seachas aon áit eile agus tá margaí a fhreastalaíonn ar oileáin teoranta. Tá ar na scoileanna dul i dtuilleamaí na dtuismitheoirí go rí-mhínic chun íoc as bunriachtanaisí. Tuismitheoirí iad siúd, dála an scéil, atá go mínic ag brath ar íocaíochtaí leasa shóisialaigh agus atá ar an ngannchuid iad féin. Ní sé seo ceart agus iarrtar árdú i líúntais na scoile.

Scoláireachtaí

Tá thimpeall is 30 scoláireachtaí cónaithe do scoláirí ó cheantair taobh amuigh don Ghaeltacht ar fáil sa gcóras iar-bhunoideachais ar na hOileáin faoi láthair. Is é seo ceann de na forbairtí is fearr a tharla riamh ar na hOileáin. Molann muid an Roinn Ealaíona, Oidreacht, Gaeltachta, Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha agus Tuaithe as an scéim nuálach seo. Seachas go gcothaíonn an scéim líofacht na Gaeilge 'sna scoláirí, ta iliomad buntáiste eile ag baint leis. Cinntíonn an scéim go bhfuil leithroinnt múinteoirí níos airde ag an scoil agus tá buntáistí sóisialta ann dár scoláirí féin. Cuireann sé le bunús eacnamaíochta na nOileán freisin i rith an Gheimhridh. Faigheann na scólairí sár-bhliain oideachais agus tá tairbhe ollmhór ann do thodhchaí na Gaeilge, todhchaí na nOileáin Ghaeltachta, agus todhchaí na scoileanna. Moltar é seo a leathnú amach agus a dhá oiread scolaireachtaí a bheith ar fáil. Sa chás seo, is é a locht a laghd. Síltear go bhfuil an sochair don tír i bhfad níos treise ná costas na scéime agus moltar staidéar anailíse costais v tairbhe a dhéanamh ar an scéim seo láithreach chun impléachtaí na scéime a mheas ó thaobh na Gaeilge dhe, ó thaobh an oideachais oileánda dhe, agus ó thaobh an tionchar socheacnamaíochta ar na hoileáin.

DEIS

Tá córas an-tairbheach anois faighte ag na scoileanna a roghnaíodh don Chlár DEIS ina bhfuil breis maoiniú & breis múinteoirí . Ach is é an sean scéal céanna é ag scoileanna na nOileán. Is léir nár thit siad isteach faoi shlat tomhais a bhí a úsáid ag an Roinn Oideachais agus nach bhfuil in oiriúint do scoileanna oileánda. Iarrtar anois ath-bhreithniú a dhéanamh ar na critéir seo agus a chinntiú go bhfuil siad promhadh i bhfábhar oileáin amach ón gcósta.

Míle buíochas as ucht an deis seo a fháil cur leis an gcomhrá maidir le cúrsaí oideachais ar na hOileáin.



Máire Uí Mhaoláin, POF,

Comhar na nOileán Teo.

Inis Oírr

Oileáin Árann

Co. na Gaillimhe

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Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Dhúin na nGall
*Donegal Education and
Training Board*



DETB/IS/1-6/smc

Mr Alan Guidon
Clerk to the Joint Committee on Education and Skills
Leinster House
Dublin 2

1st June, 2017

Re: Challenges Facing Island Schools

Dear Mr Guidon

I wish to thank you on behalf of Donegal Education and Training Board on foot of your invitation to make a written submission to the joint Committee on Education & Skills in respect of the challenges facing our Island Schools and in particular the case of Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada, Árann Mhór and Coláiste Phobail Colmcille, Oileán Thoraigh.

At the outset I advise that Donegal ETB formerly Co Donegal VEC has over the years made many submissions to the Department of Education and Skills in relation to the particular and many challenges faced by the above schools. I wish to record my thanks to the Department of Education & Skills for their continued support to Donegal ETB in this regard.

Island Education

If one applies strict economic criteria Island schools are not value for money, but their value must not be underestimated; they are the lifeline of a dying breed - islanders, and as such, the lifeline of an intrinsic part of our heritage, culture, individuality as Irish people and citizens. The Department has already acknowledged their importance and it is through the Department's vision that these schools still exist – Bunscoileanna, and have come into existence – Meanscoileanna. Previously, whole generations of young people were denied their right to secondary education,

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Anne McHugh
Chief Executive

Anne NicAodha
Príomhfheidhmeannach

and islands ran the risk of losing a whole generation of their people, many of whom never returned to live permanently on the islands. Many of these islands are the last outposts of the Irish language and will play a vital role in the next few years while the Government tries to retain, preserve, strengthen and promote the Irish language before it dies out in the Gaeltacht areas.

You will note throughout the body of this submission that both schools face very different challenges.

Background and Context

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada officially opened its doors on the 8th October 1990, which was an historic day for the Island. Since the opening of the school, young people can now complete their second level education whilst living at home. Following further receipt of funding from the Department for additional accommodation which was officially opened on the 24th May 1994, further accommodation was completed in 2011. In February 2015 a new all weather pitch was opened and is used not just by the school but also by the local community.

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada was established as a second level school with an initial enrolment of 28 ie 24 first years and 4 second years. The school operated through the medium of English from the outset and continued to do so until a High Court Determination in 2008 has resulted in the establishment of a "Sruth Gaeilge" which currently provides a full curriculum to 20 students "as Gaeilge" from entry level to Leaving Certificate. This school has grown from the base of 28 to the current enrolment and projected enrolment of 105 for the 2016/17 and the 2017/18 school sessions. Fifty two of these students are as a result of inward migration to the island from the mainland.

The value and importance of the school to the Island Community has recently been most eloquently articulated by Mr Gerry Earley of the Island in the body of an interview with Mr Ryan Tubridy on Monday last. I attach a pod cast of this interview with this submission and respectfully request that the members of the Committee should listen to it as part of their deliberations.

Teacher Allocation

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada

The following is the teacher allocation schedule for the school for the upcoming school year 2017/18.

Principal	1.0
Deputy Principal	0.25
SEN	0.90
Small	1.0
Island	1.0
COSC	0.50
Guidance Provision	0.26
JC Reform	0.15
PTR	6.03
SEN	1.0
Concessions	1.41
Total	13.50

An Ard Chúirt Athbhreithniú Breithiúnach – Uimhir Taifid 2008/91JR Sharon Uí Dhónaill agus Comharchumann Árainn Mhóir Teoranta agus Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae Dhún na nGall states:

“A full second-level education through Irish” in this context means that no subject will be offered in English to students of Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada without it also being offered through Irish.

Additional teaching staff were appointed to facilitate the provision of a full second-level education through Irish for the children of Arranmore Island and it is this Boards policy that each teacher appointed for Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada in the future will be fully capable of teaching their respective subject(s) through Irish.

The full second-level education through Irish was made available to first year students in 2009/2010. A total of 20 students are now availing of tuition through the medium of Irish. 4 of the incoming 1st year students have indicated that they wish to receive tuition through the medium of Irish. The enrolment of the school has stabilised following a period of rapid growth.

The School currently provides for a six year cycle which is demanded by parents to adequately prepare students from a remote Island Location for both further studies and work.

The High Court decision which has made provision for the establishment for a "Sruth Gaeilge" has imposed an additional strain on resources in that the programmes offered through English have to be exactly replicated in the Irish stream.

The school also faces the longer term challenge of Gaeltacht Education as per circular letter 0034/2017. This requires Gaeltacht schools within a five year time frame to implement an education service wholly and exclusively through the medium of Irish. This will be particularly difficult to implement given the context of the judicial agreement outlined above which gives rights and entitlements to parents who want their children to be educated through both the medium of Irish and English.

When Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada opened on Arranmore Island in October 1990 under the aegis of Co. Donegal VEC after many years of campaigning by the local community, despite the fact that the local community was Irish speaking in the main they decided that the medium of instruction in the school should be through English. This was because during the 1970's and 1980's there was massive emigration from Arranmore Island and the community was anxious that the provision of Irish medium instruction in the Meanscoil would mitigate against the return of these emigrants. During the boom years in the late 1990's and 2000's many emigrants did indeed return from many far flung places such as Chicago, Alaska as well as from England and Scotland and their children were educated in the school.

Accessing and Retaining Teaching Staff

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada

The Island location creates difficulty in the employment of Part – time teachers or access to shared services with mainland schools. Six of the teachers currently employed are in a PWT Capacity and are timetabled to the maximum 22 hours.

The provision of minority subjects is further compromised by the refusal of the Teachers Union of Ireland to allow their members to cooperate with e-learning, this results in students on Island Schools not having the same access to an entitled curriculum as those on the mainland.

Budgetary Matters

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada

The school has benefited from a recent building programme which has been undertaken to accommodate the "Sruth Gaeilge" and the attendant outfitting of classrooms and equipment. However the increase in enrolment with particular reference to the inward migration of students from the mainland has brought its own challenges in relation to resources.

The enhanced budgetary allocation for DEIS is somewhat of a help in this regard.

Enrolment

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada

Enrolment Summary 2005 – 2017 (Projected)

2005	54
2006	54
2007	55
2008	58
2009	54
2010	55
2011	58
2012	63
2013	65
2014	78
2015	93
2016	105
2017 (Projected)	105

DEIS status for island Schools

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada

This school enjoys DEIS status, however the lack of School Completion Personnel attached to the programme leaves and onerous burden of management and coordination on the Principal

Accessibility

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada

The Island is well serviced by two ferry companies, however there are days during the winter time and particularly in the Spring when access cannot be guaranteed.

Services such as electricity, broadband, telephones, DEIS school lunches etc are regularly compromised by the Island Location.

The island location gave rise to the successful challenge in relation to Irish Medium provision.

Background and Context

Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille

In 1999, the Tory Island co-operative Comharchumann Oileann Thoraí invited members of Meithal Forbartha Na Gaelthachta and Donegal VEC to the island to make their case for secondary education on the island. At the time there were twenty eight pupils in the national school and the need for secondary education became critical. The meeting resulted in the founding of Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille with facilities being provided in the local community centre with the new school facilities opening in 2006. The school had an initial enrolment of 10 and now has a current enrolment of 4 for the 16/17 school session and a projected enrolment of 5 for the 2017/18 school session.

Prior to the establishment of the school the Island Students were forced to relocate to the Mainland as a result of poor access and received their second level education at Pobalscoil Cloch Cheann Fhaola. This proved to be a harrowing experience for many young islanders and their families – resulting in very poor completion rates. As a consequence the vast majority of a cohort of Islanders had not completed upper secondary education and did not possess a Leaving Certificate or Third Level Qualifications.

Since the establishment of the school there has been 100% completion and access to third level/further education and training.

Teacher Allocation

Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille

The following is the teacher allocation schedule for the school for the new school year 2017/18

Principal	1.0
Deputy Principal	0.25
SEN	0.35
Lan Gaeilge	1.0
Small	1.0
Island	1.0
COSC	0.50
Guidance Provision	0.01
JC Reform	0.01
Chaplain	1.0
PTR	0.21
SEN	0.45
Total	6.78

The Teacher allocation is more than adequate, however the allocation is absolutely necessary to provide a wide enough spectrum of subjects to address student needs and interests, and so that they may move on to third level study or further education. In fact teachers must sometimes deliver programmes in subject areas where they are competent but not qualified.

Teachers have in the past collaborated with the local bunscoil; teaching Spanish, helping with learning support, music, art, drama etc.

The schools have further collaborated together in Health programmes, eg Better Dental Health project, Healthy Minds Talk, Child Protection Training etc

The school would also be prepared to provide Post Leaving Certificate courses and in fact has made numerous applications to the Department of Education and Skills to do so. The provision of such courses would not entail the allocation of additional staff and could be readily accommodated from within existing expertise and resources. I attach to this submission an application which the school had made in 2012/13 for a QQI 5 award in Cultural and Heritage studies. The provision of such courses is challenging given the Island location.

Accessing and Retaining Teaching Staff

Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille

The school has been fortunate in accessing teachers generally, though it is difficult to ensure the necessary subjects are covered by a trained teacher. Island schools have a frequent turn-over of staff.

It is very difficult to access and retain teachers who are fluent Irish speakers and who are experts in the various subjects. Now with the Policy for Gaeltacht Education we shall have 5 years to ensure that all subjects are taught through Irish, other than English and other foreign languages.

The allowances which were needed to allow teachers to live and to travel on and off the Islands in the past have been discontinued, however the added expenses teachers have such as rent on the island as well as their mortgage / rent on the mainland and travel expenses on and off the island still exist.

It might be helpful if teachers were allowed to take a couple of 'personal days' in lieu of the fact that at some stage during each year they will be storm-bound, and unable to travel to the mainland.

Substitute teachers are difficult to obtain and so Island teachers, or Principals and Deputy Principals end up covering , and often teaching, as the S&S hours do not cover the amount of substitution needed. eg If a teacher travels to the mainland with students, they may be away from school from 10.30 in the morning until 10.30 two days later, depending on ferries (and that is assuming the weather is favourable for any passage!)

A language assistant (given the policy for Gaeltacht Education), should be appointed to every island school in the Gaeltacht to assist in providing the necessary supports to students in promoting the language.

Budgetary Matters

Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille

The school is generally very well resourced by the Department of Education and Skills and other Budgetary Programmes and for this we are most appreciative. However the following provisions would help greatly.

A grant for technology to enable greater access to courses, meetings, educational resources. Island schools need the latest, state of the art equipment to connect. In line with the Policy for Gaeltacht education, other schools in the Board could access these schools to help with the Irish language!

The Department of Education and Skills should allocate a certain number of scholarships to each island school to encourage students from other places to spend time on the Island schools. This would serve to utilise better the resources on the islands.

Companies and organisations should be approached to adopt an island school and to support it for various projects. We don't have the local golf club, or bank or anywhere where we can invite companies to support and fund projects in the school. We don't have local companies who can take on apprentices and therefore it is extremely difficult for a young person to get a placement.

Enrolment

Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille

Enrolment Summary 2005 – 2017 (Projected)

2005	15
2006	13
2007	15
2008	13
2009	10
2010	9
2011	4
2012	6
2013	5
2014	4
2015	4
2016	4
2017 (Projected)	5

The concept of Pupil Teacher Ratio as applied to mainland schools does not compare favourably with that of a remote Island school such as Tory. However if the school is examined through the prism of the percentages the following applies. 100% of young people transfer from Primary to Secondary. 100% of students gain a Leaving Certificate.

Our student body represent 3.3% of the total population of the Island, ie the equivalent of 44398 students in a school in Dublin or 646 in Letterkenny.

We have already outlined our difficulties in providing a PLC.

A scholarship scheme to encourage mainland students avail of the opportunity to spend time on an island would be both beneficial to both.

DEIS status for island Schools

Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille

The added benefits of DEIS status have not been afforded to Coláiste Pobail Cholmcille despite the local Bunscoil being designated as a DEIS school. We would gratefully appreciate if this anomaly was addressed.

Accessibility

Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille

This is the most remote school; teachers cannot commute to work. Often teachers are 'stuck in' at weekends due to bad weather, or are reluctant to go to the mainland during term time because they may get 'stuck out' and their colleagues will have to cover classes.

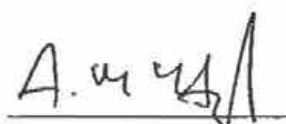
Students cannot travel in and out either and therefore we cannot attract mainland students we cannot easily attract an increase in our student enrolment because of this. Scholarships would help, the Department of Education and Skills scholarships are limited in number and because of a stipulation which states they may only be awarded to students outside the Gaeltacht, many of the young people who would consider spending time in Tory cannot apply as they live in a Gaeltacht area (Falcarragh, Termon, The Rosses etc). Technology can improve accessibility to assistance, training, up skilling, Professional Development etc as well as attendance to courses, meetings etc. The Principal of Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille attends the Donegal ETB Principals meetings by way of video conferencing.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Principals of both schools ie Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada and Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille in the compilation of this submission. I would be pleased to directly address the Committee to provide any further clarification you require in this regard.

I wish to extend an invitation to the members of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills to visit both schools (which will open again for the 2017/18 school session at the end of August), to see at first hand the excellent work being carried out to educate the students of both these Islands.

I wish to thank you again for affording us this opportunity and for reading and listening to our submission.

Yours sincerely


Anne Mc Hugh
Chief Executive

Labour Market Justification for New PLC Courses 2012/2013

Provider Details

1. Name of provider: Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille, Coiste Gairmoideachais Co. Dhún na nGall
2. Address: An Baile Thiar, Oileán Thoraí, Na Doirí Beaga, Co. Dhún na nGall
3. School Roll No: 76079S

Course Details

4. FETAC award name: Cultural and Heritage Studies
5. FETAC award code: 5M2154
6. FETAC award level: 5 (five)

Course Rationale

7. Skills area
<p>Please provide a description of the skills needs/growth that this course is addressing (by reference to the National Skills Strategy, <i>Towards 2016, Building a Smart Economy</i>, etc.):</p> <p><i>The National Skills Strategy</i> states that “the services sector will increase in relative importance” and it foresees the greatest increase in employment in this sector; it identifies the importance of a foreign language in enterprise development and places great emphasis on generic skills such as communications and problem solving.</p> <p>In Fáilte Ireland’s <i>A New Strategy for Cultural Tourism in Ireland</i>, it is stated that cultural tourism represents between 35 - 40% of all tourism worldwide, and that it is growing at 15% per annum – three times the rate of growth of general tourism. It also states that cultural tourists generally have a higher standard for authenticity than others and appreciate aspects of culture that are supported by the local population.</p> <p>The proposed course addresses all of the above areas; five of the modules relate directly to culture and heritage, with reference to them as tourism products; the course also consists of both a problem-solving module and a foreign language module in Spanish. There will be a particular focus on how the unique heritage and culture of Tory Island may be protected while also developed as a tourist resource.</p> <p><i>The National Skills Strategy</i> states that low-skilled workers in geographically isolated areas require particular attention. The strategy also states that the low skilled are in greater need of positive intervention and that those who do not hold a qualification commensurate with levels 4 and 5 on the National Qualifications Framework should be able to achieve such an award through full or part-time study without incurring tuition costs. Oileán Thoraí is the most remote of Ireland’s offshore islands; it is the most geographically isolated area in the country. It has been ascertained through research that only 50% of the likely course participants possess the Leaving Certificate; this compares with a national figure of 90% of those undertaking PLC courses having the Leaving Certificate. It is also anticipated that 80% of the likely participants will be male; this may be compared with a national participation rate among males in PLC courses of only 28%. The target group for the proposed course is geographically isolated, low skilled and male; exactly the target group identified in the strategy as needing attention.</p>

8. Identified demand

Please provide details of the steps taken to identify local and regional demand for this course (Census, consultation with employers, other providers, stakeholders, etc.). If this course or a similar course is being provided by another local provider, please identify the additional and particular demand that your course is responding to.

The proposed course will be provided on Oileán Thoraí (Tory Island); no similar course is being provided at this location or, indeed, has been provided within the last 25 years.

The demand for this course has been established through consultation with likely participants, analysis of unemployment figures, consultation with the local community development co-operative and with input from the school itself (Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille) in respect of educational attainment levels within the local community.

There are 22 people between the ages of 18 and 50 in receipt of Job-Seeker's Allowance on Tory Island at present; 14 of this group - three women and 11 men - are under 40 years of age. This is the target group for the course and of this 14, only seven (50%) have completed the Leaving Certificate. It is expected that there will be 10 participants in the course; this represents 45% of the 18–50 age cohort but 71% of the target group.

There has been a noticeable growth in interest in some form of training course on the island in the last 18 months; many of those who are unemployed have stated both to the manager of the development co-operative and to the school principal that they would like to undertake training if it were available on Tory Island. Potential participants have expressed interest in training which would facilitate their making a living on the Island and in areas with which they are already familiar – Irish language and culture, heritage and tourism.

9. Progression opportunities

Please identify the progression opportunities (employment, further education, higher education) that successful completion of this course will provide to participants (by reference to consultation with local and regional employers, local and regional education providers, other stakeholders):

Employment opportunities on the offshore islands are very, very limited and it would be disingenuous to suggest that course participants will be able to obtain full-time employment on the island on completion of the course. However, there is a strong tradition of independence, self-sufficiency and enterprise on the islands. It is anticipated that a number of the course participants will be able to progress to some form of self-employment through the provision of heritage and culture-related services to tourists; it is also anticipated that participants who are already supplying services to tourists will be able to enhance those services; furthermore, there will be some seasonal employment opportunities for suitably qualified individuals in existing Island enterprises – hotel, craft shop, art gallery and development co-operative. It is also expected that a number of the participants will use the course as a first step in returning to full-time education which will see them progress to third-level courses. A number would also be expected to undertake other FETAC courses, either at level 6 in the same subject domain or at level 5 or higher in other subject areas. Finally, all the participants will develop their self-confidence, self-esteem and flexibility, which can only be of assistance to them in whatever path they choose to follow on completion of the course.



Coláiste Naomh Eoin
Inis Meáin, Oileáin Árann, Co. na Gaillimhe,

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Aighneacht ó Mhairéad Ní Fhátharta, Príomhoide Cúnta Choláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin

Chuig Comhchoiste Oireachtais um Oideachas agus Scileanna

Oileánach mise atá sáite i gcúrsaí oideachais dara leibhéal ar Oileáin Árann le ceithre bliana déag agus ar ndóigh i bhfad níos faide má thógtar mo thaithí pearsanta ag fás suas ar oileán nach raibh oideachas dara leibhéal ar fáil san áireamh. Ghlac mé ceannas ar Choláiste Naomh Eoin i Meán Fómhair 2007 agus chaith mé na ceithre bliana roimhe sin mar mhúinteoir lán aimseartha i gColáiste Éinne, Inis Mór.

Braithim de bharr mo thaithí go bhfuil tuiscint chuimsitheach agam ar oideachas ar oileán agus tá na cúpla bliain seo caite tugtha agam ag tiomáint iarratas do Pholasaí Oideachais ar leith do na scoileanna oileánda mar go bhfuil sé soiléir thar na mblianta nach n-oireann an slat tomhais a úsáidtear don mhóramh an mhionlach mara seo.

Níl ach chúig scoil ar oileáin ag soláthar oideachas dara leibhéal, siadsan:

Coláiste Éinne, Inis Mór (53dalta) 1953

Coláiste Ghobnáit Inis Oírr (25 dalta) 1985

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada, Árainn Mhór(104 dalta) 1990

Coláiste Pobail Cholmcille, Oileán Thoraigh(5 dalta) 1999

Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, 2002(40 dalta) (gan stádas neamhspleách ach iarratas réitigh le cur faoi bhráid na Roinne Oideachais & Scileanna)

Is iad na scoileanna seo cuisle na bpobail ar a bhfreastlaíonn siad agus is deacair fianaise níos fearr de thábhacht scoil i bpobal a aimsiú ná an tártháil pobail atá tarlaithe ar Inis Meáin de bharr theacht Choláiste Naomh Eoin. Tar éis blianta



fada de bhánú agus meath pobail tá casadh dearfach tarlaithe a aithnítear go díreach mar thoradh ar theacht na meánscoile. Ní h-amháin go bhfuil feidhm oideachais ag na scoileanna seo tá sé sothuigte nach féidir inmharthanacht na n-oileáin seo a chinntiú gan scoileanna láidre a chothaíonn an óige, mar gan iad is ag fáil bháis a bheidh na pobail scoite amach seo.

Mar a tharlaíonn le gach grúpa mionlaigh bíonn scoileanna na n-oileáin fágtha ar lár sa bpictiúr mór go minic cé nach in aon turas é agus seo tá ag tarlú do scoileanna na n-oileáin faoi láthair nuair a thagann sé chuig gnáth chleachtais na Roinne Oideachais & Scileanna. Ní féidir leis na scoileanna oileánda iomaíocht i gcluiche na n-uimhreacha, de bharr mí-bhuntaíste tíreolaíochta fágтар ar lár iad. Tá feachtas náisiúnta tionscnaithe ag príomhoidí na scoileanna dara leibhéal ar na hoileáin, i gcomhair le tacaíocht ó Bhord Oideachais agus Oiliúna na Gaillimhe agus Roscomáin, Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Dhún na nGall agus Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna na hÉireann a aithníonn na príomh dhúshláin atá ag crá na scoileanna oileánda atá faoin ár gcúram agus muid ar thóir Polasaí Oideachais ar leith atá thar am a chuir ar fáil do na scoileanna oileánda seo.

Seo a leanas na príomh dhúshláin aitheanta

Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin

Iarraimse oraibh tacaíocht a thabhairt don iarratas atá Bord Oideachais & Oiliúna na Gaillimhe agus Roscomáin a chuir faoi bhráid na Roinne Oideachais agus Scileanna an mhí seo ag lorg aitheantas mar scoil neamhspleách do Choláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin. Scoil gan stad ar bith ó thaobh neamhspleáchas de atá ar an bhfód ó 2002. Tá an scoil seo mar sheoid oideachais & mar thearmann teanga do ghasúir na tíre agus is í cuisle an phobail ar a bhfreastlaíonn sí í. Tá cáil náisiúnta ar an scoil de bharr a bhfuil bainte amach aici ach tá an struchtúr bainistíochta faillíoch sa chás nach bhfuil ach duine amháin le post freagracht i gceannas na scoile agus ar ndóigh gur ag feidhmiú faoi bhainistíocht agus faoi pholasaí scoil DEIS ar an tírmhór atá an scoil. Tá impleachtaí móra ó thaobh sláinte, sábháilteacht agus ar ndóigh fostaíochta ag baint leis an socrú sealadach seo atá i bhfeidhm le chúig bliana déag. Teastaíonn aitheantas mar scoil neamhspleách a bhronnadh ar Choláiste Naomh Eoin don scoil bhliain seo chugainn.



Leithroinnt Múinteoireachta

Ní oireann an múnla reatha leithroinnte múinteoireachta na scoileanna oileánda agus mar atá thuasluaite níl seans ar bith acu más dáileadh ó thaobh uimhreacha ar an rolla atá i gceist. Níl aon trácht ag dul thar an doras ag na scoileanna seo de bharr cuinsí tíreolaíochta mar sin is tearmainn bheaga oideachais iad na scoileanna oileánda nach féidir a bheith ag súil leo fás as cuimse. Fágann foireann teagaisc íseal go mbíonn ar na scoileanna curaclaim suarach a thairiscint de bharr easpa uaireanta múinteoireachta, gníomh a mhaolaíonn rathúlacht na scoileanna.

I measc an easpa sa dáileadh uaireanta atá ar na scoileanna, tá an 0.5 WTE a bhronntar ar scoileanna comhoideachais in abhantracht scoile shingil fágtha ar lár do Choláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, cé go mbeadh na mílte farraigí le trasnú chun teacht ar scoil eile.

Ní aithnítear Coláiste Ghobnáit Inis Oírr, ná Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin ná Coláiste Pobail Cholmcille, Oileán Thoraigh le stádas scoil bheag mar sin ní fhaigheann na scoileanna beaga seo an 1.0 WTE a bhronntar ar scoileanna beag cé go bhfuil siad gan dabht ar chuid de na scoileanna is lú sa tír. Is í Coláiste Pobail Cholmcille ar Oileán Thoraigh an scoil is lú sa tír le cúigear scoláirí don scoil bhliain 2017-2018.

Leis an múnla nua dáileadh ar an 0.9 WTE Tacaíocht Foghlamtha, níl aon chinnteacht nach mbeidh laghdú i gceist do na scoileanna beaga, gníomh a mbeadh impleachtaí tromchúiseach aige ar sholáthar Tacaíocht foghlamtha sna scoileanna ar oileán de bharr a méid.

Tá iarratas déanta go méadófaí an leithroinnt múinteoireachta do na scoileanna oileánda ón 1.0 WTE ata ann faoi láthair go dtí 2.5 WTE ex quota chomh maith leis an dáileadh easnamhach luaite thuas a thabhairt do na scoileanna atá fágtha ar lár.



Rochtain ar Fhoireann cuí cáilithe

Ní oireann sé do chuile dhuine cónaí ar oileán agus a bheith scoite amach ón ngnáth shaol mar sin bíonn sé an-deacair múinteoirí a mhealladh chuig oileán atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge mar sin is minic go mbíonn athrú fóirne rialta. Teastaíonn baoite de shaghas chun cuidiú le múinteoirí an costas breise a ghabhann le maireachtáil ar oileán a láimhseáil mar sin iarrann muid an liúntas oileánda atá ar fáil ag múinteoirí a bhí fostaithe roimh 2011 a leathnú amach dóibh siúd a tháinig ar bord tar éis 2011. Níl i gceist ach tuairim agus deichniúr múinteoirí rud a fhágann pingineacha beaga a bheith de dhíth. Is €1.600 a íoctar leo siúd sa chóras roimh 2011 mar sin is €16,000 sa bhliain a theastaíonn chun an liúntas oileánda seo a leathnú ar na múinteoirí nua sa chóras.

Buiséad

Cránn cúrsaí airgid scoileanna na tíre ach tá crá breise i gceist do scoileanna oileánda. Cosnaíonn chuile rud dúbailte beagnach faoin am a bhfuil sé tugtha chomh fada le oileán agus bíonn muid cráite ag costais taistil & lasta. Bíonn thar oíche nó dhó i gceist chun freastal ar aon imeacht náisiúnta agus ár gcuid uimhreacha ró-íseal chun costas bus agus ostáin a roinnt mar sin bíonn ar na scoileanna cúiteamh do na costais seo, rud a ídíonn buiséad na scoile.

Teastaíonn buiséad na scoileanna ar oileán a mhéadú €20,000 sa bhreis chun go mbeidh na scoileanna in ann an fíor-chostas a bhaineann le scoil ar oileán a láimhseáil.

Scoláireachtaí

Tá na h-oileáin faoi mhí-bhuntaíste tíreolaíochta rud a chiallaíonn nach mbeidh líon ró-ard scoláirí san abhantracht chun scoil a chothú agus chun atmaisféar sláintúil do dhéagóirí a chinntiú sna scoileanna. Le blianta feidhmíonn scoileanna na n-oileán ar bhun náisiúnta. Tugtar deis do scoláirí ón tír mhór oideachas tré mheán na Gaeilge a fháil ar na hoileáin.

Tá breis & tríocha scoláireacht dá n-íoc faoi láthair ag an Roinn Ealaíon, agus Gaeltachta do scoláirí nach ó cheantair Gaeltachta iad chun freastal ar



scoileanna na n-oileán. Is iad trí scoil Árann a ghlacann páirt sa scéim seo faoi láthair. Seo ceann de na scéimeanna is tairbhí a tugadh isteach do na h-oileáin riamh, ní h-amháin ó thaobh sealbhú teanga de ach ó thaobh inmharthanacht na n-oileáin a chinntiú freisin.

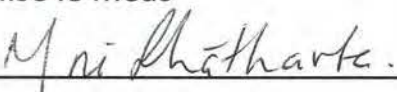
Tá iarratas déanta againn ar an Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an líon scoláireachtaí atá ar fáil a dhúbailt go dtí 60 scoláireacht sa bhliain ag costas €5.000 an ceann.

Stádas DEIS

Tá sé deacair gan na mí-bhuntaístí a bhaineann le scoileanna oileánda a thabhairt faoi deara, scoileanna suite ar charraigeacha beaga na mílte amach ón gcósta i lár an Atlantaigh ag freastal ar phobail sáinnithe nach bhfuil an bóthar faoina gcois. Braitheann feidhmiú laethúil na scoile seo ar rochtain agus ar aimsir agus faraor ar aineolas an phobail i gcoitinne. Cathfidh tú iarracht breise a dhéanamh le theacht ar oileán mar sin is minic a fhágtar ar lár iad ó thaobh fáil ar sheiribhísí scoile agus srl. Teastaíonn ó na scoileanna oileánda a bheith aitheanta mar scoileanna DEIS agus na buntaístí a ghabhann leis an stádas seo a sholáthar ar na hoileáin.

Glacaim buíochas libh as an seans a thabhairt dom ionchur a bheith agam sa phróiséis seo, molaim go mór bhur n-iarrachtaí agus beidh mé ag tnúth le deáthoradh bhur gcuid oibre.

Is mise le meas



Mairéad Ní Fhátharta

Príomhoide Cúnta



GAELOIDEACHAS

AIGHNEACTH CHUIG AN COMHCHOISTE OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA

Dúshláin atá roimh Scoileanna Oileáin

Meitheamh 2017

1.1 Réamhfocal

Is mian Gaeloideachas leis seo aighneacht a chur faoi bhráid an Chomhchoiste Oideachais agus Scileanna mar fhreagairt do chuireadh ar aighneachta faoin anailís a bheidh faoi chúram an Chomhchoiste ar Dhúshláin Scoileanna ar an hOileáin.

Fáiltíonn Gaeloideachas roimh an deis ionchur a bheith acu san anailís seo mar a bhaineann leis na scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta.

1.2 Ról Gaeloideachas

Bunaíodh Gaeloideachas sa bhliain 1973 mar eagraíocht chomhordaitheach agus tacaíochta na scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge ag an mbunleibhéal agus ag an iarbhunleibhéal. Tá Gaeloideachas ag feidhmiú ó Lúil 2014 sa mhór-réimse ***Gaeloideachas/Tumoideachas agus Réamhscolaíocht lán-Ghaeilge***, a chuimsíonn tacaíocht do bhunscoileanna agus d'iarbhunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge sa Ghaeltacht, naíonraí taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht, anuas ar thacaíocht agus abhcóideacht thar ceann bunscoileanna agus iarbhunscoileanna lán-Ghaeilge lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht.

1.3 Na Saincheisteanna

Mar chuid den ullmhú aighneachta, rinne Gaeloideachas teagmháil leis na scoileanna oileáin atá ag feidhmiú trí mheán na Gaeilge. Is ionann sin agus 20 scoil, idir bunleibhéal agus iarbhunleibhéal. Anuas ar sin, cuireadh san áireamh aiseolas ó chruinnithe comhairliúcháin leis na scoileanna seo le linn 2016. Tá a gcuid tuairimí agus moltaí mar bhunús na haighneachta seo.

Díreofar ar na saincheisteanna thíos san aighneacht seo, ar iarratas an Chomhchoiste. Déanfar iad a phlé de réir bunleibhéil agus iarbhunleibhéil, cé go mbíonn trasnaíl agus comóntacht sna saincheisteanan.

1. Leithroinnt Múinteora;
2. Rochtain ar Fhoireann Mhúinteoireachta agus Foireann Mhúinteoireachta a Choinneáil;
3. Nithe a bhaineann le Buiséad;
4. Rollú agus Scoláireachtaí;
5. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin – Stádas Scoile Neamhspleáiche,
6. Stádas DEIS do Scoileanna ar na hOileáin, agus
7. Inrochtaineacht.

BUNSCOILEANNA

1. Leithdháileadh Múinteora

Tháinig ciorclán nua isteach sa bhliain 2017 (**Ciorclán 0017/2017**) **Bunscoileanna Scoileanna Oileánda le Múinteoir Amháin (i.e. Príomhoide amháin)** a shainíonn sa chás gurb í an bhunscoil an t-aon scoil ar an oileán, is amhlaidh a leithdháilfear an dara múinteoir príomhshrutha don scoil le héifeacht ó Mheán Fómhair 2017.

Scoileanna Oileánda le Triúr Múinteoirí (i.e. PO+2) Sa chás go gcaillfear an tríú post ranga i scoil oileánda ó laghdú i líon na ndaltaí, is féidir an tríú post a choinneáil, faoi réir líon iomlán na ndaltaí sa scoil bheith os cionn 45, agus gurb í an scoil an t-aon bhunscoil ar an oileán

D'fháiltigh na scoileanna oileáin go mór roimh an chiorcláin seo, a thug an faoiseamh dóibh ar go leor leibhéil, ar a n-áirítear sábháilteacht, cumas na scoile an curaclam a chur i bhfeidhm agus riar laethúil scoile a bheith níos éifeachtaí.

Luadh na pointí seo a leanas le linn an chomhairliúcháin:-

- a) Níl an leithroinnt múinteora sásúil faoi láthair. Tá míchrothromaíocht mhór idir líon na múinteoirí ranga agus líon na bpáistí atá faoina gcúram i scoileanna éagsúla, rud a chruthaíonn éagóir do dhaltaí. Is féidir go mbaineann seo le stádas DEIS ag cinn thar cinn eile ach níl na cúiseanna soiléir faoinar diúltaíodh aitheantas do scoil.
- b) Bíonn deacrachtaí ag scoileanna múinteoirí a fháil agus iad a choinneáil. Ní bhaineann an painéal leo ar oileán.
- c) Chabhródh na deontais a bhí ar fáil cheanna féin go mór ó thaobh múinteoirí a earcú agus a choinneáil ar na hoileáin

2. Rochtain ar Fhoireann Mhúinteoireachta agus Foireann Mhúinteoireachta a Choinneáil

- a) Tá réimse mór deacrachtaí ag múinteoirí a oibríonn ar oileán atá scartha amach go fisiciúil ón mórthír. Ní féidir leo taisteal trasna na farraige gach lá - bíonn orthu cónaí ann, rud a chuireann le costais maireachtála ó thaobh cíosa agus carr.
- b) Níl na roghanna céanna ag na scoileanna ar oileán. Tá sé an-deacair ionadaithe cáilithe a fháil. I scoil le beirt mhúinteoir ranga (le múinteoir tacaíochta foghlama roinnte) níl aon duine fásta eile sa scoil (laethanta) le breathnú amach nó le tacú dá mba rud é gur éirigh múinteoir tinn.
- c) Má bhíonn uaireanta páirtaimseartha ceadaithe, bíonn sé fíor dheacair duine ón mórthír a fháil le taisteal go rialta chun na hoibre sin a chomhlíonadh. Is minic mar sin go gcaithfear na huaireanta a chnuasú. Níl an tsolúbhthacht céanna ag scoileanna ar na hoileáin maidir le na uaireanta a úsáid mar go hiondúil bíonn an múinteoir tacaíochta foghlama/acmhainne roinnte idir scoileanna, rud a chuireann srian orthu.
- d) Bíonn deacrachtaí múinteoirí a aimsiú. Is minic nach gcuireann múinteoirí cáilithe ón oileán isteach ar na poist.
- e) Bheadh múinteoirí ón mórthír sásta bliain a chaitheamh ar an oileán sa phost ach chaillfeadh siad a gcearta painéil. Tar éis na bliana, ní fhéadfadh siad filleadh ar an bpainéal. D'ardaigh an IPPN an cheist seo anuraidh ach ní fhuair siad aon fhreagra uirthi.
- f) Tá sé fíor-dheacair cúntóir riachtanais speisialta a fhostú. Níl éinne oilte ar an oileán, beidh ar dhuine teacht ón mhór thír, rud a chruthaíonn deacrachtaí. Tá an dúshlan céanna leis an múinteoir tacaíochta foghlama. Mura mbíonn ach cúpla uair an chloig sa tseachtain ceadaithe tá sé deacair múinteoir a fháil. Cé go moltar na huaireanta a chnuasú níl sé sásúil mar chóras thacaíochta leanúnach.

3. Nithe a bhaineann le Buiséad

- a) Bíonn costaisí bhreise ar scoileanna oileánda - costaisí taistil don fhoireann teagaisc agus tacaíochta, lastais, costas chun freastal ar chúrsaí maidir le forbairt ghairmiúil, turas scoile, i measc go leor eile.

4. Rollú agus Scoláireachtaí

- a) Tá líon na ndaltaí ag titim ar na hoileáin. Chomh maith leis na himpleachtaí maidir le postanna, tá páistí ann atá i rang leo féin, rud a d'fhéadfach tionchar a bheith aige ar a gcuid scileanna sóisialta.
- b) De bharr nádúr oileáin, tagann daoine agus imíonn siad go rialta. Fágann sé seo i suíomh leochaileach iad ó thaobh uimhreacha agus cúrsaí planála scoile.

5. Stádas DEIS do Scoileanna ar na hOileáin:

- a) Is mór an cúnamh an stádas DEIS, a chabhraíonn leo rudaí a chur ar fáil do na daltaí nach mbeadh ar fáil murach sin, ar nós cúrsaí damhsa, spóirt, srl.
- b) Má tá an stádas DEIS ag scoil oileánda amháin, ba cheart go mbeadh sé ag gach scoil oileánda.
- c) Tá scoileanna a diúltaíodh an stádas dóibh, gan cúis an diúltaithe a bheith soiléir.

7. Inrochtaineacht

- a) Ní fheileann clár ama an bháid farantóireachta clár ama na scoile ó thaobh daoine ag teacht isteach chun na scoile.
- b) Ní féidir bád nó eitleán a chur in áirithe do ghnó na scoile amháin – is gá cloí leis an tseirbhís atá ann. Fágann seo nach féidir turais a eagrú nach dtagann le hamantí na mbád.
- c) Bíonn deacrachtaí taistil agus costais breise le daoine a fháil isteach chun cainte le páistí nó le cúrsaí a chur ar fáil do mhúinteoirí. Níl an deis céanna ag múinteoirí i scoil oileánda freastal ar chúrsaí agus cur lena gcuid scoileanna gairmiúla, rud nach bhfuil cóir.

IARBHUNSCOILEANNA

1. Leithdháileadh Múinteora

Níl aon Chiorclán ón ROS a dhéanann tagairt do riachtanais iarbhunscoileanna ar oileáin. Cuireann na h-iarbhunscoileanna ar oileáin iarratas 'Curricular Concessions' nó Tacaíocht Teagaisc Bhreise do bhunriachtanais churaclaim (Lamháltais Churaclaim) isteach gach bliain ar bhun riachtanais scoile. Ceadaítear 1.0 múinteoir breise d'iarbhunscoil ar oileán. Tá feachtas ar bun ag na scoileanna ar na hoileáin faoin ETBI é seo a ardú go 2.5 WTE

- a) Bíonn an leithroinnt múinteoireachta bunaithe ar an líon scoláirí a bhíonn ar an rolla. Ar oileán tá líon na scoláirí an-bheag mar sin, ní aithníonn an múnla an dushlán seo. Tá sé dodhéanta curaclam caighdeánach a chur ar fáil do na scoláirí. Ba cheart go mbeadh an deis céanna oideachais ag scoláirí ar oileán agus scoláirí atá ar an mórthír.
- b) Ní bheidh deis roimh ag na scoileanna más dáileadh ó thaobh uimhreacha ar an rolla atá i gceist. Má tá easnamh sa bhfoireann teagaisc, bíonn ar na scoileanna curaclaim tanaí a thairiscint de bharr easpa uaireanta múinteoireachta, gníomh a mhaolaíonn rathúlacht na scoile.
- c) Níl stádas scoil bheag ag roinnt scoileanna agus mar sin ní fhaigheann na scoileanna beaga seo an 1.0WTE a bhronntar ar scoileanna beaga cé go bhfuil siad ar chuid de na scoileanna is lú sa tír.

- d) Leis an múnla nua dáileadh ar an 0.9 WTE Tacaíochta Foghlama, níl aon chinnteacht nach mbeidh laghdú i gceist do na scoileanna beaga, gníomh a mbeadh impleachtaí tromchúiseacha aige ar sholáthar tacaíocht foghlama sna scoileanna ar oileáin de bharr a méid.
- e) Tá iarratas déanta ag an Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna (BOO) go méadófaí leithroinnt múinteoireachta do na scoileanna oileánda ón 1.0 WTE atá ann faoi láthair go dtí 2.5 WTE exquota.
- f) I gcás scoil amháin gur sruth í, tá dúshlán ar leith ann sa mhéid is go bhfuil dhá sheirbhís oideachais ag feidhmiú sa scoil seo (an tseirbhís Ghaeilge agus an tseirbhís bhéarla). Níl siad ag fáil go leor acmhainní breise leis an sruth Gaeilge a réachtáil sa scoil mar ba chóir. Bíonn seo in easnamh i gcónaí agus mar thoradh ar seo, níl na hábhair uilig ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge mar shampla Adhmadóireacht, Eacnamaíocht Bhaile, Francís agus Ríomhairí.
- g) Tá sé dodhéanta ionadaithe a fháil a thiocfaidh isteach agus amach gach lá. Nuair a bhíonn múinteoir tinn caithfidh an príomhoide (den chuid is mó) agus na múinteoirí eile na ranganna a chlúdach (i bhfad níos mó ná uaireanta ionadaíochta agus feitheoireachta).
- h) Ní féidir le múinteoir uaireanta a roinnt mar nach mbeidh siad in ann taisteal chuig scoil eile leis na huaireanta a dhéanamh suas.

2. Rochtain ar Fhoireann Mhúinteoireachta agus Foireann Mhúinteoireachta a Choinneáil

- a) Ní oireann se do chuile dhuine cónaí ar oileán agus bíonn sé an-deacair múinteoirí atá inniúil sa Ghaeilge a mhealladh chuig oileán, mar sin is minic go mbíonn athrú foirne ag tarlú go rialta.
- b) Teastaíonn baoite de shaghas chun cuidiú le múinteoirí an costas breise a ghabhann le maireachtáil ar oileán a láimhseáil.
- c) Níl sé réadúil go mbeadh múinteoirí ag íoc as taisteal bád nó eile as a bpócaí féin, gan cúiteamh air.
- d) Iarrtar an liúntas oileánda atá ar fáil ag múinteoirí a bhí fostaithe roimh 2011 a leathnú amach dóibh siúd a tháinig ar bord tar éis 2011. Níl i gceist ach tuairim is deichniúr múinteoir. Is 1,600euro a íoctar leo siúd atá sa chóras ó 2011 mar sin is €16,000 sa mbliain a theastaíonn chun an liúntas oileánda seo a leathnú ar na múinteoirí nua sa chóras.
- e) Tá sé an deacair múinteoirí cáilithe, atá in ann teagasc trí mheán na Gaeilge a mhealladh chuig an oileán. Tá costas breise ag baint leis ar nós taisteal, lóistín agus maireachtála. Go hiondúil bheadh morgáiste ag an múinteoir ar an mórthír agus ansin bheadh orthu cíós a íoc ar a gcuid lóistín ar an oileán.
- f) Bíonn deacrachtaí go leor múinteoirí a aimsiú atá sásta fanacht ar an oileán i rith na seachtaine (agus ag deireadh na seachtaine má bhíonn droch aimsir ann).

- g) Bíonn deacrachtaí againn nó caithfidh gach múinteoir níos mó ná ábhar amháin a theagasc agus ní i gcónaí a bhíonn Gaeilge ag na múinteoirí.
- h) Bíonn sé beagnach dódhéanta freastal a dhéanamh ar chúrsaí, chruinnithe etc agus ar an ábhar sin caillimid amach ar go leor seansanna (Forbairt ghairmiúil, Teastas Nua Sóisearach etc)
- i) Bíonn sé deacair go leor cónaí i bpobal beag agus caithfidh muid a bheith airdeallach i gcónaí faoi shláinte na múinteoirí.
- j) Tá daoine iontach oilte ar an oileán ach de thairbhe nach múinteoirí iad níl cead acu oibriú sa scoil. (cainteoirí dúchais Fraincise, saoir adhmaid, ealaíontóirí, ceoltóirí srl.)
- k) Cúrsaí Inseirbhíse & Tacaíochta: Ó Mheán Fómhair go hAibreán, ní féidir freastal go praiticiúil mar gheall ar chúrsaí aimsire. Bíonn sé deacair ionadaithe a fháil freisin. Bheadh sé níos feiliúnaí do mhúinteoirí an oileáin dá mbeadh cúrsaí inseirbhíse eagraithe ar an Aoine nó ar an Luan.

3.Nithe a bhaineann le Buiséad

- a) Bíonn an costas beagnach dúbailte ar gach rud faoin am a bhfuil sé tugtha chomh fada le oileán agus bíonn siad cráite ag costais taistil agus lastais. Bíonn lóistín thar oíche , nó dhó i gceist chun freastal ar aon imeacht náisiúnta agus tá ár n-uimhreacha ró-íseal chun costas bus agus óstáin a roinnt, mar sin bíonn ar na scoileanna cúiteamh do na costais seo, rud a ídíonn buiséad na scoile.
- b) Teastaíonn buiséad na scoileanna ar oileán a mhéadú €20,000 sa bhreis chun go mbeidh na scoileanna in ann an fíorchostas a bhaineann le scoil ar oileán a laimhseáil.
- c) Tá go leor costas breise nuair atá scoil ar oileán. Tá costas breise ag baint le iompar agus taisteal. Mar shampla chun seirbhís a chur ar an copier, tá costas pá lá iomlán i gceist chun innealtóir a thabhairt chuig an oileán. Tagann sé ag an 9.00 ar maidin agus de bharr nach mbíonn siad in ann imeacht nuair a bhíonn siad críochnaithe gearrann siad táille lae ar dhá/trí uair chloig oibre. Mar sin tá beagnach dúbailte an chostas ar scoil oileánda i gcomparáid le scoil ar an mórthír. Tá forbairt ghairmiúil an chostasach freisin. Go hiondúil is trathnóna a bhíonn go leor de na cúrsaí mar sin ciallaíonn sé sin go mbíonn ar an múinteoir fanacht thar oíche.
- d) Cabhraíonn an buiséad breise atá ag scoileanna DEIS go mór, trí acmhainní agus tacaíochtaí bhreise do na daltaí.
- e) Moltar airgead breise fá choinne teicneolaíochta infheistithe sna scoileanna ar oileáin. Bheadh féidireachtaí ansin do fhíschomhdháil, do chúrsaí a dhéanamh ó chian, ar líne, freastal ar chruinnithe srl
- f) Bíonn costas breise nuair a théann scoláirí agus / nó múinteoirí amach 'na tíre, nó caithfidh siad lóistín a aimsiú nuair nach féidir taisteal amach agus isteach arís in aon lá amháin.
- g) Liúntas Oileáin – Ba cheart é a thabhairt ar ais, chuideodh sé le múinteoirí óga a gcuid costais ar an oileán agus ar an mórthír a chlúdach.

Tá feachtas ar bun ag scoileanna oileánda na hÉireann le tacaíocht ó ETBI (Boird Oideachais & Oiliúna Éireann).

I measc na n-éileamh tá

- An Liúntas Teagaisc ar oileán de €1658 a ath-thosú
- An dáileadh airgid neamh-phá a ardú ar a laghad €10,000 sa mbliain do gach scoil

4. Rollú agus Scoláireachtaí

- a) De bharr iargúltaíocht na n-oileán agus iad scoite amach ón mórthír, tá teorainn ar líon na n-uimhreacha de ghasúir áitúla a bheidh sna scoileanna mar sin thug an Roinn Ealaíon Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta isteach Scéim Scoláireachtaí i 2003 chun tacú le huimhreacha sna scoileanna ar na hoileáin. Seo ceann de na tionscnaí is rathúla agus is tairbhí do phobal na n-oileán Ghaeltachta ní hamháin ó thaobh forbairt teanga de ach ó thaobh fás agus forbairt na scoileanna agus inmharanthacht na n-Oileáin. Bogann clanna chuig Inis Meáin chun freastal ar an scoil agus le blianta tagann go leor scoláirí againn ar Dheontais do Cheantair Iargúlta a íocann an Roinn Oideachais & Scileanna dóibh siúd nach bhfuil fáil acu ar Oideachais tré Ghaeilge in aice baile.
- b) Tá breis agus tríocha scoláireacht á n-íoc faoi láthair ag an REOGO do scoláirí nach ó cheantair Ghaeltachta iad chun freastal ar scoileanna na n-oileán. Is iad trí scoil Árann a ghlacann páirt sa scéim seo faoi láthair. Seo ceann de na scéimeanna is tairbhí a tugadh isteach do na hoileáin riamh, ní amháin ó thaobh sealbhú teanga de ach ó thaobh inmharthanacht na n-oileán a chinntiú freisin.
- c) Tá iarratas déanta ar an REOGO an líon scoláireachtaí ata ar fáil a dhúbailt go dtí 60 scoláireacht sa bhliain ar chostas €5,000 an scoláireacht.
- d) Níl aon scoláireachtaí ar fáil ar Oileáin Toraigh go fóill; cuireadh ceist ar an Roinn cupla uair agus gealladh go gcuirfí a leithéid ar fáil don oileán ach níor tharla aon rud fós. Bheadh deis iontach ag scoláirí ón mórthír tamall a chaitheamh ar an oileán; agus chuirfeadh sin go mór le saol sóisialta agus foghlama na scoláirí.
- e) Ní bhíonn seans againn cúrsaí pobail a reachtáil mar nach bhfuil teagascóirí sásta fanacht ar an oileán, ach dá mbeadh cúrsa maith á reachtáil bheadh daoine (ata ar an dól) breá sásta é a dhéanamh ach maoiniú a fháil agus iad ina bhun.
- f) Ní bhíonn seans againn maoiniú a fháil ó chomhlachtaí mar nach bhfuil comhlachtaí ar bith againn, agus bíonn sé an-deacair ag daoine óga printíseacht a aimsiú mar nach bhfuil aithne acu ar dhaoine ata sásta taithí oibre a chur ar fáil dóibh.

5. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin – Stádas Scoile Neamhspleáiche

Scoil faoi bhainistíocht Choláiste Choilm Indreabhán go hoifigiúil is ea Coláiste Naomh Eoin. Tá sí ar an bhfód ó 2002 ach gan stádas neamhspleách ón mhátharscoil bainte amach go fóill. Tháinig plean fadtéarmach don scoil i 2007 agus tugadh isteach cúrsa na hArdteiste. Fostaíodh múinteoirí a bhí sásta a bheith lonnaithe ar an Oileán go lán-aimseartha agus

gearradh amach an taisteal chuig Coláiste Cholm Cille Indreabhán. Fostaíodh múinteoir i bhFeighil agus tugadh uasghradú ar an stádas poist seo go dtí Príomhoide Cúnta i 2014.

Cruthaíonn an struchtúr bainistíochta an-dúshlán d'fheidhmiú na scoile. Tá duine amháin le post freagrachta i gceannas na scoile, agus ag feidhmiú faoi bhainistíocht agus faoi pholasaí scoil DEIS ar an tír mhór atá an scoil. Tá impleachtaí móra ó thaobh sláinte, sábháilteachta agus fostaíochta ag baint leis an socrú sealadach seo atá i bhfeidhm le chúig bhliana déag. Teastaíonn aitheantas mar scoil neamhspleách a bhronnadh ar choláiste Eoin don scoil bhliain seo chugainn. [Tá iarratas faoi bhráid na Roinne Oideachais agus Scileanna].

Tá an easpa aitheantais oifigiúil mar scoil mar bhagairt laethúil d'inmharthanacht na scoile. Teastaíonn stádas buan neamhspleách ón scoil. Roinntear uimhir Rolla le Coláiste Cholmille Indreabhán rud a fhágann nach dtarlaíonn aon idirdhealú idir an dá scoil, gníomh a dhéanann riaradh agus feidhmiú laethúil na scoile fíor dheacair agus anróiteach. Ní oireann an choincheap reatha (bainistiú chianda) ar chor ar bith agus le fás na scoile tá na deacrachtaí ag méadú.

Seo thíos roinnt de na deacrachtaí aitheanta ó thaobh bainistíochta de:

- Níl ach post freagrachta amháin sa scoil, sin Príomhoide cúnta, agus bíonn ar an bPríomhoide cúnta seo freagracht iomlán na scoile a ghlacadh agus gníomhiú mar a bheadh súil leis ó Phríomhoide ach gan aon aitheantas ná liúntas dá gcuid oibre. (Níl sé réalaióch go mbeadh bainistíocht Choláiste Cholmille in ann a bheith ar an bhfód nuair a theastaíonn siad, tá tríocha míle farraige idir an dá scoil.)
- Le h-imeacht ama tá an gaol oibre idir an dá scoil ag laghdú mar go mbíonn ar Choláiste Naomh Eoin gníomhú as a stuaim féin cé nach bhfuil na hacmhainní ar fáil chun an obair seo a láimhseáil.
- Tá sé deacair curaclam leathan a sholathár de bharr easpa uaireanta múinteoireachta réasúnach. Gan an 0.5 do abhantracht comhoideachas ná 0.25 leas-phríomhoide tugtha.
- Níl 1.0 wte do scoil bheag tugtha.
- Brathann Coláiste Naomh Eoin ar lamhátais churaclaim gach bliain chun uaireanta múinteoireachta a fháil mar sin ní féidir pleanáil.
- Ní bhíonn Coláiste Naomh Eoin san áireamh do dheontais ná maoiniú stáit a bhronntar ar scoileanna.
- Níl aon cheangal idir scoláirí an dá scoil agus is go neamhsplách ar a chéile a feidhmíonn an dá scoil go laethúil, mar shampla i gComórtais náisiúnta & IRL.
- Níl aon ionadaí ar Chomhairle na Scoláirí ag Coláiste Naomh Eoin ná ar Bhord Bainistíochta na Scoile mar nach bhféidir freastal ar chruinnuithe de bharr cúinsí tíreolaíochta.
- Níl Polasaí ná Pleanáil Choláiste Cholmille feiliúnach do Choláiste Naomh Eoin.

- Níl na scoláirí ar an taifead leictreonach áitiúil ach ar chóras na mátharscoile. Fágann seo nach gcoinnítear taifead ar thorthaí scrúduithe scoláirí an oileáin ar an gcóras leictreonach. Is i gColáiste Naomh Eoin a bhíonn na rollaí a bhaineann leis an scoil sin, déanta ar an seanchóras le lámh. Déanann an easpa aitheantais seo obair Choimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit an-chasta mar nach mbíonn Coláiste Naomh Eoin san áireamh tráth a mbíonn scrúdaitheoirí dá gceapadh agus gur ar iarratas breise ag uair na cinniúna a dhéantar solathár do Choláiste Naomh Eoin. Tá an socrú seo baolach ó thaobh seachadadh scrúduithe idir an dá scoil, uaireanta is go leictreonach a sheoltar páipéir scrúduithe nó ar eitleán .
- Bíonn deacracht ó thaobh síniú oifigiúil, mar shampla seiceanna scoile a sheoladh isteach agus amach chun síniú a fháil más féidir agus impleachtaí ag baint le seiceanna réamhshínithe a fhágáil thart.
- Srian ar fhorbairt ghairimúil mhúinteoirí Choláiste Naomh Eoin mar nach bhfuil aon deis fhorbairt ghairimúil sa scoil.

6. Stádas DEIS

- a) Teastaíonn ó na scoileanna oileánda a bheith aitheanta mar scoileanna DEIS agus na buntáistí a ghabhann leis an stádas seo a sholáthar ar na hoileáin.
- b) De bharr go bhfuil míbhuntáistí ag baint le bheith lonnaithe ar oileán ba cheart stádas DEIS a bhronnadh ar na scoileanna. Tá go leor dúshláin le sarú ar nós an aimsir, múinteoirí ag taisteal, easpa seirbhísí ar an oileán.
- c) Chuideodh stádas DEIS leis an cóimheas idir múinteoirí agus daltaí do cuid de na scoileanna agus le scoláirí a spreagadh le dul ar aghaidh chuig tríú leibhéal.

7. Inrochtaineacht

- a) Teastaíonn seirbhís aeir agus farantóireacht le freastal ar riachtanais na scoile. Teastaíonn cinnteacht a bheith leis na seirbhísí go fadtéarmach agus nach mbeadh na scoileanna gach cúig/ceithre bliana ag déanamh iarrachta an tseirbhís a choinnéail mar a tharla le deirneas leis an tseirbhís aeir.
- b) Is iondúil nach féidir taisteal isteach agus amach gach lá. Ní fheileann am na mbád do chlár ama na scoile.
- c) Ní féidir ionadaí a fháil ach go fíor-annamh agus ansin bíonn sé ag bráth ar aimsir.
- d) Le freastal ar chruinniú i mBAC is taisteal 2 nó 3 lá atá i gceist.
- e) Teicneolaíocht – ní bhíonn ceangal maith ar na hoileáin go ginearálta. Teastaíonn ceangal maith ins na tithe le go mbeidh scolairí in ann buntáiste a bhaint as an dteicneolaíocht sa mbaile.
- f) Bíonn se deacair tabhairt faoi fhorbairt ghairmiúil de bharr na haimsire agus a leithéid.

- g) Moltar struchtúr a fhorbairt don Forbairt Ghairmiúil Leanúnach ina mbíonn an oiliúint ar fáil ar líne mar rogha.

Conclúid

Tá sé ríshoiléir go bhfuil an-chuid dúshláin roimh na scoileanna oileáin, dúshláin comóna idir an dá leibhéal, agus cinn ar leith a bhaineann leis na leibhéal faoi seach.

Tá sé rí-shoiléir go gcruthaíonn an suíomh oileán dua breise, agus gur gá iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar conas an saibhreas agus an tábhacht a bhaineann leis na scoileanna oileán a chaomhnú agus a fhorbairt trí struchtúr tacaíochta níos feiliúnaí mar a bhaineann le stádas neamhspleách scoile; soláthar mhúinteoirí; foireann tacaíochta; buiséad; scoláireachtaí agus liúntais.

Moltar iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar liúntas cuí do mhúinteoirí oileán, a chuirfeadh leis an mealladh dóibh cónaí agus obair ar oileán iarghúlta.

Moltar iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar an gcur chuige DEIS lena chinntiú go mbeidh comhsheasmhacht I gceist leis agus go mbronntar go huathoibríoch ar scoileanna oileán é mar aitheantas ar na míbhuntáistí iliomad a bhaineann lena suíomh.

Gabhann Gaeloideachas buíochas leis an gComhchoiste as an deis a bheith againn ionchur a bheith againn I gceist atá fíor-thábhachtach agus criticiúil. D'fháilteoimis roimh an deis teacht os chomhair an Chomhchoiste leis an bplé ar na ceistanna seo a leathnú agus chun teacht ar chomhthuiscintí ar na bealaí is éifeachtaí chun tosaigh.



Joint Committee on Education and Skills

Challenges facing our Island Schools
16th June 2017

INTO Submission

Background

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) represents over 40,000 teachers across the island of Ireland. In the Republic, it represents 33,600 teachers and principals in primary schools. INTO maintains a strong organising base at local level, with 160 branches throughout the 26 counties. The INTO, and primary teachers generally have strong links with their local communities. INTO has a proud tradition of not only representing teachers in relation to their terms and conditions, but also seeking to support and develop the schools in which they work, through improved staffing and funding.

Ireland's coastal islands form a rich part of the country's cultural heritage. There are approximately 30 inhabited islands off the coast of Ireland. There are currently 12 island primary schools located on 10 offshore islands off the coasts of Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Cork serving 203 pupils. (See Appendix A) A thirteenth island school, on Sherkin Island, closed in July 2016. All of the islands discussed are geographically isolated, face Atlantic waters and have ferry access to the mainland.

Primary schools on islands, as in many rural areas, have a key role in sustaining vibrant and viable local communities. The INTO has strongly argued the need to provide adequate support and resources to rural schools and to consider small schools not only on financial terms, but on the value they provide to areas where other facilities may be scarce. The INTO firmly believes that island populations deserve high quality, fully-resourced primary education available within their communities.

Teaching Allocation

All of the island schools currently have a teaching staff of two or less. In Budget 2012, the Government announced an increase in the staffing schedule that targeted 2, 3 and 4 teacher schools. The appointment figure for a second teacher was to increase over 3 school years from 12 to 20, for the third teacher from 49 to 56 and the fourth teacher from 81 to 86. A resolution passed at INTO Congress 2012 condemned "the pressure that is being exerted on rural schools by the revised staffing schedule which will have the effect of making it very difficult for these schools to develop or even survive." The INTO demanded that the staffing schedule be immediately revised with particular reference to the protection of small schools. Following extensive INTO campaigning on the issue, there was a small reduction in appointment figures (to 19, 55 and 85 respectively) in Budget 2015. INTO calls for the immediate restoration of the 2011 staffing schedule for 2, 3, and 4 teacher schools of 12, 49 and 81 respectively for both appointment and retention of staff.

The INTO acknowledges the provision in Budget 2017 for one-teacher island schools. As of September 2017, where a school is the only primary school on an island, it can appoint a second teacher, regardless of pupil numbers. This is a welcome concession. The INTO has previously raised concerns that one-teacher schools can leave teachers professionally and socially isolated. Having one teacher as the sole adult in a school also raises health and safety and child welfare concerns. We understand that this arrangement will lead to an additional teacher for the primary schools on Tory Island and Inishturk.

Budget 2017 also included a provision for three-teacher island schools. In the event that a reduction in numbers meant that a school would lose its third teacher, Budget 2017 allowed the third teacher to be retained subject to the total number of students in the school being at least 45 and the school being the only one on the island. The largest island school currently has two teachers and an enrolment of 42 (as of September 2016) so this provision will not alter the teaching allocation of any of the schools.

Accessing and Retaining Teaching Staff

In 1964, the Government introduced an island allowance as an incentive to teachers to take up teaching positions on islands. This allowance was abolished for all new appointees from 1 February 2012.

Eight of the island primary schools are also Gaeltacht schools. The additional allowance available to teachers in Gaeltacht schools was also abolished for new appointees from 2012. The INTO condemned these cuts and called for the immediate restoration of these allowances.

These allowances were an important incentive in recruiting teachers to island and Gaeltacht schools. Taking up a teaching post on an island involves either a significant upheaval in moving to the island or incurring a huge burden in travel time and cost in going to school.

Teachers deployed in shared posts on island schools have long travel times and increased costs which are not recognised in the time allocations for such posts.

Teachers in island schools, particularly where a school is the only one on an island, are at risk of becoming professionally isolated. Professional development is rarely, if ever, available on island itself and teachers must typically travel to the mainland to engage in training and upskilling. The INTO recommends that continuing professional development should be available to teachers on the islands or that funding be provided to facilitate the additional transport costs for island teachers attending training on the mainland.

The Boards of Managements of island schools also face unique and complex challenges. The INTO recommends that specific and targeted training should be provided to these Boards. Island schools could be brought together, where feasible, to avail of training specific to the management of island schools.

Special consideration should also be given to redeployment of teachers to or from island schools. Teachers being redeployed from the main panel must accept a formal offer of a job within 45km of their original school. The redeployment process, however, makes no distinction between distance travelled by road and that travelled by sea. Tory Island, for example, is 11km from the mainland but the ferry journey to the island takes approximately an hour and varies with changes in weather conditions. A teacher redeployed up to 45km to or from the island would have a considerably longer commute than a teacher travelling up to 45km by road only.

The principals in all of the island schools are teaching principals. The INTO recognises the multifarious duties of a teaching principal and have long demanded an increase in principal release days to one per week. The INTO also demands the payment of the benchmarking award, recommended over ten years ago, to end inequality between primary and post-primary principals. The payment of this allowance would enhance recruitment to such posts.

Budgetary Matters

A capitation grant is provided to each school to cover day-to-day running costs. In mainstream schools, the capitation grant is currently €170 per pupil per year. This payment of less than one euro per child per day is insufficient and unacceptable for any primary school. A resolution passed at the INTO Annual Congress in 2016 demanded that the “primary school capitation grant be increased in line with capitation grants at second level.”

We acknowledge that the minimum capitation grant to small schools is based on 60 pupils, but there are basic running costs such as heating and cleaning that exist regardless of school enrolment and many small schools struggle to meet these costs. This difficulty is exacerbated on islands where costs are higher. The limited capitation grant means many primary schools throughout the country are forced to hold fundraisers to meet operational costs, but fundraising possibilities are limited for island schools by lower populations in the communities they serve.

For island schools there are additional costs to be factored into meeting pupils' educational needs. For example, the Aquatics strand, an obligatory part of the PE curriculum, is not grant-funded. In order to fully deliver the curriculum, schools must pay for ferry transport, in addition to the buses hired by most schools, to access swimming pools on the mainland. Ferry costs must also be factored into any educational outings, school tours or attendance at inter-school activities such as sports tournaments or debating competitions. The INTO calls for an increase in the capitation grant which would ensure that island schools, and their pupils, are not disadvantaged or forced to continuously fundraise to meet the costs of delivering high-quality education.

Island schools, given their location, are particularly exposed to elements and, subsequently, to accelerated building wear and tear. The cost of doing repairs on islands is increased as building materials and labour, when not available on the island, must be sourced on the mainland and transported via ferry to the school. The Minor Works Grant available to schools for the completion of minor repairs and the purchase of furniture and educational equipment is set at a standard rate of €5,500 basic grant plus €18.50 per mainstream pupil and €74 per special needs pupil. This set-rate grant does not consider that any furniture, photocopiers, computers or PE equipment purchased for island schools incur the additional costs associated with getting them to the island. The INTO, therefore, recommends an increase in the Minor Works Grant to allow for the higher cost of equipment and increased frequency of repairs on island schools.

Enrolment

Figures from the Central Statistics Office indicate that in the five years between 2011 and 2016 the overall population of Ireland's islands dropped by 3%. (These figures include some islands that are attached to the mainland by road or causeway.)

The population change has varied across different age ranges. There was a general increase in the number of island inhabitants over 55 years old and a decrease in population numbers across every age range below that. The population of children less than 14 years old decreased by nearly 10% in the five-year period.

The enrolment numbers in island primary schools have fluctuated in the same period as can be seen in Appendix A.

Seven of the island schools had an increase in enrolments, three saw enrolment numbers drop and two schools had the same enrolment in 2016 as it had in 2011.

Given the natural fluctuations in population and the contribution that primary schools make to the vitality of an island community, it is important that a long-term view is taken when deciding the viability of an island school. Enrolment in a given year is not necessarily indicative of the future enrolment potential of that school and consideration must be given to the broader picture and the community's needs.

Gaeltacht Schools

As previously stated, eight of the island schools are also Gaeltacht schools. The INTO believes that special consideration, and favourable retention figures, should be given to schools serving Gaeltacht communities.

Tá ceist na teanga sa Ghaeltacht leochaileach go leor agus tá sé an-tábhachtach go dtabharfaí gach tacaíocht do na scoileanna sa Ghaeltacht plé leis an gcomhthéacs casta teanga ina bhfuil siad ag feidhmiú. Tá taighde déanta, tuarascálacha scríofa agus moltaí curtha chun cinn cheana maidir le cúrsaí oideachais i limistéir Ghaeltachta, agus tá sé in am gníomh anois. Tá cúram ar an Roinn Oideachais a chinntiú go bhfeidhmíonn an córas oideachais ar mhaithe leis an nGaeilge agus le pobal na Gaeltachta seachas a mhalairt. Tá práinn leis an obair seo ó tharla go bhfuil daonra na gcainteoirí dúchais ag titim agus go bhfuil próifíl teangeolaíoch sna ceantair Ghaeltachta éagsúla ag síor athrú. Tá cúram ar leith ar na scoileanna atá lonnaithe sa Ghaeltacht de réir An Achta Oideachais 1998 cuidiú chun an Ghaeilge a choinneáil mar phríomhtheanga an phobail. Aithníonn Acht na Gaeltachta 2012 gurb iad na scoileanna atá mar chroí chuid den tacaíocht atá de dhíth chun cur le húsáid na Gaeilge i measc an phobail Ghaeltachta. Ní mór gach tacaíocht a chur ar fáil do na scoileanna sa Ghaeltacht chun a chur ar a gcumas ard chaighdeán oideachais a sholáthar don phobal.

DEIS Status for Island Schools

Eight of the island primary schools are currently classified as DEIS Rural schools.

The Department of Education & Skills DEIS programme aims to provide support to schools with high levels of disadvantage and, as a result, improve educational outcomes for pupils in these schools. Supports available to DEIS Rural Schools include additional grant aid, enhanced rate of funding under the Schools Book Grant Scheme and priority access to schools meals programmes.

When the programme was first implemented, DEIS Rural schools had access to a rural co-ordinator serving a cluster of schools. Where clustering wasn't an option, DEIS rural schools were granted additional financial supports to aid with school planning, the implementation of measures to improve literacy and numeracy and to facilitate building strong links between home, school and the community. Under the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014, rural co-ordinators were withdrawn from schools effective from 31 August 2011. The INTO Central Executive Committee deplored the removal of these and other resources which were "relied on by schools to enhance the learning of the most vulnerable pupils in our primary schools." INTO called for the "return of the rural coordinator role to schools banded as Rural DEIS," as per a resolution passed at INTO Congress 2016.

Conclusion

The Department of Education and Skills' Value for Money Review of Small Primary Schools, completed in 2013, stated that "The Department of Education and Skills supports a number of small primary schools.., that are mainly located in rural areas, so that children of primary school age are enabled to attend a local school without having to travel excessive distances and are able to benefit from the same quality of education as those pupils attending schools of a larger size... Through benefiting from quality education, pupils in small primary schools are then enabled to develop to their full potential and thereby contribute to the economy and wider society." The INTO fully supports this view and is therefore committed to ensuring that island schools are properly staffed, resourced and funded to ensure that they can continue to contribute to vibrant local communities. We look forward to engaging further with the Joint Committee on this matter.

Appendix 1
From DES Statistical Reports

	School Name	Location	Roll Number	DEIS?	Gaeilge	Number of mainstream teachers 2015/16	Enrolment 2016	Enrolment 2015/16	Enrolment 2014/15	Enrolment 2013/14	Enrolment 2012/13	Enrolment 2011/2012
1	Scoil Mhichil Naofa	Bere Island, Bantry, Co Cork	19525R	Y	N	2	20	18	19	20	22	23
2	Scoil Naisiúnta Cléire	Cape Clear, Skibbereen, Co Cork	14303U	Y	Y	2	14	13	15	12	14	8
3	Scoil Naomh Cholmcille	Tory Island	05164I	Y	Y	1	7	9	10	11	9	6
4	Arainn Mhór I	Arranmore Island, Donegal	15955W	Y	Y	2	18	25	31	36	41	43
5	Arainn Mhór II	Arranmore Island, Donegal	16384K	Y	Y	1	16	15	12	12	10	12
6	Scoil Ronain	Inis Mór, Arainn, Co Galway	17456O	N	Y	2	42	37	34	36	41	42
7	SN Eoin Pól II	Inis Mór, Arainn, Co Galway	20210W	N	Y	2	17	21	20	21	23	16
8	SN Caomhain	Inis Oirthir, Arainn, Co Galway	17289V	Y	Y	2	24	25	18	16	17	17
9	SN Inis Meadhain	Inis Meain, Arainn, Co Galway	12339I	N	Y	2	8	8	3	5	8	6
10	Inishbofin NS	Inishbofin, Co Galway	13927H	Y	N	2	12	11	12	17	17	15
11	St Columba's NS	Inishturk, Co Galway	13174H	Y	N	1	3	3	2	3	3	3
12	St Patrick's NS	Clare Island, Co Mayo	13311O	N	N	2	22	20	22	19	18	20
13	Sherkin Island NS	Sherkin Island, Co Cork	14065H	Closed 2016			Closed	2	4	12	6	12

Appendix 2
From CSO.ie

Population of Inhabited Islands Off the Coast 2011 to 2016 (Number) by Sex, Age Group and Census Year

	2011	2016
Both sexes		
All ages	9,029	8,756
0 - 4 years	449	387
5 - 9 years	518	448
10 - 14 years	568	550
15 - 19 years	584	491
20 - 24 years	463	429
25 - 29 years	442	406
30 - 34 years	496	441
35 - 39 years	543	495
40 - 44 years	573	538
45 - 49 years	640	580
50 - 54 years	682	610
55 - 59 years	671	672
60 - 64 years	648	673
65 - 69 years	568	655
70 - 74 years	404	534
75 - 79 years	355	351
80 - 84 years	231	277
85 years and over	194	219



10th November 2017

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)
Submission to the Oireachtas Committee
on Education and Skills:
Challenges facing post-primary schools on off-shore islands

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Introduction: Requirement for Island Education Policy

Island schools are at the heart of Ireland's Island communities. Without schools, primary and post-primary, island communities would not survive. There are currently only five islands with small post-primary schools. These schools face inordinate and unique challenges, which place the schools, parents, staff and most importantly, the pupils at a major disadvantage. Island post-primary schools have specific challenges that have not to date been adequately addressed by any Government Department. The challenges faced by island schools are additional to those faced by 'small schools' elsewhere. Many of these specific challenges are surmountable, requiring thought and a little investment, and above all, a more flexible approach to regulations designed for much larger mainland schools.

The case for specific additional ring-fenced supports for off-shore island schools is strong. The State needs to positively discriminate in favour of island schools because of their unique geographical, cultural and societal context. ETBI wholeheartedly supports our member Education and Training Boards (Galway & Roscommon ETB and Donegal ETB) which are patrons of off-shore second-level island schools. The following are some of their key concerns.

1. Teaching allocation

Challenge:

The current model of teacher allocation (PTR, Curricular Concessions and other associated allocations) does not sufficiently identify or address the unique challenges of the islands' post-primary sector. The provision of a required curriculum is dependent on the provision of a suitable teacher cohort. Island schools, by nature, have small numbers of pupils, but those pupils require a full curriculum. A small teaching allocation cannot provide the range of subjects to schools, pupils and parents, or the minimum 28-hour instruction week per pupil, as required by the Department of Education and Skills.

Not all Island schools are in receipt of the 'Co-Educational Single Catchment Area' additional teacher allocation of 0.5 WTE, which is available to stand-alone schools, where no other education provision is available within approximately 32kms. While, geographically, island schools may not exceed the required minimum distance from other schools for this allocation, as measured by the Department, the real challenge of accessing the island schools is not recognised, as no transport links exist between island post-primary schools. Consequently, as schools that exist on other islands or on the mainland are not accessible, the co-ed single catchment 0.5 WTE should be available to all island schools. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, has applied to DES for this necessary allocation each year, but has to date been unsuccessful.

For the past couple of decades, the Department of Education and Skills has given a significant number of stand-alone small post-primary schools the official designation of 'Small School'. This designation affords such schools an additional staffing designation of 1.0 WTE teachers, in

addition to the teaching allocation generated by the national template approach for all schools of 19:1. The formal designation of such schools as small schools allows the smallest stand-alone schools to offer some limited subject choice, which would otherwise not be available.

The five (5) post-primary off-shore island schools under the patronage and management of GRETB and Donegal ETB are among Ireland's smallest post-primary schools. Indeed, within the category of island schools, Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr, (average 25 students enrolled) and Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin (average 27 students enrolled), are among the smallest of island schools, and are ranked among Ireland's ten smallest schools. Notwithstanding this, to date, neither Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr, nor Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, have secured designation from Department of Education and Skills as 'small schools' and neither has been allocated the additional 1.0 WTE teaching allocation from DES, despite several applications from GRETB to the Department of Education and Skills.

On Tory Island, Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille does not necessarily require 'special status'; but it is most important that improvements put in place for island schools must be made available for **all** island schools.

As far back as 2001, the Department of Education and Science commissioned an expert group to study and report on the allocation of teachers to second-level schools. The DES expert group recognised that 43 vulnerable small standalone post-primary schools existed across Ireland, but that within that group of 43, six of these schools had not been awarded 'small school' status nor had they been given the teacher allocation associated with such status.

"The additional allocation in recent years to small schools of part-time hours in areas such as guidance, remedial teaching and home school liaison has been beneficial in supporting and extending the range of services which these schools can offer. These schools now need to be given some guarantee of curriculum protection in the form of additional core staffing, extra funding or other supports.

In the school year 2000/01, 144 second-level schools had enrolments below 250, a possible minimum viable enrolment. We are given to understand that approximately 43 of these would meet the criteria of small 'stand-alone'.

.... Similar schools not included in the above group may be given curricular concessions and we recommend that they be given a similar allocation of one extra teaching post as entitlement rather than as a concessionary allocation. We estimate that the number of schools in this category currently not receiving this additional allocation on entitlement amounts to six."

The Allocation of Teachers to Second Level Schools – Report of the Expert Group to the Minister for Education and Science, (DES, 2001, P. 85-87)

For some reason, the following GRETB offshore island schools find themselves to be unfortunate members of the group of six without official designation as ‘small schools’.

- Coláiste Ghobnait, Inis Oírr
- Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin

The DES expert group report makes some specific recommendations regarding addressing these matters.

GRETB has made a number of applications to the Department of Education and Skills over the years, attempting to secure ‘small school’ designation status for Coláiste Ghobnait and Coláiste Naomh Eoin. The failure by GRETB to secure this designation for these vulnerable small Gaeltacht schools on offshore islands has resulted in these schools having a more limited curriculum than might otherwise be available, including the necessity to have more than one year group being taught in a single class in some instances in these schools.

From 2019, the new model of delivering Learning Support and SEN provision is expected to further reduce the teacher allocation in the island schools, with the removal of the 0.9 WTE LS allocation as a block allocation currently available to all schools below 500 pupils, irrespective of size. ETBI and GRETB have raised this matter with Department of Education and Skills, and the Department has been asked to review the expected impact of the changes on the smallest post-primary schools, a category that includes Ireland’s five island schools, which are those most likely to be adversely affected.

Proposed Solution:

It is essential that the Island School core teacher allocation is increased from 1 to 2.5 WTE ex-quota posts (1.5 extra in 5 schools). At Basic Scale Pt. 10, the annual cost of this allocation would be €327,090. This will ensure that the five Island Schools provide the required curriculum to pupils and provide access to a range of extra-curricular activities and also enhance the health and safety of the school body.

All Island schools must be given the ‘Co-Educational Single Catchment allocation’ of 0.5 WTE. All Island schools should be officially designated ‘small schools’ by the Department, and receive the associated 1.0 WTE teaching allocation. There are approximately only 220 pupils distributed across Ireland’s five post-primary island schools, or an average enrolment of 44 pupils.

2. Accessing and Retaining Teaching Staff

Challenge:

Living and teaching on an island is not for everyone. Hiring suitably qualified staff, competent ‘as Gaelige’ and willing to teach on an island is extremely challenging and can involve a high degree of turnover of teaching staff.

Island teachers have to pay the additional costs involved in commuting to and from the islands. In Donegal, Tory Island teachers cannot commute and must rent accommodation on the island as well as pay mortgages etc on the mainland. Furthermore, they are often storm-bound on the island, or do not take holidays as they must travel to Tory the day before they teach (and that is weather-permitting only).

Many island teachers are forced to work part-time due to insufficient teacher allocation within island schools to support more substantial contract hours. Others are shared between schools (island and mainland schools) and are further burdened with additional accommodation costs as well as the travel costs. Also, the cost of living on an island is more than on the mainland.

The issue of accessing substitute teachers is also a challenge, acquiring someone who would be willing to teach in an island school, as the need for accommodation means extra expenditure for the teacher. In the case of both Arranmore and Tory Island, it is impossible to get a substitute as they cannot commute daily; this further strengthens the case for an extra teacher allocation.

Proposed Solution:

A return of the Island Allowance of €1,600 for Teachers is essential to attract teachers to the Island Schools. The estimated cost of this for the five islands would be €16,000. (10 WTEs @ €1,600). [Note: All pre-2011 island teachers retained their allowances; however, it should be noted that while pre-2011 island teachers retained their allowance, it was in fact changed with all other allowances.]

3. Inadequate School Budget

Challenge:

Island schools' budgets do not reflect the heavy additional costs of cargo transport, travel costs, school servicing and repairs (i.e. hourly charge while waiting for travel off the islands) and other additional costs. Island schools are overly burdened by the additional travel costs when pupils attend events on the mainland, which is part and parcel of school life, as all events are "away" fixtures. No additional ONP funding currently given by the Department of Education and Skills to island schools and no island education policy exists to engage with such issues.

Proposed Solution:

It is essential that the island schools' budgets be increased by €20,000 per school to reflect the real costs in running post-primary island schools. The cost of this would be a €100,000 PA increase in Other Non Pay (ONP).

4. Enrolment and Scoláireachtaí

Challenge:

Island schools, by nature, have small pupil populations. School curriculum and hence numbers of teachers depend on pupil numbers. The three Aran Island post-primary schools currently have 30 scholarship placements between them and these greatly enhance the opportunities afforded to the island schools pupils in terms of subject choice available.

Proposed Solution:

It is requested that the number of scholarships granted by Roinn na Gaeltachta be increased from the current 30 to 60. The cost of this would be €150,000 PA, funded by Roinn na Gaeltachta. In relation to scholarships and enrolment, we would like to see this scheme made available for the Donegal island schools also.

5. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin - Independent School Status

Challenge:

Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, has to date, from a governance and administrative perspective, been administered by Coláiste Cholmcille, Indreabhán, on the mainland (distance of a one-hour sea journey, in addition to 18km by road). This is a historical situation in order to provide post-primary education on Inis Meáin. Coláiste Naomh Eoin has little or no official recognition from the Department of Education and Skills. This arrangement is now wholly unsuited to the current circumstances and is adversely affecting both Coláiste Cholmcille and Coláiste Naomh Eoin.

Proposed Solution:

Coláiste Naomh Eoin must be granted official independent school status and be provided with a Príomhoide and Príomhoide Tánaisteach, as exists in every other of the 726 post-primary schools. Coláiste Naomh Eoin, Inis Meáin, is the only school in Ireland that has only one management post sanctioned by DES, that of Múinteoir i bhFeighil. No Principal or Deputy Principal exists in Coláiste Naomh Eoin, contrary to the situation for the other four island schools. An application from GRETB to the Department of Education and Skills for independent status was lodged with the Department during June 2017.

6. DEIS Status for Island Schools

Challenge:

Due to the offshore nature of islands and the significant disadvantage arising from this, DEIS status should be afforded to the five offshore island schools. Inclement weather conditions can have a detrimental effect on school attendance by pupils and staff.

The lack of availability of additional school-related services through Irish generally, particularly with regard to the Islands; NEPS; Mental-health services; Medical services; causes additional hardship and disadvantage.

Third-level institutions rarely include the islands in their drives for enrolment or information sessions.

Island schools do not enjoy the same degree of in-school visits as other schools; guest speakers, demonstrations, tutorials, information sessions for parents etc.

Proposed Solution:

Award DEIS status.

7. Accessibility

Challenges:

Ferry and air services to the three Aran Islands are inadequate in providing access to and from the Islands for pupils, staff and other school-related services.

Proposed Solution:

It is requested that adequate, state-funded, PSO passenger transport access be provided to the islands, in consultation with stakeholders, the post-primary schools in particular. GRETB is the largest employer on the three Aran Islands and our school community is the largest user of transport services.

Conclusion:

The aggregate total cost of the required enhancement and allocations is estimated at €590,905 PA across two Government Departments. This investment does a lot more for the islands than the figure suggests. The additional value to the islands and contribution to island life of this investment in the five island schools is immeasurable.

ETBI calls on the government to recognise the need to make provision in the 2018 budget to address the specific challenges and disadvantages of post-primary education for island schools and their communities.


etb

Bord Oideachais agus
Oiliúna Dhún na nGall
Donegal Education and
Training Board

Opening Statement

Title: “Challenges Facing our Island Schools’
To: Joint Committee on Education and Skills
Date: 19th December 2017
Speaker: Ms Anne McHugh, Chief Executive, Donegal ETB

I wish to thank you on behalf of Donegal Education and Training Board for the opportunity to address you in respect of the challenges facing our Island Schools. Donegal ETB operates two island schools, Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada, Árainn Mhór and Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille, Oileán Thoraí.

If one applies strict economic criteria, Island schools are not value for money, but their value must not be underestimated; they are the lifeline of a dying breed - islanders, and as such, the lifeline of an intrinsic part of our heritage, culture and individuality as Irish people and citizens. The Department has already acknowledged their importance and it is through the Department’s vision that these schools still exist – Bunscoileanna, and have come into existence – Meánscoileanna. Previously, whole generations of young people were denied their right to secondary education and islands ran the risk of losing a whole generation of their people, many of whom never returned to live permanently on the islands. Many of these islands are the last outposts of the Irish language and will play a vital role in the next few years while the Government tries to retain, preserve, strengthen and promote the Irish language before it dies out in the Gaeltacht areas.

I will refer separately to our schools as, despite being island schools, they both face very different challenges.

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada, Árainn Mhór

Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada officially opened its doors with an initial enrolment of 28 on the 8th October 1990. The school operated through the medium of English from the outset and continued to do so until a High Court Determination in 2008 resulted in the establishment of a Sruth Gaeilge which currently provides a full curriculum to 19 students “trí mheán na Gaeilge”. Current enrolment is 103. 59 of these students are as a result of inward migration to the island from the mainland.

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Anne NicAodha
Príomhfheidhmeannach

Additional teaching staff were appointed to facilitate the Sruth Gaeilge and it is the policy of Donegal ETB that each teacher appointed for Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada in the future will be fully capable of teaching their respective subject(s) through Irish. Teacher supply and in particular teacher supply with competence “trí mheán na Gaeilge” is a national and very worrying issue for our schools.

Implementing the High Court decision has imposed an additional strain on resources in that the programmes offered through English have to be exactly replicated in the Irish stream.

The school also faces the longer term challenge of Gaeltacht Education as per Circular Letter 0034/2017. This requires Gaeltacht schools within a five year time frame to implement an education service wholly and exclusively through the medium of Irish. This will be particularly difficult to implement given the context of the High Court decision outlined above which gives rights and entitlements to parents who want their children to be educated through both languages.

The school enjoys DEIS status, however the lack of School Completion Personnel attached to the programme places an onerous burden of management and coordination on the Principal.

The Island is well serviced by two ferry companies, however there are days during the Winter time and particularly in the Spring when access cannot be guaranteed.

Services such as electricity, broadband, telephone, DEIS school lunches etc are regularly compromised by the Island location.

Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille, Oileán Thoráí

In 1999 there were 28 pupils in the Bunscoil and the need for secondary education was critical. Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille had an initial enrolment of 10 and now has an enrolment of 6.

Prior to the establishment of the school the Island students were forced to relocate to the mainland and received their second level education at Pobalscoil Chloich Cheann Fhaola. This proved to be a harrowing experience for many young islanders and their families – resulting in very poor completion rates. As a consequence the vast majority of a cohort of Islanders had not completed upper secondary education.

It can be difficult to ensure all subjects are taught by a subject expert & substitute teachers are difficult to obtain. Staff end up covering and often teaching, as the S&S hours do not cover the amount of substitution needed. For example: If a teacher travels to the mainland with students, they may be away from school from 10.30 in the morning until 10.30 two days later, depending on ferries (and that is assuming the weather is favourable for any passage!)

A language assistant (given the policy for Gaeltacht Education) and a grant for technology to enable greater access is urgently required.

The concept of Pupil Teacher Ratio as applied to mainland schools does not compare favourably with that of a remote Island school such as Tory. However if the school is examined through the prism of the percentages the following applies: 100% of young people transfer from Primary to Secondary. 100% of students gain a Leaving Certificate. The student body represents 3.3% of the total population of the Island, i.e. the equivalent of 44398 students in a school in Dublin or 646 in Letterkenny.

The added benefits of DEIS status have not been afforded to Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille despite the local Bunscoil being designated as a DEIS school. This anomaly should be immediately addressed.

Coláiste Phobail Cholmcille is possibly the most remote school in the State. Teachers cannot commute to work. Often they are 'stuck in' at weekends or are reluctant to go out to the mainland during term time because they may get 'stuck out' leaving colleagues to cover classes.

The allowances to live and to travel on and off the Island have been discontinued, however the added expenses teachers have, such as rent on the island as well as their mortgage/rent on the mainland and travel expenses on and off the island still exist.

Because students cannot easily travel to and from the mainland, the school cannot attract mainland students and this restricts enrolment. Scholarships would help but the Department of Education and Skills scholarships are limited in number and because of a stipulation which states they may only be awarded to students outside the Gaeltacht, many of the students who would consider spending time on the Island cannot apply as they live in a local Gaeltacht area.

I wish to acknowledge the support of the Department of Education and Skills for these schools and that of our Principals for their outstanding work in this challenging area.

I finally wish to extend an invitation to the members of the Joint Committee on Education and Skills to visit both schools to see at first hand the excellent work being carried out to educate the students of both Islands.

Follow up submission to the Joint Committee on Education and Skills on 19th December 2017

I had to leave the meeting early on 19th December and did not get an opportunity to reply to some of the points made by Members following my submission.

Please find below some further clarification as it pertains to the two Island schools off the coast of County Donegal, Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada, Oileán Árainn Mhóir agus Coláiste Phiobail Colmcille, Oileán Thoráí.

At the outset, may I thank the members and indeed non-members for their interest in the area of Island Education. It is without doubt, an equality issue and I'm pleased to hear that Mr Byrne, TD has undertaken to devise a policy for Island Education. This is, I believe, the only way that matters can progress and improve.

I believe that improved ICT facilities to allow for teaching via video conferencing equipment would be an important step towards eliminating the inequalities in relation to subject choice. I would say that in general, students and their parents are happy with the range of subjects offered and are not adversely affected by a narrower range of subjects. Senator Ruane enquired in relation to Islanders becoming Teachers. I'm happy to confirm, that on Oileán Árainn Mhóir four of the teaching staff, a total of 14 reside on the Island and one is a past pupil. On Oileán Thoráí all teaching staff must reside on the Island during the week, of which three of the five teachers are Island based.

Ms Martin, TD enquired about teacher retention. I can confirm, that this is not currently an issue for our two Island schools. Both schools have well established links and connections facilitated by the fact that they are both ETB schools.

The lack of consistency in relation to DEIS status was highlighted at the meeting. The Bunscoil on Árainn Mhóir does not have DEIS status, while Gairmscoil Mhic Diarmada has a limited support service. The school is a 'stand-alone' SCP project and, as such, is unusual. This is most likely the reason for grant only support. The lack of dedicated personnel support means that there is an onerous burden placed on school personnel (mostly the Principal) to plan activities and ensure governance criteria are adhered to.

Population decline is a major issue for our Islands and unless this trend is reversed our schools will continue to come under pressure as they struggle to survive under an allocation framework which is not suited in any way to small, rural, island communities.

I again, invite Members to visit our islands and our schools and commend the excellent work of our schools in partnership with the communities to give our island citizens the best possible opportunities to be fully participating citizens of Ireland.

If I can provide any further assistance and/or clarity to the Members I am happy to so do.

Is Mise le meas

Anne McHugh
Príomhfheidhmeannach
Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna Dhún na nGall