



An Coimisinéir Teanga, Rónán Ó Domhnaill, has welcomed a recommendation from the Department of Education and Skills which would end one of the major obstacles to the establishment of new Irish-medium schools.

Given the result of an investigation by An Coimisinéir Teanga, the Department of Education and Skills has made a recommendation that would place far greater emphasis on the demand for Irish-medium schools when new schools are being established.

Under the current regime for the establishment of new schools in the State, the patron with the highest number of expressions of interest is the one chosen to establish the new school; this is recognised as a major obstacle to the development of Irish-medium education.

But under the proposed new system, the patron seeking an Irish-medium school would not necessarily require the largest number of expressions of interest, and two separate schools would be established independently of each other – one English-medium school and one Irish-medium school – if demand for Irish-medium education from a certain percentage of parents could be proven.

An Coimisinéir Teanga welcomed the proposal to allow new Irish-medium schools even where the application for Irish-medium education doesn't obtain the highest number of expressions of interest.

"The change proposed by the Department of Education is praiseworthy," An Coimisinéir Teanga said, "and I hope that it will facilitate the efforts of parents in obtaining Irish-medium education for their children, if they so wish. The percentage decided upon needs to make a significant difference in respect of the building of new Irish-medium schools, and it should be agreed as soon as possible."

The change proposed by the Department of Education arose from an investigation carried out by An Coimisinéir Teanga into its approach to the establishment of Irish-medium schools. The investigation concluded that the failure by the Department of Education to take the Irish language into account when choosing a patron for a new school for the Drumcondra / Marino / Dublin 1 area breached their statutory duties.

That investigation also stated that the system used to select a new school for the area did not accord properly with the aims of the Education Act in respect of the teaching and promotion of Irish.

An Coimisinéir Teanga also welcomes the intention of the Department to recommend that the new school to be established in the Drumcondra / Marino / Dublin 1 area is to be a multi-faith Gaelscoil under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta, following the Department's review of the case in accordance with the recommendations of the investigation.

An Coimisinéir Teanga's 2017 Annual Report will be launched in the Marino Institute of Education today. The statistics published show that there was a 17% reduction in the number of complaints made to the Office in 2017 – from 768 in 2016 to 638 during 2017.

One third of the complaints received by the Office concerned services which come under the scope of language schemes. This area encompasses services such as websites, online systems, application forms and interpersonal services. A large number of complaints also concerned a lack of Irish on signage and stationery.

The greatest proportion of complaints came from people who live in Dublin (35%) and, as was the case last year, one in every five complaints originated from a Gaeltacht area.

The Annual Report contains an account of the formal investigations which were completed during the year, as well as the monitoring work carried out by the Office. The public bodies which were the subject of investigations during the year included Waterford City and County Council – this investigation concerned publication of its Annual Report for 2015 in English only. An investigation was also carried out on Dublin City University, concerning correspondence in Irish being replied to in English. An investigation carried out on Cork County Council concerned publication in English only of draft Local Development Plans and official Gaeltacht placenames. The fourth investigation was into the provision made by the Department of Education for education through Irish.

[http://coimisineir.ie/userfiles/files/Tuarascail\\_Bhliantuil\\_2017.pdf](http://coimisineir.ie/userfiles/files/Tuarascail_Bhliantuil_2017.pdf)

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