

**COMHAIRLE NA GAELSCOLAÍOCHTA  
(INCORPORATED UNDER GUARANTEE)**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS  
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

The Directors of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, who are also Trustees of the charitable company for the purposes of charity law, present their report and the audited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FRM), Charities SORP (FRS 102), Companies Act 2006, Charity Law and the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

**Reference and Administrative Details**

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (CnaG), is a charitable company incorporated under guarantee (Company Registration Number: NI039115). The charity is recognised by HM Revenue & Customs as a charitable body for taxation purposes and became registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland on 3 April 2017 (Charity Registration Number: NIC105808).

Reference and administrative details are shown on page 1 of the annual report.

The responsibility for day to day management of the charitable company during the year was delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, Ms M Thomasson.

The Directors who served the charity during the year were as follows:

Ms Á Andrews  
Mr S Ó Coinne  
Mr N P Ó Catháin  
Mr P M O'Doherty  
Mr D Ua Bruadair  
Mr P A Ó Mianáin  
Mr T Rogan  
Ms N Toman  
Ms J Ni Fhearghusa  
Ms O Flanagan  
Mr C McCallan

The company is limited by guarantee and therefore no Directors had interests in share capital.

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Cont'd)  
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

**Structure, Governance & Management**

***Governing Document and Organisational Structure***

The company was established in August 2000 under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charity and is governed under its Articles of Association. The company was set up by the Department of Education to promote, facilitate and encourage Irish-medium education in Northern Ireland in a co-ordinated, planned, educationally efficient and cost effective manner. In 2011/12 CnaG became designated as a Non-Departmental Public Body.

***Directors***

New Directors are briefed on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision making process, the business plan and recent financial performance of the charity. They are free to discuss any issue with other Directors or key employees. Directors are encouraged to attend any appropriate external training events where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

The Board of Directors is made up of individuals with varying knowledge and expertise giving the charity a breadth of skills to help achieve its aims and objectives. New appointments are made to address particular areas of knowledge or skill:

- Business planning and management;
- Public administration, corporate governance and accountability;
- Accountancy / financial monitoring;
- Public relations;
- Language planning.

The interests of the Irish-medium sector are represented by the number of nominating bodies who choose individuals to sit on the board along with chosen Principals, Teachers, Governors, Trustees and parental representatives from the sector.

The Directors who served during the year are detailed on page 5.

Further information on the recruitment and appointment of new Directors and the organisational structure is included in the Governance Statement on pages 22 to 35.

The Board of Directors has reviewed details of any other directorships held by Directors and do not perceive there to be any conflicts with management responsibilities. Should any conflict arise procedures are in place to ensure this does not affect the decision making process.

***Background***

The charity was established in 2000 by the Department of Education with the following aims:

- To promote, facilitate and encourage Irish-medium education and schools in Northern Ireland.
- To do this in a planned, educationally efficient, and cost-effective way.

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Cont'd)  
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

**Structure, Governance & Management (Cont'd)**

***Accounting Officer***

Ms M Thomasson was the Accounting Officer during the period of these financial statements.

***Sickness Absence Data***

For all staff throughout the year, the number of possible working days was 2,707 (2023: 2,644). The number of sick days totalled 67 (2023: 212). Hence, the non-attendance rate was 2.48% (2023: 8.02%).

***Personal Data Related Incidents***

There were no incidents of personal data lost during the year.

***Risk management***

The Board strives to follow best practice in the public sector and works in conjunction with its sponsoring branch within the Department of Education, following its advice and recommendations. The charity provides the Department of Education with reports and updates regarding internal controls and governance matters and there are regular governance and accountability meetings with the Department of Education.

Further information regarding Internal Controls and Risk Management is included in the Governance Statement on pages 22 to 35.

***Aims, Objectives and Activities***

The mission of the charity is to promote, facilitate and encourage all aspects of Irish-medium education (IME) through:

- (1) The provision of assistance and advice in the establishment of schools.
- (2) Promoting the interests of persons connected with the schools and promoting standards of good practice within the schools.
- (3) Liaising with and representing the views of other bodies with a view to the furtherance of IME. Such groups include the Department of Education, the Education Authority, the Council for the Curriculum, Examination and Assessment, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and other educational bodies.

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Cont'd)  
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

**Aims, Objectives and Activities (Cont'd)**

This is achieved through the implementation of the following key objectives:

- To provide advice, assistance and information in relation to IME to voluntary, private sector and public bodies, to groups seeking to establish Irish-medium schools and units to established schools.
- To promote, facilitate and encourage the development of IME and schools in Northern Ireland in a co-ordinated, planned, educationally efficient and cost-effective manner.
- To advise, either alone or in conjunction with other bodies and institutions, on the development of curriculum materials for IME.
- To identify the training needs of the IME sector and, in conjunction with the Education Authority, to contribute to the development of training modules specific to the needs of Principals, Teachers and Boards of Governors in relation to the management and delivery of Irish-medium education.
- To advise the Department on issues relating to the supply of adequate numbers of suitably trained teachers for Irish-medium schools.
- To identify and access sources of additional funding to support the development of IME.

**Achievements and Performance 2023/24**

This section is a summary of what has been achieved throughout the year in accordance with the Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta Business Plan objectives and Corporate Vision for 2023/24. It is the assessment of DE, who evaluate our Business Plan, that 21 out of 23 objectives were either achieved in full or substantially or are likely to be achieved. The objectives that were not achieved relate largely to areas that are outside the control of Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

Status Descriptor	CnaG Assessment		DE Assessment	
	Number	%	Number	%
Achieved	12	52	13	56
Substantially achieved	7	30	6	26
Likely to be achieved but with some delay	2	9	2	9
Not achieved	2	9	2	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

**Business Plan Objective: DE Strategic Priority 1 - CHAMPIONING the needs and aspirations of all our children and young people and the positive impact of education.**

- Work to shape and support educational policies with a view to improving the wellbeing of children and young people as outlined in the Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015
- Specific IM references in IRE report highlighting particular challenges in relation to Teacher Supply, Accommodation, SEN support etc.
- EA's High 5 behaviour resource translated into Irish.
- Continued collaboration with Altram throughout 23/24 to support capacity building in voluntary committees and to establish potential new IM EY provision.
- Overall increase of 1.4% across IM sector in 23/24 with an increase of 6.31% at post-primary levels.

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Cont'd)  
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

**Achievements and Performance 2023/24 (Cont'd)**

**DE Strategic Priority 2 - HELPING all our children and young people by supporting their well-being and learning.**

We want to unite families, communities and educators around a shared vision to nurture healthy, confident children and young people, supported to learn and equipped to lead fulfilling lives.

- Growing numbers of IM leaders in attendance at each termly meeting of the IM Principals' Forum where speakers present on a range of educational issues and initiatives from within NI context and beyond.
- Engagement with local communities seeking to establish IM provision (Pre/primary-Derry (Waterside), East Belfast, Post-primary Co. Tyrone).
- During 2023/24, we worked with the IM sector and other relevant stakeholders to bring forward measurable recommendations that allow us deliver on the outcomes contained in the 'A Fair Start' report.
- Successful conference in September 2023 with more than 400 delegates in attendance, many of whom were IM Practitioners.
- Ongoing work regarding the more general recommendations of A Fair Start. Continued participation and advocacy for IME in DE's A Fair Start stakeholder reference group.
- During 2023/24, CnaG advocated, through active participation on relevant DE/EA stakeholder groups, for the IM sector including those pertaining to 'A Fair Start', Covid-19 and the response to it.
- RAISE policy paper was updated in Quarter 4 in recognition of the recommendations made to support IME showing increased understanding of the sector.
- Active participation and advocacy continue with the Irish-medium Cross Directorate Group in EA.
- Active participation and advocacy continue with all relevant EA groups to support specific challenges facing the IME sector.
- Post-primary schools have reported an increased confidence in their support due to advocacy with relevant stakeholders.
- Ongoing work with DE relating to teacher provision and TPL.
- During 2023/24, CnaG provided advice, guidance and support to IM Principals, practitioners and Governors in relation to dealing with continued impact of Covid-19.
- Sustained increased participation in Principals' Forum and range of training facilitated by external providers on identified priority areas.
- Relationships established with local, national and international bodies including attendance at a number of conferences to identify and share good practice.
- Wide range of sessions delivered at annual conference to share best practice in identified priority areas.
- During 2022/23, CnaG disseminated a wide range of IM specific resources and contemporary research relating to blended learning etc in an immersion context.
- Effective resources identified and shared via forum, monthly bulletin and ad hoc online sessions.
- Commissioned the undertaking of research on sectoral pressures for the subsequent dissemination of findings amongst the sector and relevant stakeholders.
- Specific TPL facilitated at annual conference.
- Strong relationships forged with UU and QUB relating to international best practice in an immersion context via 'A Fair Start' funding.

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Cont'd)  
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

**Achievements and Performance 2023/24 (Cont'd)**

- Shared research with IM Principals and other stakeholders (e.g. 6/2/24 research symposium) including DE/EA officers and political representatives at Education Committee and beyond.
- Number of online training sessions facilitated on a range of areas.
- During 2023/24, CnaG maintained full engagement and participation at all levels of the Area Planning processes to fully represent the needs of the sector in collaboration with other educational partners in the Area Plan.
- Ongoing representation at APLG, APWG (including Collaboration sub-committee) and APSG.
- Throughout 2023/24, CnaG worked with schools, InaG, CCMS, FnaG, EA, and DE and other partners to deliver the area planning commitments identified in the Strategic Area Planning Action Plan in a way which is more reflective of the particular circumstances and needs of IM sector.
- Ongoing attendance at APLG/WG to proactively work to increase number of SPiMs for the IM sector. Continued engagement with schools in relation to this however, we are unable to increase number of SPiMs on a regional basis due to extreme accommodation barriers facing the IM sector.
- Despite ongoing representation (over the past 3 years) on SEND EG, EA has no plans to provide IM specific support in Local Integrated Team model for September 2024.
- Continued growth in Derry City IM schools in 23/24.
- IM schools not currently meeting the sustainability threshold continued to progress towards target numbers again in 23/24.
- IM schools listed on Operational Plan 2 (OP2) have been actioned-development proposals submitted in 23/24.
- During 2023/24, CnaG recruited, engaged and managed a number of external, professional associates to undertake research, training, collaborative and associated work for IME sector.
- Associates were used to support the organisation in several areas, education support as well as in the area of research/advocacy.
- Regular meetings with DE in relation to addressing significant gaps in provision to support IM pupils with SEN.
- Presentation to EA Board on IM issues in October 2023, at DE Webinar on 11 December 2023, at Education Committee (Stormont) 13 March 2024.

**DE Strategic Priority 3 - INSPIRING all our children and young people to make a positive contribution to society.**

We ensure that education provision is of a high quality and supports learning and progression.

- During 2023/24, CnaG provided timely, high-quality advice and recommendations to DE on Irish-medium education particularly in relation to policy development, research and consultations.
- Throughout 2023/24, CnaG supported DE in fulfilling its statutory duty to encourage, facilitate and support the development of Integrated Education.
- Fully participated in the Steering and Working Groups associated with the implementation of the IE Act.
- Ongoing liaison with NICIE relating to move of GS Léim an Mhadaidh to old Roe Valley IPS site.
- Ongoing positive working relationship with NICIE relating to the development of Naíscoil na Seolta in East Belfast and the establishment of Scoil na Seolta.

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Cont'd)  
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**Achievements and Performance 2023/24 (Cont'd)**

- All consultations discussed with and informed by wider IM sector and subsequently shared on CnaG website.
- Continue to engage with the Shared Education DE/EA teams and other education/sectoral bodies where appropriate to help address any barriers to Irish-medium engagement in Shared Education.
- Advocate for sufficient flexibility in future Shared Education Initiatives such as Peace Plus to encourage more engagement from and with the Irish-medium sector.

**DE Strategic Priority 4 - Meeting the LEARNING needs of our children and young people and developing their knowledge and skills, enabling them to fulfil their potential.**

We want every child to enjoy a high-quality education and learning experience from Early Years to post-primary.

- During 2023/24, ensure provision of a quality Irish-medium pre-school support service.
- Progress of Altram's work monitored from 1/4/23-31/7/23 by SMT and CnaG Board.
- Altram funding secured including an uplift to opening budget allocated in April 2023 after strong advocacy for same.
- Budget secured for Altram via CnaG from 1 April 2023-31 July 2023 and from 1 Aug 2023-31 March 2024 this grant was paid directly to Altram as a body recognised and eligible to receive grant aided funding as per Article 89 of NI Education Order 1998.
- Initial feedback would indicate that several prioritised areas for a targeted marketing campaign have experienced significant increases in their numbers. For example, Mid-West Belfast, Kilkeel and in the Waterside, Derry City where new IM preschool provision in response to the marketing campaign has exceeded the accommodation capacity.
- Representation on the DE Irish-medium Early Years' Group to ensure delivery of targets, including the creation and delivery of bespoke Irish-medium language and methodology training in conjunction with Altram.

**DE Strategic Priority 5 – DELIVERING an effective, child-first, collaborative and high-quality education system.**

We want a sustainable education system which is appropriately resourced, works in partnership, invests in its workforce and is committed to excellence and equity

- During 2023/24, maintain full engagement and participation at all levels of the Area Planning processes to fully represent the needs of the sector in collaboration with other educational partners in the Area Plan.
- CnaG participated fully at all AP groups.
- We fully engaged in the work relating to the preparation of OP2 to include the establishment of additional SPiMs for the IM sector.
- In collaboration with NICIE-GS Léim an Mhadaidh relocated to the former Roe Valley IPS site.
- CnaG facilitated IID/EOT visits to three IM primary schools in September 2023- Bunscoil an Iúir, Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain & Gaelscoil an Lonnáin in September 2023 and work to improve the building of Gaelscoil an Lonnáin is ongoing at an investment of £180k.

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**Achievements and Performance 2023/24 (Cont'd)**

- During 2023/24, assisted the recruitment, training and continued development of governors of school settings at all levels in IME in conjunction with EA through, amongst other things, the provision of specific training session for IM governors.
- Further IM-specific training sessions provided by EA.
- Ongoing representation on the Governors' Stakeholders group and Review of Governance Group.
- Regular advice given to governors in IM schools and signposting to support within EA.
- Associates have been used for various purposes to support CnaG throughout the 23/24.
- Three professional associates have been instrumental in supporting the CEO in the transition period from Dec-March 2024 with a vacancy in the Senior Corporate Services role.
- Associates were involved in addressing outstanding internal audit recommendations, providing support with payroll, pensions etc and to ensure the organisation complied with all procurement requirements.
- These individuals have assisted us in creating a range of policies and putting multiple processes and systems in place in relation to the full range of corporate services.
- Associates with particular experience and expertise in IME have also been employed to offer mentorship programmes for new IM principals and to develop an Irish language policy template for IM schools.
- An academic has been appointed to conduct a feasibility study into the provision of post-primary IM education in Co. Tyrone/Fermanagh.
- Throughout 2023/24, we worked closely with the Department's Investment and Infrastructure Directorate to address the accommodation needs of the Irish-medium Education sector.
- We held regular meetings with EOT/IID which occur bimonthly (peppered with occasional engagement via phone calls / emails). As stated previously, the ongoing work to Gaelscoil an Lonnáin, the relocation of Gaelscoil Léim an Mhadaidh and Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí being progressed and the search for suitable sites (Gaelscoil Aodha Rua, Gaelscoil na Spéiríní, North Belfast & Gaelscoil Éanna).
- Due to challenging budget situation, much work remains and will be prioritised via the Accommodation Improvement Strategy for the IM sector which will be developed by IID with input from CnaG.
- Accommodation survey updated, translated, and launched on 13 May 2024.
- During 2023/24, advocated for adequate numbers of teachers for Irish-medium Education to meet increasing demand.
- Needs clearly defined with actions to address in the Teacher Supply Paper created by CnaG in August 2023.
- Ongoing advocacy on the need to address this issue with DE, ITE colleges and political representatives.
- Pilot scheme launched with AFS funding.
- Issues raised and highlighted at DE Webinar, Research Symposium and at Education Committee.
- Ongoing engagement with DE in relation to this.

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Cont'd)  
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

**Financial Review**

The Department of Education core grant is the charity's principal source of funds. Expenditure in the year went towards the achievements and objectives detailed on pages 8 to 12. Funding levels have been confirmed at a similar level for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The results for the year are set out on pages 42 to 64. The charity returned net outgoing resources before actuarial movements of £673 for the year (2023 - £118,102). The results for the year are in line with budgets, the deficit in the prior year arose as a result of the pension fund service costs totalling £166k.

At 31 March 2024 the charity had total General Funds of £19,829 (2023 - £22,470) and total Restricted Funds of £14,438 (2023 - £16,470). In addition, at 31 March 2023 there was a pension reserve of £45,000 which reduced to £nil at 31 March 2024 as a result of actuarial losses.

As CnaG is in the Public Sector and follows the guidance found in Managing Public Money NI (MPMNI) the Directors are obliged to keep the holding of reserves to a minimum. CnaG will draw down sufficient funds each month to match the budgeted expenditure from the Department of Education and the level of free reserves is kept low, generally less than four weeks expenditure.

At 31 March 2024 the charity held free reserves of £19,829 (2023 - £22,086) which represents approximately eight days' expenditure.

The accounting policy on pension costs included in Note 2 and the information in Note 14 of the financial statements provide details of how pension assets and liabilities have been accounted for.

**Payments to Suppliers**

CnaG is committed to the prompt payment of suppliers in accordance with guidance issued by the Department of Finance. Payment is due within thirty days of receipt of an undisputed invoice.

**Plans for Future Periods**

The charity plans to continue the activities outlined above in the forthcoming years, subject to satisfactory funding arrangements.

CnaG continues to be classified as a Non-Departmental Public Body.

**Employees**

CnaG aims to promote the involvement of all its employees in its aims and performance. The development of effective employee communication and consultation has continued as part of improving best practice within the organisation.

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Cont'd)  
For the year ended 31 March 2024**

**Directors' Responsibility Statement**

The Directors are responsible for preparing the Report of the Directors and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the Directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the Directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards) and applicable law. Under company law the Directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Directors are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- Make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The Directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities, and to provide reasonable assurance that:

- the charitable company is operating efficiently and effectively;
- it maintains a Fraud Prevention Policy and Response Plan;
- its assets are safeguarded against unauthorised use or disposition;
- proper records are maintained, and financial information used by the charitable company or used for publication is reliable; and
- that the charitable company complies with relevant laws and regulations.

The financial statements have been prepared under a direction issued by the Department of Finance insofar as those requirements are appropriate.

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**REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS (Cont'd)  
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**Statement of Disclosure of Information to Auditor**


So far as each person who was a director at the date of approving of this report is aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the company's auditor is unaware; and
- the directors individually have taken all the necessary steps that they ought to have taken as directors in order to make themselves aware of all relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information.

**Registered Office:**

Áras na bhFál  
202 Bóthar na bhFál  
Béal Feirste  
BT12 6AH

By order of the Board



MR S O COINNE  
Director

24 July 2024

Registered as a charity No. NIC105808

Registered in Northern Ireland No. NI039115