



Tuarscáil an Chathaoirligh

2022-2023

Chairperson's Report

2022-2023 has seen many new developments with Naíscoil na Seolta as an Integrated Irish-medium pre-school. As you know Naíscoil na Seolta was established previously as a result of a major Turas project that has been in the planning and development since 2018. The past year's move to Garnerville Presbyterian Church rented accommodation together with formal recognition as an integrated sector pre-school and funding as Pre-school Education Provider (to be granted in September 2023) has marked a significant step forward in development and status of Naíscoil na Seolta. As a result, we will be able to continue as a "Naíonra", that is a *playgroup* for the youngest age group, in conjunction with the Naíscoil/voluntary pre-school.

The past year

2022-2023 has shown an increasing interest our playgroup and pre-school provision. A total of 19 children have attended Naíscoil na Seolta and we received expressions of interest for 34 places in 2022-2023. Naíscoil na Seolta has also seen the employment of a new staff team which has brought new success to the Naíscoil. The ability of staff to provide an interesting, playful and educational environment for children as well as working well with parents, has been critical in building up the operation and image of the naíscoil in the

community. 2022-2023 has seen this notable improvement in this regard with the work of a well-qualified and fully engaged team. Further to this, Naíscoil na Seolta's official status as a funded voluntary naíscoil (to commence September 2023) has given us a stamp of approval which has in turn inspired us to proceed with plans for 2024 and the coming years. This of course includes plans to create a Bunscoil commencing with Rang 1 (P1) in 2024.

Proceeding with these developments will not be possible at the Garnerville location. As a rented premises with restrictions in the hours of use, Naíscoil na Seolta is prevented from expanding both pre-school services and the developing a Bunscoil. Additionally, outdoor play has been very restricted at Garnerville, making the venue less than ideal. The problem of the Garnerville location has also arisen - it is quite a distance from many of the main residential areas and "wrap-around care" providers in east Belfast, making it less attractive to parents.

Other important developments have occurred in 2022-2023. Late in 2022 we were invited to apply for substantial funding from Ciste um Oileán Comhroinnte (The Shared Island Fund) to undertake a feasibility study to look at possible sites and requirements for a permanent location for Naíscoil na Seolta that would also allow for the development of a Bunscoil. This study was undertaken on our behalf by Quarter Chartered Accountants (Cathedral Quarter Belfast) in cooperation with Pilib Ó Ruanaidh (Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta). This study identified several potential sites and resulted in the finding of what is, hopefully, a very suitable site for our future plans. This site is located on Montgomery Road, Castlereragh Road/Lisnasharragh area. A lease is currently being agreed with the owners and a planning application will go ahead in the autumn.

As a result of the completion of the feasibility study the committee of Naíscoil na Seolta has been able to enter into negotiations with An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media) for capital build funding and assistance with rental payments for the site identified as suitable for the development of the naíscoil/bunscoil. This assistance will help us make possible the establishment a permanent provision, effectively by-passing an unwieldy long-term bureaucratic process of applying for assistance to the Education Authority and DENI. It also allows us to approach the Integrated Education Fund/NICIE with concrete proposals and an associated application for salary

assistance in establishing an Irish-medium Integrated Pre-school/Primary School. Naíscoil na Seolta is, of course, also receiving help from Community Foundation Ireland, Community Foundation Northern Ireland and The Ireland Fund to help with salary, running costs and other projected costs. These funds are helping us to get well established until such time as Naíscoil na Seolta/Bunscoil can seek full recognition from the EA/DENI (as our pupil numbers allow).

Finally, the most critical aspect of our future development will be child/pupil numbers. Having sufficient numbers to meet the required quota of a minimum of eight children receiving Pre-school funding in the future as well as maintaining good numbers in "pre-pre-school"/naíonra which will bode well for future numbers in a Bunscoil thus enabling us to become a fully funded Irish-medium Integrated Primary School with associated Pre-school with, as mentioned, recognition from the EA and DENI.

Signed:	Chairman	<i>Adán mac Síofraigh</i>	Date	<i>9/1/2024</i>
	Secretary	<i>Alf Jacks</i>	Date	<i>12/1/2024</i>
	Treasurer	<i>Paul</i>	Date	<i>9-1-2024</i>