**Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme**

Gaelscoil Mhic Amhlaigh is part of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. The Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme stems from the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017-2022 (Department of Education and Skills, 2016), which is based on the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 (Government of Ireland, 2010). The primary objective of the Policy is to provide a high quality and relevant Irish-medium education for young people in a school; thereby supporting and encouraging the use of Irish in Gaeltacht communities. The objectives of the Policy include:

• To provide support and improve the quality of teaching through Irish in Gaeltacht schools and early years settings, so that teaching through Irish will be the parents' first choice throughout the Gaeltacht areas

• Support the provision of appropriate Irish-medium education for children and young people being raised through Irish

• To foster innovation and excellence in the provision of Irish-medium education.

Under the Policy, schools located in Gaeltacht language-planning areas can express an interest in participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme. In order to achieve recognition as a Gaeltacht school, schools will be required to operate entirely through the medium of Irish (apart from the curriculum for English and other languages) as set out in the language-based criteria of the Policy. The Gaeltacht Education Unit in the Department of Education and Skills supports schools in their efforts to achieve recognition as Gaeltacht schools. A particular aspect of the scheme is the total immersion approach in the infant classes in primary schools, where Irish is the only medium of instruction.

Schools that undertake to become Gaeltacht schools, through their school self-evaluation processes (SSE), will develop a whole-school action plan for improvement which will clearly demonstrate how the school will meet the requirements for the recognition process in a phased manner and how links will be established with the local school community to foster the use of Irish.

The school has 13 language-based criteria to achieve, with an emphasis on many different areas.

**Language-based criteria for recognition as a Gaeltacht primary school :**

1. Implement a two-year immersion programme through Irish in infant classes, during which time no English will be taught

2. Implement a full immersion approach where all areas of learning, with the exception of English, will be taught through Irish

3. To provide high quality educational experiences through Irish for all pupils and to pay particular attention to the differentiated language needs of native Irish speakers as well as Irish language learners

4. Develop a whole-school improvement action plan: a) demonstrate how the school will ensure the use of Irish as the language of communication, teaching and socialisation within the school and b) communicate and promote the benefits of learning Irish and learning through Irish among the school community (principal, staff, students, parents and board of management)

5. Review the quality of Irish-medium educational provision to ensure continuous improvement through the school self-evaluation process (SSE)

6. To provide Irish language learning experiences that are consistent with the L1 learning outcomes in the Primary Language Curriculum for Gaeltacht and Irish-medium schools

7. To use Irish language resources to support the teaching of all curricular areas through Irish in all classes, with the exception of the English curriculum

8. To provide curriculum, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (if any) through Irish

9. To support their school community in the language planning process (under the Gaeltacht Act, 2012) by assisting in the use and promotion of the Irish language in the school and in the local Gaeltacht community

10. The use of Irish in communication with parents, the local community and other parties is a priority

11. Establish useful and mutually beneficial language and cultural links with the local early education settings that operate through Irish (naíonraí)

12. Establish useful and mutually beneficial language and educational links with local Irish-medium post-primary schools and other Irish-medium primary schools

13. Every effort is made to recruit teaching and ancillary staff who are fluent in Irish, and who have knowledge and understanding of the pedagogical practice associated with teaching through Irish as well as an understanding of the linguistic and cultural dynamics of the Gaeltacht.