



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

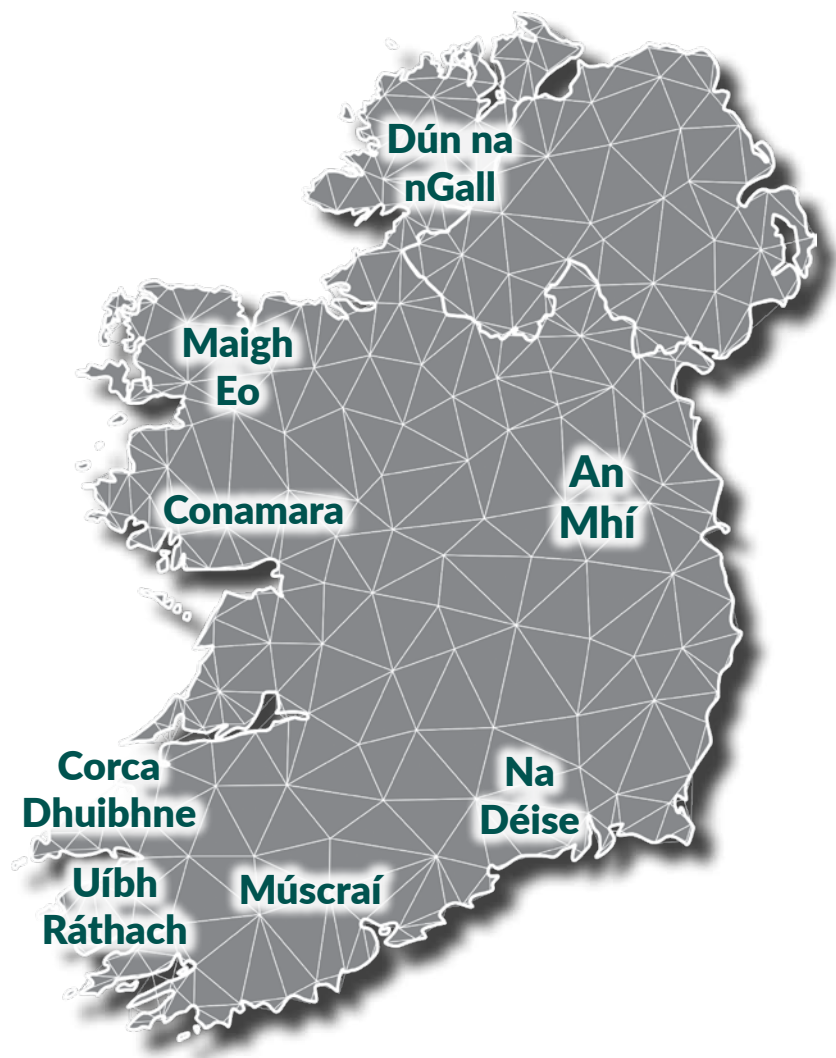
Guide for Gaeltacht Post-Primary Schools

Indicators of Good Practice for Immersion Education



An Roinn Oideachais
agus
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta

2020



This Guide is available at www.education.gov.ie and www.cogg.ie

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Published by the Department of Education, Marlborough Street, Dublin D01 RC96.

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Foreword

The *Guide for Gaeltacht Post-Primary Schools - Indicators of Good Practice for Immersion Education* will support post-primary schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme in their efforts to provide a high quality Irish-medium education and extend the use of Irish as the language of the Gaeltacht community (*Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022*). The Scheme is well underway now and individual schools and their communities are working diligently to fulfil the language-based criteria in order to achieve recognition as a Gaeltacht school.

The indicators of good practice in the Guide are linked to the language-based criteria to identify good practice and areas for development through the school self-evaluation process to support the implementation of immersion education. This publication can be used as a working document to encourage professional dialogue, to reflect on approaches to teaching and learning through Irish, to monitor progress and to identify priorities and further actions to strengthen immersion education.

This Guide emanated from the research, *“I dtreo Barr Feabhais: Dea-Chleachtais san Oideachas Lán-Ghaeilge agus Gaeltachta”* (July 2017), conducted on behalf of Gaeloideachas, with teachers in schools in different sociolinguistic contexts. The work of Gaeloideachas, researchers Dr. T. J. Ó Ceallaigh, Coláiste Mhuire gan Smál and Aoife Ní Shéaghdha, Ionad na Gaeilge Labhartha, University College Cork, in sharing these research findings, is acknowledged.

Gratitude is extended to everyone who assisted in the publication of the Guide including An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG), representatives of the Advisory Committee for the Policy on Gaeltacht Education and members of An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta.

Above all, the teachers and principals of Gaeltacht schools are commended for their overwhelming support for the implementation of the Scheme and for sharing their experiences and best practice. The active engagement of schools is paramount in ensuring a high standard of Irish-medium education for children in the Gaeltacht.

The progress being made by schools is apparent and the Scheme has a positive impact on Gaeltacht communities and on the promotion of Irish generally. Schools are at different stages of the journey in implementing immersion education and in fulfilling all of the language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht school. The commitment and diligence of students, teachers, principals and boards of management, are lauded. It is hoped that this Guide will support schools in their continuing work to ensure the future of the Irish language.

An tAonad um Oideachas Gaeltachta, An Roinn Oideachais
and
An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta

Introduction

The overarching goal of the *Policy for Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 (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 (*Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022*, pg 10).

The Government's priority in regard to improving the quality of Irish-medium educational provision in the Gaeltacht is set out clearly in the *Policy* and is in line with the Department of Education and Skills *Cumasú: Statement of Strategy 2019-2021* and with the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030*.

The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme (*Scheme*) is based on the following processes:

- effective school self-evaluation
- ongoing school improvement
- co-operation and partnership between the partners in the school community.

A school will be given recognition as a Gaeltacht school when it has satisfied the language-based criteria of the *Scheme*. These criteria will be achieved through school self-evaluation and by implementing an action plan for improvement. An important part of this self-evaluation process is the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness and progress of this action plan. The plan will need to be developed from year to year to ensure ongoing improvement. This cyclical school self-evaluation process will support the development of high-quality Irish-medium educational provision in the Gaeltacht leading to a defined characteristic ethos for Gaeltacht schools. This ethos will be beneficial to teaching and learning through the medium of Irish in the Gaeltacht and will strengthen links with the local community to foster the use of Irish in the community.

Aim of the Guide

The aim of this *Guide* is to provide an insight into and practical support for post-primary schools on indicators of good practice for Irish-medium education in the Gaeltacht i.e. good practice in immersion education. This will build on existing good practice and will cultivate a shared understanding of what constitutes good practice across diverse contexts.

What does the term *Immersion Education* mean in this document?

The term *Immersion Education* as used in the *Guide* relates to the Gaeltacht school context and means that the provision of education is entirely through the medium of Irish, with the exception of the teaching of the English curriculum or that of any other language. Total immersion means that the learning environment operates solely through Irish. This process enables the fuller development of students' language proficiency.

The indicators of good practice in this *Guide* will help schools identify specific improvement targets linked to language-based criteria to strengthen immersion education. The indicators of good practice will be helpful to teachers who are seeking to continuously develop and improve their practice through the cyclical self-evaluation and improvement process.

This *Guide* can be used to:

- reflect on teaching and learning practices through the medium of Irish in the Gaeltacht school
- guide professional discussion on learning, teaching, management and leadership to support the implementation of immersion education
- identify, develop and extend good practice in immersion education
- identify targets and actions to fulfil the language-based criteria for immersion education.

The *Guide* provides a summary of the school self-evaluation process and an explanation of how schools in the *Scheme* will operate through that process. The document is also intended to create links between implementing the *Scheme* and implementing the language planning process in the Gaeltacht and to link with the *Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium Schools* (2017).

The indicators of good practice are made available in this *Guide* to assist the staff and the school community in directing the self-evaluation process, a process with which schools are already familiar. These indicators are not a checklist for external evaluation and are solely for internal use in the school. Schools may use the indicators to begin an internal discussion and to identify specific targets.

Content and Structure of the Guide

The *Guide* is presented in five sections.

Section 1: The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and School Self-Evaluation (SSE)

Section 1 provides an overview of the self-evaluation process as outlined in *School Self-Evaluation: Guidelines 2016-2020: Post-Primary Schools* and guidance is provided on how the *Scheme* can be implemented through such a process.

Section 2: The Role of the Board of Management

In Section 2, clarification is provided on the role of the board of management in the school self-evaluation process to improve Irish-medium educational provision in the Gaeltacht school and to enhance the characteristic spirit and ethos of the Gaeltacht post-primary school.

Section 3: The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and the Gaeltacht Language-Planning Process

Section 3 explains how the language-planning process in the Gaeltacht will provide support for schools participating in the *Scheme* when language plans are being implemented.

Section 4: The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and the *Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools (2017)*

In Section 4, an explanation is given on how the *Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools (2017)*, and, in particular, the Statements of Learning and the expectations for students across the strands - communicative competence, language and cultural awareness, learner's self-awareness - can support schools in identifying goals for implementing the *Scheme*.

Section 5: Language-Based Criteria: A Sample of Good Practice Indicators and Self-Evaluation Questions

In Section 5, the language-based criteria are divided into indicators of good practice examples and self-evaluation questions that will support post-primary schools in assessing their language plans, in identifying new specific targets, and in monitoring the effectiveness of their plans as they participate in a cycle of improvement.

1. The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and School Self-Evaluation

School self-evaluation (*SSE*), first introduced into the Irish school system in 2012, is a collaborative, reflective process of internal school review which focuses on improving teaching and learning. The *SSE* process gives the school community an opportunity to recognise and affirm good practice and to identify areas where improvement is required and to act accordingly. As explained in the document *School Self-Evaluation: Guidelines 2016-2020: Post-Primary Schools*:

“School self-evaluation is primarily about schools taking ownership of their own development and improvement.” (page 6)

Although there is also external evaluation (Department of Education Inspectorate), the school self-evaluation process and the external evaluation process are interconnected, and both processes are focused on improvement.

As part of this school self-evaluation:

- The school creates an action plan that emanates from reflective enquiry and from evidence collected within the school's own specific context.
- The school uses this evidence to identify targets and worthwhile actions for improvement, targets that are focused on improving the standard of teaching and learning through Irish.
- The school creates action plans arising from the participation of the whole-school community.
- The school implements the plans, measures progress associated with them, and identifies new relevant targets as required.

The school self-evaluation approach is a cyclical process that includes 6 steps (*School Self-Evaluation: Guidelines 2016-2020: Post-Primary Schools*; 10-14) and the *Scheme* should be implemented in accordance with this SSE process. The school's action plan for the *Scheme* to strengthen Irish-medium education should be incorporated into the SSE report, and only one document is required.

Schools that are seeking recognition as Gaeltacht post-primary schools have drafted action plans as an initial first step in the implementation of the *Scheme*. The next steps are implementation of the plans and evaluation of their impact on teaching and learning in an Irish-medium school in the Gaeltacht and on the use of Irish in the school community.

This is a summary of the overall six-step school self-evaluation process.

- **Step 1: Identify focus**
The SSE focus is based on teachers' understanding and knowledge of their own (Gaeltacht) school context, the specific language-based criteria (Appendix 1) and the teaching and learning area selected to strengthen Irish-medium education.
- **Step 2: Gather evidence**
Evidence is gathered from the school community in the context of the focus selected in Step 1. Description of the school context (e.g. language profile of students, teachers, etc), quantitative (e.g. questionnaires) and/or qualitative (interviews/focus groups) data from teachers/board of management/ students/parents depending on the self-evaluation focus i.e. the specific language-based criteria targeted.
- **Step 3: Analyse and make judgements**
The evidence is analysed and judgments are made in terms of the school's current strengths from the perspective of Irish-medium education in the Gaeltacht school and in terms of those areas requiring improvement. This is where objectives and specific objectives for improvement are identified for the action plan for improvement in terms of the language-based criteria and in terms of teaching and learning.
- **Step 4: Write and share the school self-evaluation report and improvement plan**
The school draws up a plan to improve the standard of the particular aspect of Irish-medium education that is being focused on for improvement, and shares the findings of the evaluation and the improvement plan with the school community. The school has to make a decision regarding the best way to report on the progress made, and make arrangements to share the SSE report and improvement plan with the school community.

- **Step 5: Put the improvement plan into action**

The work of a Gaeltacht school will not improve in terms of learning and teaching until the plan's actions are implemented. All school personnel should be central to the work involved in implementing an improvement plan at individual classroom and whole-school levels.

- **Step 6: Monitor actions and evaluate impact**

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the improvement actions, the leaders of the process and all teachers must engage in monitoring and reviewing on an ongoing, systematic basis.

It is important that the school would engage in making judgements during the process to ensure that the actions for improvement are effective and that the changes in practice impact on teaching and learning through the medium of Irish in the Gaeltacht school.

The possible evaluation methods include:

- Individual and collaborative professional review of teaching and learning through the medium of Irish:
 - teachers' own self-reflection
 - review of collaborative team teaching
 - collaborative review of teaching and learning
 - individual and collaborative review of students' work.
- the opinions of the school community on aspects of education through the medium of Irish in the Gaeltacht school:
 - getting the opinions of students, teachers and parents.
- a review of data on student achievement:
 - an analysis of teacher-designed tasks to measure students' fluency, accuracy and language enrichment
 - an analysis of assessment outcomes and, if appropriate, a comparison between the assessment results and national norms
 - an analysis of students' achievements in terms of the learning outcomes for Irish as set out in the *Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools (2017)* and in other curriculum areas through the medium of Irish
 - a review of data in terms of students' disposition to teaching and learning through the medium of Irish in the Gaeltacht school.
- a review of the school context and school policies:
 - examination of the percentage of native Irish language speakers and learners of Irish
 - examination of social language used amongst students and teachers
 - examination of the involvement of students and teachers in language-centred activities in the Gaeltacht community
 - examination of the school's policy for Irish and the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to support the learning and teaching of the language.

In accordance with the *Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools* (Appendix 2), the most effective improvement occurs in a “well-integrated system of evaluation that combines the external perspective (Department of Education/Inspectorate) with the reflective and collective insights of school leaders, teachers, parents and students” (*Looking at Our School 2016: Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools*, pg 7).

When the action plan for improvement is implemented, a new cycle of school self-evaluation begins, with new targets specifically focused on the language-based criteria and on school improvement.

2. The Role of the Board of Management

A board of management manages the school on behalf of the Patron, as set out in the Education Act, 1998 and relevant circulars, guidelines and procedures issued from the Department of Education. The board has responsibility to ensure that the school’s development plan is developed in collaboration with the school community, including the school patron.

While the board will oversee the implementation of the *Scheme*, school review is a collaborative, inclusive and reflective process involving the school community and the local language-planning committee. The principal and staff, under the direction of the board of management and in consultation with parents and students, engage in reflective enquiry on the work of the school to provide high quality Irish-medium education in the Gaeltacht. Clearly, therefore, the whole-school community should be involved in implementing improvement pertaining to the *Scheme* and the board of management has a particular role in guiding the process. The following table could be helpful for the board of management in overseeing the implementation of immersion education in the school.

Area	How the board of management can support the implementation of immersion education in the school
Irish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board continuously supports the promotion of Irish in the school • The board conducts its business through Irish as far as possible • The board ensures that the public understands that the school is a Gaeltacht school • Irish is the language prioritised in school documentation including its policies • The board ensures that Irish is the language used in all aspects of the work of the school.
Whole-school Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board of management defines its vision for immersion education in the Gaeltacht school. • The board ensures that the admissions policy states that it is a Gaeltacht school and that the language of communication, teaching and learning in the school is Irish. • The board ensures that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a whole-school policy for Irish as the language of the school is formulated and updated as appropriate – a whole-school plan for the implementation of Irish as a curriculum subject is formulated and updated as appropriate – a whole-school plan for all other curricular subjects through the medium of Irish is formulated and updated as appropriate.

Area	How the board of management can support the implementation of immersion education in the school
Action-planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board of management plays an active role in the planning process in order to fulfil the language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht school. • The board collaborates with school staff in order to ensure that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – realistic and measurable targets are set in the school's action plan – appropriate activities planned to achieve those targets – the action plan is reviewed regularly – progress is identified – new targets set as appropriate – regular updates completed and discussed by the board. • The board identifies and agrees leadership roles and responsibilities in relation to the implementation of immersion education. • The board provides a short a summary of the self-evaluation report and school improvement plan to the school community annually.
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board fosters a positive and open partnership with parents and the community. • The board disseminates information to the community on the benefits of immersion education and bilingualism/multilingualism. • The board supports the parents' association in its work on immersion education (assisting in the establishment of a committee, if necessary). • The board fosters a beneficial link with the community, early-years settings and other Gaeltacht/Irish-medium schools, and the local language-planning committee.
Management of human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The board recruits staff in line with the minimum requirements of relevant Department of Education circulars and who are competent in Irish. The board requests that the Education and Training Board recruits staff in line with the minimum requirements of relevant Department of Education circulars and who are competent in Irish. • The board supports staff in accessing training opportunities such as those provided by national support services and COGG in order to strengthen their proficiency in the language and their understanding of immersion education. • The board ensures a whole-school approach in the implementation of immersion education in order to fulfill the language-based criteria. • The board ensures the supports provided as part of the Scheme are used effectively in accordance with Departmental Circulars and Guidelines (for example, the additional support hours for Irish). • The board/ETB ensures that appropriate management systems and procedures are implemented to ensure that grants relating to the Scheme are used for the purposes intended.

3. The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and the Language-Planning Process in the Gaeltacht

Co-operation between the work of schools and the work of the language-planning committees/lead organisations in the Gaeltacht will be important in terms of the implementation of the *Scheme* and of the local language plans in the Gaeltacht. Language-planning committees have been established in the 26 language-planning areas in the Gaeltacht to prepare and implement language plans in each language-planning area to preserve and strengthen the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht.

The *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022* recognises that the Gaeltacht areas are of particular linguistic, cultural and economic significance and that Irish is currently very vulnerable as the language of the home and of the community in the Gaeltacht.

The *Policy* confirms that the Gaeltacht is a resource for Irish speakers and for those learning the language that cannot be revitalised, if assistance is not provided to the language community in the Gaeltacht.

The *Policy* explains the importance of schools participating in the local language-planning process in the Gaeltacht (*Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022*, pg 45). The language-planning process aims to support Irish in a systematic and integrated way as the language of the community and home, in order to increase the use of Irish on a daily basis in Gaeltacht areas (*Language-Planning Guidelines 2016*, pg 7).

In the *Policy*, there is one particular language-based criterion for primary and post-primary schools that refers specifically to the participation of schools in the local language-planning process; Criterion 9 for primary schools (Circular 0033/2017) and Criterion 8 for post-primary schools (Circular 0034/2017). This criterion requires Gaeltacht schools to “support the school community in the language-planning process (*Gaeltacht Act, 2012*) by contributing to the use and maintenance of Irish in the school and local Gaeltacht community”.

4. The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and the Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Schools operating through the medium of Irish (2017)

There is a new Irish curriculum for the Junior Cycle in post-primary Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools i.e. *Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools* (2017). This specification is focused on native speakers and on learners in these schools to provide them with an enriched language experience, particularly those who are native Irish speakers (*Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools* (2017, pg 3). The specification supports students by providing for enriched language-learning experiences that will enable them to:

- improve their language skills
- enrich language and cultural awareness and awareness of self as a language learner
- expand and enrich vocabulary
- differentiate between dialects (outside of own dialect)
- focus on language as a system i.e. understand language patterns
- understand various language registers.

It is expected that these competencies and understandings would support the student to:

- take advantage of opportunities for language use in the community

- learn through Irish across the curriculum
- play an active part in Gaeltacht community life (pg 4).

The specification includes 52 learning outcomes across three strands: Communicative Competence (32 learning outcomes), Language and Cultural Awareness (11 learning outcomes) and Learner's Self-Awareness (9 learning outcomes). It is the aim of the specification to enable the student to communicate effectively, interactively, confidently in formal and informal settings within the language community. The learning outcomes attached to these three strands are in line, more or less, with the descriptors available at level B2 i.e. an independent language learner on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

According to the *Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022* (2016, pg 12), to achieve recognition as a Gaeltacht school at post-primary level, it is expected that the specification for Irish L1 will be implemented and that students, especially native speakers, would be encouraged to engage with it.

The learning outcomes across the various strands in the L1 specification function as a good planning tool to assist teachers in identifying targets in terms of listening, reading, oral language, writing, cultural awareness and self-awareness as a language learner. Additionally, the Common Reference levels based on the *European Framework of Reference* is provided as an Appendix to the specification to identify the various levels in understanding, reading, spoken ability and writing in Irish. This might be helpful to teachers in reflecting and identifying targets that will improve the teaching, learning and assessment of the language in their schools.

5. Language-Based Criteria: Sample of Good Practice Indicators and Self-Evaluation Questions

Post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht must operate entirely through the medium of Irish (apart from the English curriculum and other languages) to gain recognition as a Gaeltacht school, as outlined in Table 1 of the *Policy* (pg 11). Post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht must fulfil 11 criteria (Circular 0034/2017) to achieve this recognition in the *Scheme*. A list of all criteria is available in Appendix 1 of this document. The language-based criteria of the *Policy* emerged following the completion of a Department of Education consultation and research process that formed part of the preliminary work for establishing the *Policy*. These criteria are in line with internationally recognised good practice for educational settings operating in contexts such as that of Gaeltacht schools (Ó Ceallaigh & Ní Shéaghdha, 2017).

The indicators of good practice outlined in this section of the *Guide* will be helpful to staff and school leaders as they engage in professional dialogue to support their efforts in evaluating their action plans to strengthen immersion education. These indicators may also be helpful in identifying new goals, targets and actions for improvement through the self-evaluation process for the next action plan. The indicators of good practice are intended as a guide for schools when making quality judgements on their work in terms of excellence in Irish-medium education in the Gaeltacht school.

The *Indicators of Good Practice* are aligned to *Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools* (LAOS), which gives a clear picture of what good or very good practice looks like in schools. The *Indicators of Good Practice* in conjunction with LAOS will allow schools in the Gaeltacht to look at their own practices and identify what they are doing well, and what aspects of the school's work could be further developed. There are two dimensions to this quality framework: teaching and learning and leading and management. Within these dimensions, there are various domains for assessing standards/improvement; for

example, the following are the domains used to assess the standard of teaching and learning within the dimension, *Teaching and Learning*:

- learner outcomes
- learner experiences
- teachers' individual practice
- teachers' collective/collaborative practice.

This framework adopts a holistic view of learning, in which student wellbeing, the quality of teaching and school's responsibilities for the standard of education of learners are key features. In terms of the framework, excellence in teaching is the most powerful influence on student achievement and therefore professional development during a teacher's career-lifetime is essential. These are included in the indicators of good practice for Irish-medium education in the Gaeltacht schools in the Tables from page 14 onwards. These indicators are linked to the dimensions and domains from the *Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools (Looking at Our School, 2016: Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools)*.

Furthermore, the indicators of good practice take account of the underlying principles of the *Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools (2017)*. These are principles that are focused on achieving learning outcomes pertaining to:

- listening, reading, oral communication, and writing (Strand 1: Communicative competence)
- the Irish language as a system, developing an awareness of the culture of the language and bilingualism (Strand 2: Language and cultural awareness)
- developing self-awareness as a language learner, developing self-directed learning, developing an understanding of personal motivation in terms of the language (Strand 3: Learner's self-awareness).

The context of every school is different and some indicators will be useful to schools in a particular sociolinguistic context that will not be suitable for schools operating in other sociolinguistic contexts. School leaders and staffs can add to the indicators of good practice as suits their own school context in terms of language-based criteria.

The following improvement continuum regarding each indicator of good practice may be used to guide the next implementation steps.

Improvement Continuum			
1 - yet to be implemented	2 - progress made	3 - being implemented	4 - already implemented

The following indicators, which are linked to specific language-based criteria, provide schools with a guide to identify good practice and to select specific areas for improvement for the phased implementation of immersion education.

TABLE 5.1: CRITERION 1 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	Extend the availability of a curriculum with a total immersion approach, where all areas of learning, apart from English and other languages, will be taught through Irish.				
Dimension:	Teaching and Learning				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner outcomes and experiences Teachers' individual and collective/collaborative practice 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	All subjects are taught through Irish, apart from English and other languages, and that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the language of teaching the language of learning the language of communication/socialisation in class the language of homework the language of textbooks the language of group-work and project-work the language of practical-work the language of testing/assessment for each subject except English and other languages. 				
	All teachers provide students with exemplars of accurate Irish including an academic, cognitive and social language input so that students get a taste of the various aspects of language in environments that are enriched in terms of language.				
	There is a strong support system in the school for teachers to enhance the standard of their own Irish (for example, content-based language classes, inputs in grammar accuracy) and their attention is directed towards accuracy and language enrichment.				
	Teachers are aware of good teaching methods that effectively connect language teaching and subject teaching in an integrated way. Accuracy in Irish is taught and tested as a key part of the teaching of each subject in school.				
	Differentiation strategies, as outlined in the curriculum, are employed to assist native Irish speakers and learners of Irish. Differentiation is also provided to cater for the different ability levels of all students including those with special educational needs.				
	The language of other subjects is explicitly taught to enable students to learn through the medium of Irish. <i>Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)</i> is fostered through Irish-medium instruction in all other subject areas.				
	Teachers work co-operatively to specifically identify cross-linguistic ¹ pedagogies that are appropriate to the context, to focus students' attention specifically on similarities and differences between languages and to consolidate the key learning strategies in a coordinated manner.				
	School assessment of students' Irish and English is undertaken in the three strands of the curriculum at various points during post-primary school (in-school assessment that tests both languages in a balanced manner) to assess the development of both languages.				

¹ Cross-linguistic pedagogies: approaches/methodologies that use comparisons and differences between languages (for example, between Irish and English) to facilitate/enrich the learning of students.

TABLE 5.2: CRITERION 2 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	Deliver high quality educational experiences through Irish to all students focusing particular attention on the differentiated language needs of native Irish speakers² as well as learners of Irish				
Dimension:	Teaching and Learning				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner outcomes and experiences • Teachers' individual and collective / collaborative practice 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	Various teaching techniques are used to implement the communicative approach, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active learning strategies • co-operative learning • different learning stations in the classroom • groups of various abilities to encourage all students (i.e. L1 and L2 learners of Irish) to achieve higher levels of language usage and cognition. (The <i>Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools (2017)</i> can also provide a guide here).				
	Language and literacy teaching is integrated with the development of higher-order thinking at each level, and teachers consistently use effective formative ³ feedback pertaining to both the language and the curriculum area.				
	Assessment is focused on the particular needs of students that are learning curricular subjects through the medium of Irish as either L1 or L2. Assessment outcomes are used to inform teaching.				
	The school plan for language and literacy is clearly outlined to cater for the language acquisition needs of L1 and L2 learners of Irish and to avail of the additional cognitive benefits associated with immersion education.				
	Teachers create opportunities for meaningful language use ⁴ and for interactions and language enrichment to enable students to be aware of specific Irish language structures. Teachers encourage students to identify those structures, and to develop accurate use of oral and written language across curricular areas.				
	Teachers engage in group work with different students to present the different learners with options that have different learning expectations. They receive support from others, for example, language assistants, and/or support teachers in this regard also, to achieve specific language learning targets on an ongoing basis for L1 and L2 students.				
	The <i>Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools (2017)</i> is used as a guide to identify various learning outcomes in the different elements across the strands of communicative competence, language and cultural awareness and learner self-awareness.				

² A native speaker of Irish is defined as a child who is raised through Irish in an Irish-language community and whose parents speak Irish as the main language of communication in the home, such being declared at the point of enrolment for school (*Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022*, p 11)

³ Formative feedback: feedback that will be used to develop learning and teaching.

⁴ Meaningful language use: using newly acquired language in context.

TABLE 5.3: CRITERION 3 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	<p>Develop a whole-school action plan for improvement that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out how the school will ensure the use of Irish as the language of communication, instruction and socialisation within the school and • communicate and promote the benefits of learning Irish and learning through Irish to the school community (principal, staff, students, parents and board of management) 				
Dimension:	Leadership and Management				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading school development • Leading learning and teaching • Managing the organisation 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	<p>The school has a clear policy in place regarding the use of Irish as a communicative language amongst the whole-school staff, amongst teachers and between teachers and students. The policy is regularly discussed amongst the whole-school community and students and teachers support it by proposing recommendations for improvement.</p>				
	<p>It is school policy that the school board of management operates entirely through Irish. Every effort is made to ensure each member of the board of management has Irish. Board meetings and events are conducted through the medium of Irish.</p>				
	<p>The board of management and the principal provides full support to the parents' association and school management clearly prioritises Irish when parent committee meetings and events are being organised. Parents are very clear about the language policy of the parents' committee.</p>				
	<p>A policy for the social use of Irish is effectively implemented at school; there are ongoing strategies employed to encourage students to use Irish socially and this policy is regularly reviewed. Irish is the social language of the students in the school environment.</p>				
	<p>The students themselves, and parents, are involved in promoting and developing the policy in terms of the social use of Irish and they often make new suggestions for improvement.</p>				
	<p>The teachers focus on developing and teaching communicative and social Irish and students are encouraged to always use Irish socially outside the classroom.</p>				
	<p>The principal is an effective, informed leader who clearly communicates the vision, objectives, underlying philosophy and outcomes of Irish-medium education to staff and to the school community in general. He/she can creatively disseminate the information to others and support the school proactively at community events.</p>				
	<p>The above indicators of good practice underpin the drafting of the school's action plan for improvement. The whole-school community, including students, parents, teachers and board of management, was involved in discussion and reflection on the plan.</p>				

TABLE 5.4: CRITERION 4 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	Review the quality of educational provision through Irish to ensure continuous improvement through the school self-evaluation (SSE) process				
Dimension:	Teaching and Learning and Leadership and Management				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner outcomes and experiences • Teachers' individual and collective/collaborative practice • Leading learning and teaching 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	The teachers and school management regularly reflect on the effectiveness of teaching and learning and improvement targets are set for various aspects of teaching and management to improve the standard of learning and teaching in the Irish-medium school.				
	The school creates and maintains records of students' progress and of the assessment conducted. A record is kept of the whole-school planning, of the implementation of planning, and of assessment.				
	The school systematically gathers data to see if the language targets and the curriculum objectives are being fulfilled, and data from assessments are used for planning in regard to teaching approaches that pertain specifically to immersion education ⁵ at whole-school.				
	Regarding the processes and practices of the Irish-medium school, the roles and responsibilities of staff, and management, are clearly defined in policy and practice to ensure that effective Irish-medium teaching and learning is always the main focus of the Irish-medium school.				
	Teachers are aware of the process of bilingual development, and of the benefits of immersion education, and they are happy to continue to develop their knowledge and to discuss that information with parents/guardians to improve the standard of Irish-medium education.				
	All teachers are both language and subject teachers and proposed learning outcomes are clearly specified in terms of subject and language, they present clear expectations regarding the use of the immersion language, and they view themselves as facilitators in language development both within and outside the classroom. They manage to measure language learning/development from year to year and therefore they are constantly ensuring the highest standard of Irish-medium educational provision.				
	School staff (including the support teacher for Irish) and management have meetings regularly to identify areas for improvement and gaps in learning and to outline actions to engage with the improvement of Irish-medium education. The whole-school staff is involved and the whole-school community, students, board of management, parents etc. also have an opportunity to participate in the reflective discussion.				

⁵ Immersion education: teaching through the target language (Irish) in Irish-medium schools.

TABLE 5.5: CRITERION 5 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	Implement the L1 Specification for Irish in Junior Cycle				
Dimension:	Teaching and Learning and Leadership and Management				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner outcomes and experiences • Teachers' individual and collective / collaborative practice • Leading learning and teaching 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	The school has clear high standards in terms of language development in Irish and English, for both educational and cultural achievements. This is in line with the <i>Specification for Irish in the Junior Cycle: Irish-medium schools (2017)</i> .				
	Curriculum and teaching are appropriate in terms of the development of each student's language skills.				
	The class teacher and the support teacher for Irish collaborate to ensure that specific teaching and learning targets are devised for students of different abilities.				
	The assessment activities used by the school are appropriate to the ability and age levels of students. They display a standard of language that is highly reflective and in line with the learning outcomes in the <i>Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools (2017)</i> .				
	<i>Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools (2017)</i> is being implemented in the school, teachers have received professional development and have planned for it. Students are being encouraged to undertake the L1 specification.				
	A higher standard of Irish is being encouraged as part of the <i>Specification for Junior Cycle Irish: Irish-medium schools (2017)</i> and there is evidence that students are achieving this standard, both native Irish speakers and learners of Irish.				
	The class teacher and the support teacher for Irish maintain a continuous record of students' progress and they identify new targets, as required, to support student language development.				

TABLE 5.6: CRITERION 6 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	Use Irish-language resources to support the teaching of all curricular areas through Irish in all classes, apart from English and other languages				
Dimension:	Teaching and Learning and Leadership and Management				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner outcomes and experiences • Teachers' individual and collective / collaborative practice • Leading learning and teaching 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	There is a school policy in place to use Irish resources (textbooks, digital resources) for every subject. English textbooks should not be used if a suitable Irish textbook is available for the subject.				
	It is the school's practice to share Irish materials amongst teachers and to work together to develop materials/resources.				
	Teachers use new Irish resources that are available from various agencies, for example, COGG, <i>Breacadh</i> , <i>Áisaonad</i> . (Appendix 3)				
	Teachers are in contact with other local teachers regarding authentic dialect materials and teachers often work with another group of teachers to create materials.				
	Teachers support each other in proofing any resources/class notes notes that they themselves prepare for students, if such support is required.				

TABLE 5.7: CRITERION 7 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	Deliver curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities (where provided) through Irish				
Dimension:	Leadership and Management				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading learning and teaching • Managing the organisation • Leading school development 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	There is a clear school policy on organising curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities through Irish only, as often as possible.				
	Students are given regular opportunities to participate in cultural activities through the medium of Irish, for example, sean-nós singing, sean-nós dancing, scéalaíocht, seanchas.				
	Every effort is made to ensure that any extra-curricular visitor who is regularly in the school has Irish; every organisation is asked to send a person with Irish to the school.				
	The school avails of Irish resources in the community, for example, guest speakers fluent in Irish, participating in school tours where Irish is used exclusively, use of Irish media, use of technology to support students' learning through Irish.				
	Management ensures that no extra-curricular activity occurs through the medium of English. All extra-curricular activities in the school are organised through Irish.				
	School tours for students of the school are organised through Irish in so far as possible. The staff speak in Irish to the students on school trips, and trips to cultural and Irish occasions/events form part of the school's tour programme.				

TABLE 5.8: CRITERION 8 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	Support the school community in the language-planning process by contributing to the use and maintenance of Irish in the school and local Gaeltacht community				
Dimension:	Leadership and Management and Teaching and Learning				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading school development • Leading learning and teaching • Learner outcomes and experiences 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	The school is engaged in the local language-planning process, which has a clear target to increase the number of daily Irish speakers in the community.				
	Representative(s) from the school are on the local language-planning committee and/or they are active in attempts to enhance Irish as the language of the community in the area.				
	The school staff encourage the students to participate in the promotion of the language at school and in the community outside the school.				
	There is full co-operation between the school and the community/language-planning committee in implementing the educational elements of the local language plan and of the <i>Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme</i> in the school.				
	There is co-operation between school staff and management and other youth organisations in the area, that provide services/events for the students in the school.				
	The school's students regularly participate in Irish activities in the community.				
	Students present themselves through the medium of Irish at local/county/national level in any competitions in which they are participating.				
	Every effort is made to give an opportunity to the school community (parents, students, proficient Irish-language speakers in the community, members of the board) to have an input in progressing Irish in the school.				

TABLE 5.9: CRITERION 9 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	Prioritise the use of Irish in communicating with parents, the local community and other parties				
Dimension:	Leadership and Management				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading learning and teaching • Leading school development • Managing the organisation 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	The school has a policy to prioritise the use of Irish with parents in every correspondence with them; that correspondence is prepared in Irish and an English translation is provided for those parents who need it. In the enrolment policy, as part of the process of registering students, parents are given the opportunity to request correspondence in Irish or bilingually.				
	In the Gaeltacht districts that are strongest in terms of speaking Irish every day, communication with parents is through Irish only apart from parents seeking bilingual communication at the beginning of the year.				
	Meetings with parents are conducted through Irish only when possible or bilingually, if necessary, with priority given to Irish.				
	Irish is prioritised in any official correspondence with any local community / state organisation with which the school is in contact.				
	The school develops good relationships with parents/guardians by giving them clear, helpful and proactive feedback on an ongoing basis in support of their children’s progress and learning. Priority is given to the Irish language in these interactions.				
	Parents are asked to make every effort to speak Irish at school (with teachers, other parents and children) when collecting their children. They are frequently reminded that their child’s education will be more successful if parents model this practice and in this support the school’s language of instruction.				

TABLE 5.10: CRITERION 10 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	Establish useful and mutually-beneficial language and cultural links with other local Irish-medium primary and/or post-primary schools by utilising online and blended-learning opportunities				
Dimension:	Leadership and Management and Teaching and Learning				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading learning and teaching • Leading school development • Learner outcomes and experiences 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	The primary and post-primary school co-operate to ensure continuity in language development and learning between primary and post-primary schools.				
	The primary and post-primary schools work co-operatively to explain the benefits of Irish-medium education to parents.				
	Primary pupils and post-primary students regularly attend Irish events together.				
	There is a link fostered between the post-primary school and primary schools in the Gaeltacht so that students can develop Irish social networks with students from other schools and other Gaeltacht regions.				
	The post-primary school is working in partnership with other post-primary schools regarding the development of online learning possibilities and blended learning.				

TABLE 5.11: CRITERION 11 FOR THE POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL

Criterion:	Make every effort to recruit teaching and ancillary staff who are proficient in Irish, and have a knowledge and understanding of pedagogical practice relevant to teaching through Irish as well as an understanding of the language and cultural dynamics of the Gaeltacht				
Dimension:	Leadership and Management				
Domain:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading learning and teaching • Leading school development • Managing the organisation 	1	2	3	4
Samples of Indicators of Good Practice	The school has a policy to always make every effort to recruit teachers who are fully proficient in Irish and every support is provided for all teachers in the school in terms of having a high-standard of proficiency and accuracy in Irish. The school provides evidence of the efforts that were made to appoint teachers/members of staff who are fully proficient in Irish.				
	It is a key part of the school policy that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • every member of staff would have Irish and • it would be standard practice for staff to use Irish as the language of communication amongst themselves and with students in the school. 				
	Every support in the language is provided for new teachers and for teachers already in the school in terms of accuracy in Irish, and in terms of developing their subject-based Irish, as required.				
	All teachers are engaged in ongoing professional learning and development, enabling them to reflect on, and develop, their own language and their pedagogical expertise specifically in terms of immersion education and teaching through the medium of Irish.				
	Appropriate support is provided for staff members in terms of some best practices, for example, regular meetings and time to observe colleagues teaching. Opportunities for professional development amongst colleagues is encouraged: co-operative planning, collaborative teaching, shared reflection and reviewing teaching methodologies.				
	Action plans for professional development are based on the needs of the teaching staff.				
	The school has a programme of continuing professional development (CPD) that is comprehensive and relevant and that supports the specific needs of staff teaching in an Irish-medium school in the Gaeltacht.				

References

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- The Inspectorate, Department of Education and Skills (2016). *Looking at Our School 2016: Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools*.
- The Inspectorate, Department of Education and Skills (2016). *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020: Post-Primary Schools*.

Appendix 1

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

	The Language-based criteria for post-primary schools	1	2	3	4
		To be implemented	Progress made	Being implemented	Implemented
1.	Extend the availability of a curriculum containing a total-immersion approach, where all areas of learning, apart from English and other languages, will be taught through Irish				
2.	Deliver high-quality educational experiences through Irish to all pupils focusing particular attention on the differentiated language needs of native Irish speakers ⁹ as well as learners of Irish				
3.	Develop a whole-school action plan for improvement that will:				
	a) set out how the school will ensure the use of Irish as the language of communication, instruction and socialisation within the school and b) communicate and promote the benefits of learning Irish and learning through Irish to the school community (principal, staff, pupils, parents and board of management)	a) b)			
4.	Review the quality of educational provision through Irish to ensure continuous improvement through the school self-evaluation (SSE) process				
5.	Implement L1 specification ¹⁰ for Irish at Junior Cycle				
6.	Use Irish-language resources to support the teaching of all curricular areas through Irish, apart from English and foreign languages				
7.	Deliver curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities (where provided) through Irish				
8.	Support their school community in the language-planning process (under the Gaeltacht Act 2012) by contributing to the use and maintenance of Irish in the school and local Gaeltacht community				
9.	Prioritise the use of Irish in communicating with parents, the local community and other parties				
10.	Establish useful and mutually-beneficial language and educational links with local Irish-medium primary and/or post-primary schools by utilising online and blended-learning opportunities				
11.	Make every effort to recruit teaching and ancillary staff who are proficient in Irish and have a knowledge and understanding of pedagogical practice relevant to teaching through Irish as well as an understanding of the language and cultural dynamics of the Gaeltacht.				

9 A native speaker of Irish is defined as a child who is raised through Irish in an Irish-language community and whose parents speak Irish as the main language of communication in the home, such being declared at the point of enrolment in a school. (Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022, p 11)

10. L1 refers to Irish as the main language of the school in relation to teaching and learning, and communication in official, administrative and recreational affairs.

Appendix 2

A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools – Overview

(Looking at Our School 2016: Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools, pg. 12)

	DOMAINS	STANDARDS
TEACHING AND LEARNING	Learner outcomes	Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners have the necessary knowledge and skills to understand themselves and their relationships demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the post-primary curriculum attain the stated learning outcomes for each subject, course and programme.
	Learner experiences	Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning.
	Teachers' individual practice	The teacher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress students' learning selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning objectives and to students' learning needs responds to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary.
	Teachers' collective / collaborative practice	Teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration work together to devise learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise.

A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools – Overview

(Looking at Our School 2016: Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools, pg. 12)

	DOMAINS	STANDARDS
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	Leading learning and teaching	<p>School leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment • foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each student • manage the planning and implementation of the curriculum • foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and students' learning.
	Managing the organisation	<p>School leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication • manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation • manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice • develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability.
	Leading school development	<p>School leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation • lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation • build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community • manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education.
	Developing leadership capacity	<p>School leaders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership • empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles • promote and facilitate the development of student's voice, student participation, and student leadership • build professional networks with other school leaders.

Appendix 3

Aids for teaching effectively through Irish at post-primary level

A comprehensive list of materials for teaching through the medium of Irish is available on the COGG website at www.cogg.ie



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Further support materials are available at www.pdst.ie and at www.jct.ie and at www.scoilnet.ie

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