

Réamheolaire

Prospectus



Introduction

Gaelscoil Aodha Rua is an Irish Medium primary school and was established on 1st September 2011. We had an opening enrolment of 12 pupils and were the first Irish Medium school to open with full government recognition and funding, outside of Belfast.

The establishment of Gaelscoil Aodha Rua was a direct result of the high demand for Irish Medium Education among parents in the Dungannon area.

Our sister pre-school provision, Naíscóil Aodha Rua, was formerly known as Naíscóil Uí Chléirigh and had been in existence for over 12 years, prior to the successful founding of Gaelscoil Aodha Rua. The Naíscóil celebrated their 20th anniversary last year.

Naíscóil Aodha Rua has a current enrolment of **26 pupils** and has been filled to capacity for most of the past seven years.

Gaelscoil Aodha Rua has witnessed unprecedented growth in the past four years and has a current enrolment of **127 pupils** in classes 1-7.

Rang a 1 – 22 pupils

Rang a 2 – 19 pupils

Rang a 3 – 21 pupils

Rang a 4 – 21 pupils

Rang a 5 – 18 pupils

Rang a 6 – 17 pupils

Rang a 7 – 9 pupils

We are now fortunate enough to have the unique opportunity of accessing Irish Medium Education at three levels in the immediate Dungannon area:

Naíscóil Aodha Rua – pre-school facility

Gaelscoil Aodha Rua – Primary School

An Sruth Gaeilge at St. Joseph's Grammar school, Donaghmore – bi-lingual Irish Medium secondary stream.

We enjoy links with a range of other local Irish Medium schools, including Gaelscoil Uí Néill in Clonoe, Gaelscoil Eoghain in Cookstown, Bunscoil na mBráithre Críostaí in Armagh and many others throughout the six counties. There are currently over 80 Irish Medium pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools in the North of Ireland.

Ethos

At Gaelscoil Aodha Rua we have a strong Gaelic ethos, where we immerse the children not only in the Irish language, but also in all aspects of the Irish culture and heritage, including Gaelic sports, music, dance and literature. We instil in the children a pride in our Irish identity, yet encourage them to respect and appreciate the languages and cultures of other nationalities and communities.

We are a community-based school and have strong links with a range of local sporting and cultural clubs and organisations, including the local GAA clubs, Feis Dhún Geanainn, Campa Chormaic and An Chraobh Rua. We work closely with the Irish language development officer at Mid-Ulster Council and with the newly appointed Dungannon Gaelic Forum. We are also very proud to be hosting the newly established 'Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éirinn' traditional music classes.

We embrace and encourage the children to live out the Christian values of kindness, mutual respect and generosity. We teach Religious Education from the Beo go Deo (Alive-O') scheme and prepare children for the Catholic sacraments of Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation. However, we welcome children from all religious denominations and those of no particular faith and decisions regarding participation in the sacraments are fully at the discretion of parents.

Our school is a child-centred school and is a happy place of learning for all. The warm welcoming atmosphere in the school is tangible and the dedication of staff, both teaching and non-teaching is the back-bone of our success. We aim to make learning a fun and interactive experience for the children and to provide them with a wide range of activities, both curricular and extra-curricular, to enhance their learning experience.

We have a culture of high expectation within our school, not only with regards to the standards of education provided, but also in the case of the professionalism of the staff and the behaviour of the children. We encourage every child to strive to meet their maximum potential and all staff are encouraged to seize opportunities for continuous professional development. We have an excellent working relationship with our parent community and provide support and guidance to parents on how best to support their child's learning. We have an open-door policy, where parents are welcome to speak with staff on a regular basis to discuss their child's progress.

Staff

All staff in Gaelcoil Aodha Rua are addressed by pupils and parents alike, by their first names. Every staff member, both teaching and non-teaching has an important role to play in the efficient running of the school and each and every staff member is dedicated to providing the best possible environment for learning for the children in our care.

Principal Móna Uí Dhochartaigh

Teaching Staff

Rang a 1 Laoise Ní Choinn
Rang a 2/3 Sinéad Nic Cana
Rang a 3/4 Clíona Ní Mholmhuaidh
Rang a 5 Caitlín Andarsan
Rang a 6 Éirinn Ní Lochlainn
Rang a 7 Sean Mac Diarmada

Non-teaching Staff

Class-room Assistants
Rang a 1 Áine Nic Eochain (BA Liberal Arts SMUCB)
Rang a 2 Caoimhe Hurl (BA Irish UU)
Rang a 5 Órlaith Ní Chatháin (BA Irish Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta)

Secretary Ann Salmon
Lunch-time staff Sinéad Ní Mhúrchú
Cleaner Grace Nugent

Board of Management

Trustees

Mrs Helen Mhic Ruairí
Mr John Gill
Mrs Máiréad Uí Mháirtín
Mr Gabhán Ó Dhochartaigh

Board of Governors

Chairman Mr Mícheál Ó Máirtín
Vice-chair Iolo Eilian
Secretary Mrs Móna Uí Dhochartaigh
Teachers' Rep. Miss Laoise Ní Choinn
Parents' Rep. Mr Colm Mc Grath
Máire Uí Dhoibhlín Aisling Uí Choinn
Eileen Sheilds Catherine Martin
Stephanie Fox (co-opted as legal advisor)
Tiarnán Ó Néill (co-opted as financial advisor)

Uniform



The uniform of Gaelscoil Aodha Rua consists of:

- jumper with school crest;
- polo T-shirt with collar;
- trousers / skirt
- shorts / dresses during good weather
- black shoes

A school sports kit is also available to purchase from the school and consists of:

- navy polo short
- navy shorts

Our school crest is symbolic of our school ethos and portrays the faces of happy children who are motivated for learning. It portrays the important cultural link that we have with our ancestors and the bright colours depict the bright future which lies ahead of our boys and girls.

We encourage our pupils to wear their school uniform with pride and to remember that they are ambassadors for our school when out in public in their uniform. We encourage parents to ensure that children are dressed in full school uniform and to ensure that they have a warm coat and wear suitable footwear every day.

At the beginning....

At the beginning of the school-year, we operate a staggered intake, where the children remain at school for gradually increasing periods of time. For the first fortnight, the school-day will finish at 12 noon. From week three onward, the children will remain until 1.45pm and will eat lunch at school.

We recognise that all children are different and will adapt to school-life at their own pace. We aim to build on the experiences and routines of the Naíscoil and to make the transition from Naíscoil to Gaelscoil as smooth as possible for both the children and parents. We promise to be sensitive and patient with your little one, whilst they find their feet in Rang a 1 and to do our utmost to help them to settle in. We operate an open-door policy and parents are always welcome to call in to discuss their child's progress during the settling-in period.

The School Day

8.45 am	Doors Open
9.00 am	School day begins
10.30 – 10.50 am	Morning Break
12.00 - 12.50 pm	Lunch-Time
1.45 pm	School-day ends for Rang a 1
2.00 pm	School day ends for Rang a 2
3.00 pm	School day ends for Ranganna 3-7

Dropping Off

The school day begins at 9am. Staff will be on the premises from 8.45am and are willing to accept children from this time, to accommodate parents who have to be in work for 9am. At the beginning of the day, please bring your child to the door of the school, no earlier than 8.45am. Encourage your child to become familiar with the morning routine of hanging up their coat, leaving their lunch-box in the hallway and 'self-registering' themselves on their way into class. 'Self-registration' is where the children stick their photo/name onto a chart on the wall to indicate that they are present and if they will have dinner or lunch that day.

Picking Up

We operate an adult to adult hand-over at the end of the day. Parents will be asked to provide names and contact details for 3 people who will be permitted to collect their child from school. Children will not be released to any other individual, unless prior notification has been received from the parent. If your child is to be collected by taxi, please discuss the arrangements with me at the beginning of term. Parents will be furnished with our 'Collection Policy' in full, as well as our other main policies, at the end of August. To assist with the efficient management of traffic in and around the school site, we ask that children are collected on time and that parents and taxis adhere to the one-way system of traffic.

Traffic Management

Since the arrival of our latest accommodation, our car-parking space has decreased. Therefore, in order to ensure the safety of both parents and children as they arrive and leave the school, we ask that only parents of children in Ranganna 1&2 would drive down to the main school door. We operate an 'adult to adult' handover of children in Ranganna 1&2 and ask that parents drive and park carefully in and around the school grounds. We ask that all other pupils in Ranganna 3-7 are dropped at the main gate.

Break-Time

As part of the Revised Curriculum, it is recommended that pupils are encouraged to develop healthy attitudes towards food and hygiene. It is advised that children are encouraged to choose healthy snacks, to take part in the preparation of foods at break-time and to develop the habit of hand-washing before meals. As is common in many local schools, we have adopted a 'Healthy Eating Policy' within the school and a healthy break-time snack will be provided for all pupils in Ranganna 1&2 every day. We ask for a parental donation of £2 per week for this service.

Each day during play-time, foundation stage children will have access to a snack-buffet, where a range of healthy snacks will be on offer. They will be encouraged to wash their hands, to pour their own drink and to choose and prepare their own snacks. Snacks on offer on a weekly basis will include: milk, water, fresh fruit, yogurt, cheese, toast, pancakes, butter, jam. On an occasional basis, as a treat; cookies / mini muffins may also be offered.

Lunch-Time

School Meals

At lunchtime, parents will have the option to choose a hot school dinner or to send in a packed lunch. We do not have access to onsite cooking facilities therefore, school meals will be delivered to us from another local school. Currently, school dinners cost £2.60 per day, although this may change before the beginning of term. If you think you may be entitled to 'Free School Meals', you will be given an application form in June, which must be returned to the Education Authority in Armagh. We ask that all dinner money is paid on a Monday morning for the week ahead.

Packed Lunches

As with break-time snacks, we encourage children to make healthy choices at lunch-time as well. If you wish to send a packed lunch with your child, we ask that you avoid sending foods with nuts, in case of children who may suffer from nut allergies. We recommend that lunches contain at least one piece of fruit, healthy snacks such as sandwiches, pancakes, crackers, ham, cheese, raisins, yogurt etc. and we ask that you refrain from sending fizzy drinks. Please send your child's lunch in a separate box / bag to that in which their school-books will be carried, to avoid accidental spillages where books may be destroyed.

During snack-time and lunch-time, children will be encouraged to chat and to share the social experience of eating together, thus developing vocabulary based on food and eating. In Rang a 1, we will also be continuing the good practice of 'teeth-brushing' after lunch, as was done in the Naíscoileanna.

Illness

If your child suffers from a specific illness, health problem or allergy, please inform me or your child's class teacher at the beginning of term. Whilst we encourage good attendance at school, we ask that you do not send your child to school if he/she is sick, to prevent the spread of bugs and flu throughout the school. In the case of an emergency, or if your child becomes sick during the day, it is essential that we have the correct contact details for you, or for another nominated person. If these details change, please inform the school as soon as possible. If your child needs to take medication during the school day, we ask that parents arrange to meet with the class teacher to agree a 'care-plan' and to authorise the administration of the necessary medication.

Curriculum

At Gaelscoil Aodha Rua, we deliver the same curriculum as in other local schools in the Catholic Maintained or Controlled sectors. The Revised Curriculum for children is set out under the following Areas of Learning:

Language and Literacy
Mathematics and Numeracy
The World Around Us
Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU)
Physical Development and Movement
The Arts
Religious Education

During Rang 1&2, your child will engage in active / play-based learning across all areas of the curriculum and through carefully planned 'play' sessions, they will be encouraged to be creative, to explore, to experiment, to investigate and to make sense of the world. From Rang a 3 onwards, the curriculum becomes somewhat more formal, with a greater emphasis on formal recording.

In line with the 'immersion' system of language teaching, Literacy is taught solely through the medium of Irish in Ranganna 1-3. From Rang a 4-7, the children will follow a scheme of bi-literacy, where they will carry out literacy tasks in both Irish and English and will develop as balanced bi-linguals, who can speak, understand, read and write to a high level of competency in both Irish and English.

The children will have the opportunity to develop the following cross-curricular skills via carefully planned topic based work:

- Communication
- Using mathematics
- Using ICT

They will also be encouraged to become independent learners via opportunities to develop the following thinking skills and personal capabilities:

- Managing Information
- Thinking, problem-solving and decision making
- Being creative
- Self-management and Working with others

Language

As an Irish-medium school, we follow the 'Immersion' model of language learning. This means that the children will be immersed in the Irish language and will acquire fluency in Irish by listening and interacting with teaching staff who will speak solely in Irish to your child. In order to assist the children, teaching staff will use facial expression, practical activities and over exaggerated body-language, to clarify the context of their speech. You will witness that your child will firstly begin to say the Irish words for particular objects that they are familiar with. As they progress, they will pick up a range of phrases, which they will be able to use in the correct context. They will understand more than they can independently say and by the end of Rang a 1, they will have a basic proficiency / fluency in the language and will be able to re-count events, stories, songs and rhymes and express their feelings and requests.

Children have the capacity to acquire language very quickly and their spoken fluency in Irish develops very quickly. By the end of Rang a 4, the children will have a broad vocabulary in Irish and will be able to speak using a range of tenses and grammatical structures.

If you have a little bit of Irish, use it as often as possible with your child and encourage them to watch cartoons on TG4 and to play online games and apps through Irish. If you do not speak Irish at all, do not worry – this will not hinder your child's learning! 95% of parents in Irish Medium schools have little or no Irish. Your child will enjoy trying to teach you the words which they have learned at school and you will find yourself picking up a word or two before long!

English

In Gaelscoil Aodha Rua, the Revised Curriculum will be delivered through the Medium of Irish for the first three years of school-life and by the end of Rang a 3, the children will be speaking, reading and writing independently in Irish. They will have consolidated their basic literacy skills in Irish and will be ready to transfer their knowledge to the learning of English. Formal teaching in English will begin in Term 3 of Rang a 3. As English is the main language spoken at home, in most cases, the children will already have a good spoken fluency in English and therefore a broad oral vocabulary. When we begin formal teaching in English, the literacy skills learned in Irish in the first 3 years will automatically transfer to English and will therefore enable us to fast-track the children's progress in English.

Below are just a few examples:

- We read from left to right in both languages.
- The alphabet and many of the phonological sounds are similar.
- Letters make words, words make sentences, sentences make stories in both languages.
- Punctuation such as capital letters, full stops etc. are used in the same context.
- Verbs, nouns, adjectives all have the same function.

In Rang a 4, we will follow a structured programme of study for the introduction of formal English, using commercial schemes such as Oxford Reading Tree and Collins' Focus on Literacy. Parents will have been speaking and reading to children in English at home and, in many cases, children will already have begun to read independently in English. Therefore, the learning of reading and writing in English will take place at a faster rate. A programme for bi-literacy will be followed in school from Rang a 4-7 and the development of language and literacy in one language will compliment, support and encourage development in the other language. By the end of Rang a 7, the children will be both bi-lingual and bi-literate – being able to speak, read and write in both Irish and English!

Advantages of Bi-lingual Education

Bi-lingual education is a common phenomenon not only across Europe but on an international stage also. There are immersion education programmes in place in Wales, Brittany, Holland, Canada to name but a few and over half of the world's population are at least bi-lingual if not multi-lingual. International research has shown that being bi-lingual offers a wide range of cognitive, cultural and social benefits to a person and in particular, to young children who are at the optimum age for language acquisition.

These advantages include:

- a broader perspective of the world through the perspective of two linguistic codes
- increased cognitive awareness and function as they constantly think in two languages
- a greater capacity for learning a third or further languages
- a deeper understanding of their own cultural heritage and identity
- a deeper appreciation of the cultures and languages of others and a curiosity to experience and embrace the heritage of other nationalities
- enhanced problem solving skills
- enhanced creativity
- greater confidence socially as they are aware from a young age that they have a special talent
- and a sense of belonging to the local Irish speaking community and a love and pride in all things Gaelic

Physical Education

As part of the Revised Curriculum, pupils will receive instruction in Physical Education and will be encouraged to see the importance of sport and physical activity in their daily lives. As we do not currently have access to our own indoor facilities for PE, we travel to The Torrent Complex in Donaghmore each week for PE and use both the sports hall and during the better weather, the out-door pitch for our sessions. Coaching for PE is provided by the GAA, with pupils in Ranganna 1&2 receiving weekly sessions of 'fundamental movement skills' and children in Ranganna 3-7 taking part in football and hurling / camogie. Pupils in Ranganna 4-7 also receive weekly swimming lessons in Dungannon Leisure Centre. We take part in the inter-schools blitzes and local swimming galas. During break-time and lunch-time at school, the class-room assistants lead structured physical games and activities in the two yards, where the children are encouraged to take part in enjoyable physical activities, through the medium of Irish, thus developing their vocabulary and language skills at the same time.

ICT

ICT is an integral part of the Revised Curriculum and is an essential skill for life in the modern age. At Gaelscoil Aodha Rua, we have invested heavily in ICT equipment and use a range of technological appliances to enhance the children's learning. We have an interactive white-board in every class-room, each connected to a laptop. We have a total of 12 PCs, 10 laptops and we have recently purchased 16 i-pads. Children are given opportunities to use ICT across the curriculum, to develop their ICT skills and competences, for use during the school day and at home.

Extra-Curricular Activities

At Gaelscoil Aodha Rua, we place a great emphasis on extra-curricular activities, as a means of encouraging the children to use the Irish language in a social context outside of the class-room and to see the language as a living language, not just a school subject. In keeping with the ethos of the school, we strive to access as many extra-curricular activities through the medium of Irish as possible and aim to immerse the children in activities of a Gaelic nature.

During the school year, the children have access to the following activities:

FMS, Football and Hurling sessions
Swimming lessons
Sean-nós / hip-hop dancing – Tura Artura
Céilí dancing – Máire Bruadair
Drama – Abábú theatre company
RITH – all Ireland marathon for Irish speakers
Feis Dhún Geanainn
Armagh Rhymers workshop in Gaelic singing

Traditional Irish singing – Geraldine Bradley
Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish language week) events
Scholastic Book Clubs and Book Fair
History work-shops at Ranfurly Arts Centre
Tin-whistle classes
ICT club
Tesco Farm to Fork project
Tree Planting workshop
Irish Maths Week activities
Gael Goers 5km fundraiser

This is just a small cross-section of the activities that we have taken part in in the last school year and we hope to add Yoga classes and Darts for Mental Maths sessions to our schedule in the coming term.

Reporting to Parents

In keeping with the ethos of the school, all correspondence between school and home will be done bilingually, in both Irish and English. We will publish a newsletter twice each term, to inform you of upcoming events and of the activities, words / phrases, rhymes and songs being learned by the children in class, so that you can reinforce this work at home.

Teachers will formally report to parents on 3 occasions during the school year:

Halloween	Curriculum Meeting
February	Parent teacher meeting
June	End of year written report

However, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher or myself at any time if you have any other queries or concerns. We pledge to do our utmost to support you in supporting your child. We also offer Irish language evening classes for parents on a weekly basis and a set of literacy based classes for parents of children in Rang a 1 who are due to commence formal reading.

Homework

We encourage parents to take an active role in their children's learning, regardless of their proficiency in the Irish language. We understand that many parents feel anxious about assisting their child with homework, especially if they do not speak Irish. We will use the following strategies to help relieve your concerns:

- A curriculum night is held at the beginning of each year, to outline the curriculum for that year-group and the approach to homework. Parents will receive a home/school learning package at the Curriculum Night to assist them in supporting their child at home.
- We provide Irish evening classes to teach parents basic vocabulary, songs and rhymes in Irish.

- Provision of phonetic version of reading books.
- Interactive homeworks – cutting / sticking, colouring, physical tasks, maths / literacy games; all of which require parental participation but not necessarily through Irish.
- An English library book will be sent home once a week, to foster a love for reading.
- Investigative tasks – hunting for mini-beasts, spotting various fruits at the supermarket.

In Gaelscoil Aodha Rua, we adhere to the policy that homework is used as a means of reinforcement and will not contain 'new learning'. Therefore, your child will be familiar with the tasks they receive for homework, as they have already been doing them confidently at school and should not require parental assistance to complete their homework. However, it is important that you are there to encourage them, to show an interest in their homework and to discuss the tasks with them, so that they feel that you are involved in their learning and are interested in their education and progress.

Secondary Education

Rang a 7 pupils in the Dungannon area now have the unique opportunity to transfer to An Sruth Gaeilge at St. Joseph's Grammar School, Donaghmore; where they will study approx. half of their subjects through Irish. Gaelscoil pupils do not need to sit an entrance exam to gain entry to An Sruth Gaeilge. Your child will also be able to transfer to any other local Secondary School, in the same way as their counterparts in English Schools. They will sit an Entrance exam (in English or Irish) for entry to a Grammar School and will gain automatic entry to any of the local non-selective Secondary schools.

Plans for the future

We have seen unprecedented growth in enrolments within our school on an annual basis since our establishment in 2011. With the continual expansion of the school community, we find ourselves constantly striving to expand and improve our facilities and wait the arrival of a new double mobile which will encompass a dining hall and additional classroom. This project should be completed by Easter 2018.

On 16th March 2016, we were delighted to receive news that the Minister for Education had awarded us 'Capital Funding' for a state of the art, custom made brick-build school! Our new school-build project is now at the formal 'design' stage and we are entering the final phase of negotiations with the land owner regarding our new site. There will be a 12 week public consultation phase prior to the submission of the planning application and we will welcome the views of our school and local community. This will be an exciting and prosperous phase in our development and we hope that you and your child will be part of it!

We are eternally indebted to the committee and community of the Eoghan Rua

Hurling Club who have generously accommodated us on their site for our early years of development and we congratulate them on the completion of their fabulous new pitch and walking track facility.

Applications for Rang a 1 2018

If you wish to apply for a place at Gaelscoil Aodha Rua for the September intake in 2018, please return the application form, along with a copy of your child's birth certificate to the school office before 12 noon on Wednesday 10th January 2018.

Give your child the opportunity to become bi-lingual and bi-literate in both English and Irish.

Give them the opportunity to be part of the historical development of Irish Medium Education in their own home-town.

Give them the opportunity to learn in a happy, community-based, child centred environment.

Give them the chance to appreciate the cultural link that we have with our ancestors and to enhance their employment opportunities for the future.

Gaelscoil Aodha Rua

Gaeloideachas i gcroílár an phobail

Irish Medium Education at the heart of the community