

Tús Maith

2009 / 2010

Introduction

The Tús Maith initiative was established by the Minister for Education and Science in 2006 to support teachers in developing their own confidence and competence in the use of Irish, and also to improve the teaching and learning of Irish. An advisory team, comprising representatives of various interest groups such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Department of Education and Science (DES) Inspectorate, Colleges of Education and An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG) was established to inform the development of the programme of support. The Tús Maith team was merged with the PCSP Gaeilge team in order to provide cohesive support to schools and teachers. In the school year 2007/2008, there were 31 advisors on the team, and in the school year 2008/2009, there were 25.5 on the team. In the current school year, there are 14.5 advisors, located around the country.

Gaeilge/Tús Maith advisors

Region	Tús Maith advisors
Region 1 - Drumcondra , Navan and Monaghan	Ruairí Mac Dónaill
Region 2 – Blackrock, Dublin West and Kildare	Seosamh Mac an Iomaire Máire Nic an Rí
Region 3 – Kilkenny, Wexford and Waterford	Síle Ní Shéaghdha Conchobhar Ó Laoghaire
Region 4 – Tralee, Limerick, Cork and West Cork	Clíodhna Furlong Máire Mhic Chárthaigh Sandra Chute Eimear Ní Niallagáin (1/2 DEIS)
Region 5 – Athlone , Clare, Galway and Laois	Mícheál Mac Donnacha Íde Ruaidh
Region 6 – Donegal, Mayo, Carrick-on-Shannon and Sligo	Bríd Ní Dhonnacha Karen Brogan Máire Ni Chionnaigh Brídín Nic Uiginn
Co-ordinator	T J Ó' Ceallaigh

Purpose

The purpose of the initiative is two-fold:

- to enhance teachers' competence and confidence in using the Irish language
- to enhance the teaching and learning of Irish and implementation of the Gaeilge curriculum.

Underpinning principles

A number of principles have been identified which act as reference points in guiding the programme of support.

- Schools and teachers are given a sustained period of support to ensure maximum impact.
- Local teacher needs are facilitated through a range of after-school activities such as workshops and other activities which enhance Gaeilge, such as grúpaí comhrá, Skype trí Ghaeilge, siúlóidí cainte.
- It is recognised that support is provided in three separate contexts, and that teachers in each of these contexts require specific and targeted support
- There is a particular focus on whole-school planning to ensure student and teacher language development.

Identification of needs

The focus of the programme of work is informed by findings identified in recent evaluations. The recommendations determine the nature and focus of in-school and off-site interventions.

Summary of findings

1. Department of Education and Science, (2006) *Irish in Primary Schools: Long Term National Trends in Achievement.*



Key areas for development

- Teachers' competence in Irish language proficiency
- Views and practices of teachers
- Suitable teaching materials and methods
- Teachers' satisfaction in the teaching of Irish
- Adherence to time allocation for Irish as outlined in the Curriculum.
- Increase in teaching through Irish outside of the Irish lesson

2. Department of Education and Science, (2005) *Beginning to Teach: Newly Qualified Teachers in Irish Primary Schools.*



Key areas for development

- Teachers' competency, accuracy and proficiency in Irish language – spoken and written
- Second language teaching and learning methodologies
- Language planning according to curricular strands
- Review and reflection techniques

3. An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta, (2004) *A Study of Gaeltacht Schools.*



Key areas for development

- Recruitment of competent and proficient teachers
- Managing teacher supply in relation to specialist linguistic needs
- Professional development opportunities for Irish teachers to enhance and support pedagogy in Gaeltacht contexts.

**4. An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta, (2006)
*Soláthar Múinteoirí do na Bunscoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge.***



Key areas for development

- Provision of opportunities and incentives to enable teachers to improve Irish language competency
- Provision of pre-service, induction, in-service, and continuing professional development opportunities in immersion pedagogy.

Target Audience

Teachers have varying needs depending on their role in the school and their current language proficiency. The Gaeilge/Tús Maith advisors are available to support:

- class teachers
- principals, post-holders and curriculum leaders
- teachers in special schools
- resource teachers and learning support teachers
- teachers with a low standard of Irish
- teachers with a good standard of Irish but who lack confidence
- teachers hoping to improve their accuracy in Irish
- teachers who need additional training in the Primary School Curriculum
- teachers trained in other jurisdictions .



A multi-dimensional approach

The following table outlines some goals and strategies of the Tús Maith initiative

Goals	Strategies
Enable teachers to gain confidence, competence and pleasure in using the Irish language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • flexible and collaborative evening programmes tailored to the specific linguistic needs, initiatives and challenges of individual teachers/schools



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• regionally based courses/workshops/seminars to cater for various linguistic abilities/competencies• development of <i>grúpaí comhrá</i> to enable teachers to avail of opportunities to practice, upskill and use Irish as a medium of communication• workshops aimed at enhancing teachers' grammatical accuracy and linguistic skills• classroom modelling and mentoring to promote understanding, fluency, accuracy and linguistic progression• development of specially tailored materials and provision of workshops/training - <i>Content and Language Integrated Learning</i> – to promote an extended core Irish programme (Physical Education and Drama)• ICT forums – opportunities for on-line Irish language learning, networking and engagement in professional dialogue.
<p>Continuous support with interpretation and implementation of Curaclam na Gaeilge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• professional development to ensure stronger focus on where and how to support teacher communities in developing language teaching and learning practices• provision of forums in which new knowledge, skills and understanding can be created and shared among colleagues and by the wider profession – <i>Professional Learning Communities</i>.• advice/guidance for professional communities to support effective Irish language teaching and learning in all sectors• modelling and mentoring to enable teachers to integrate and embed new knowledge, understanding and language pedagogy into practice

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of tools, language teaching and learning resources, exemplars and specialist interventions to support an evidence-based approach to effective language teaching and learning • provision of quality ICT resources and downloads to support various aspects of practice • week-end seminars • Leadership Framework– Principal/Middle-management planning workshops/initiatives to develop whole school strategies regarding teaching and learning of Irish • cluster groups – to enable practitioners to exchange information, share expertise, engender new ideas and promote coordinated approaches to Irish language planning, teaching, learning and assessment at local level.
<p>Provision of ongoing and continuous professional development opportunities for teachers in T1 schools, tailored to specific needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targeted support to include knowledge of subject and curriculum – the knowing what to teach, making links to real life and taking into account students' experiences and prior knowledge • provision of quality and responsive advise, support and guidance through classroom modelling and mentoring • sustained support through the advisory service.

Current PPDS work in Tús Maith

The practical application of the Tús Maith intervention is primarily at school level where advisors offer in - class modelling and mentoring, dialogue with individuals and groups of teachers, and whole – school facilitated staff meetings. School based supports are followed up with a range of other forms of development depending on the needs and interests of the teachers in the school. These include:

- after-school and evening workshops
- Teacher Professional Communities



- Caint agus Café- informal chats through Irish in a local coffee shop
- Siúlóidí cainte - group walks where the focus is on conversational Irish
- historical trails where information is delivered and participants communicate with each other through Irish
- Tráth na gCeist- table quizzes
- weekends in the Gaeltacht.



Séideán Sí

Séideán Sí, produced by the DES is a literacy resource for Irish medium schools. In the current school year, all Gaeltacht primary schools were invited to apply for customised support in the use of Séideán Sí, and 74 Gaeltacht schools have signed up for this support.

Demand from schools 2009/2010

Demand for support in Gaelige and/or Tús Maith is high, and in the current school year, 361 schools have applied to the PPDS for support in Gaelige and/or Tús Maith.