



Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill – Call for Evidence

Written response submitted to the Northern Ireland (NI) Assembly Education Committee's Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill Call for Evidence

Submitted by the Controlled Schools' Support Council

Submission Date: 11 June 2026

For further information please contact:

Controlled Schools' Support Council
2nd Floor, Main Building
Stranmillis University College
Stranmillis Road
Belfast
BT9 5DY

Tel: 028 9531 3030

Background

- As the support body for almost half of the schools in Northern Ireland, the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Education Committee's Call for Evidence on the Irish-medium Education (Workforce Plan) Bill.
- The controlled sector is the largest education sector in Northern Ireland, representing 49% of all schools. CSSC supports a diverse range of schools including Nursery, Primary, Secondary, Grammar, Integrated, Special and Irish-medium schools.

Policy Background

- The Independent Review of Education (IRE) stated that "Education is the greatest investment any society makes in its own future. Responsible citizenship, prosperity and fulfilled lives depend on it. In a world changing at an unprecedented pace, peace and prosperity depend on education more than ever before."
- CSSC continues to be concerned about the impact of longstanding funding pressures on the education system. Sustainable workforce planning, recruitment and retention can only be achieved where schools and education bodies have sufficient resources and certainty to plan effectively.
- As noted in the TransformED NI strategy published in March 2025, "The growing economic power houses of the 21st century are those nations that have placed an absolute premium on getting their education system right. Northern Ireland must do the same." CSSC believes that investment in the education workforce is a critical component of delivering high-quality outcomes for children and young people.

Irish-medium Education Workforce Bill

- CSSC notes and welcomes the Irish-medium Education Workforce Bill. Given the concise nature of the Bill, this response is similarly concise and focused on the key proposals.
- CSSC recognises that Irish-medium schools, including our own member Irish-medium schools, have specific needs and challenges in relation to staff recruitment and retention across all roles and phases.
- It is important that all children and young people are provided with an equitable opportunity to access a high-quality education. This includes having the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects at both GCSE and A-Level. Ensuring that appropriately qualified staff are available is therefore essential, and a workforce plan will assist Irish-medium schools in recruiting and retaining the staff required to deliver high-quality educational provision.
- As the Department of Education and the Education Authority continue to implement changes to SEN provision and associated processes, it will be important that workforce planning takes account of these developments. This should help create a more supportive environment for Irish-medium schools to recruit and retain appropriately qualified staff.

- CSSC is represented on the Irish-medium Education Strategy Working Group, led by the Department of Education, which is currently developing a ten-year strategy for the Irish-medium sector. It will be important that the workforce plan aligns with and takes account of the recommendations emerging from this work, including those relating to workforce development and sustainability.
- The workforce strategy proposed in the Bill should consider issues such as the relevance and availability of Initial Teacher Education pathways, incentives to attract and retain Irish-medium teachers, and opportunities for greater flexibility through secondments and workforce mobility across the Irish-medium sector.
- While recognising the specific workforce challenges facing Irish-medium education, CSSC notes that the overall school-age population is projected to decline by 8.2% between 2023/24 and 2030/31. This underlines the importance of strategic workforce planning across the entire education system to ensure that schools remain appropriately staffed and sustainable.

Conclusion

- Overall, CSSC supports the Bill and recognises the importance of workforce planning in addressing the specific recruitment and retention challenges faced by the Irish-medium sector. Effective workforce planning will help ensure that Irish-medium schools can continue to provide high-quality educational experiences for children and young people.
- More broadly, the demographic challenges facing Northern Ireland's education system highlight the value of strategic workforce planning across all sectors to ensure that the future workforce has the capacity and capability to deliver high-quality education.