

NAISCOIL NA SEOLTA

TRUSTEES' REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

The Trustees present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) - Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008.

Objectives and activities

Public benefit

The Trustees have paid due regard to guidance issued by the Charity Commission in deciding what activities the should undertake.

2023-2024 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 move to Garnerville Presbyterian Church rented accommodation in September 2022 has been successful in providing a level of stability and we are very grateful for this temporary accommodation. The past year has seen the fruition of plans to move to a more permanent site where the management and staff of Naíscoil na Seolta have complete control over a suitable building and hours of use. 2023-2024 also saw the development of a realistic and funded plan to see the establishment of an IME/Integrated primary school, Scoil na Seolta.

Achievements and performance

Significant activities and achievements against objectives

2023-2024 has shown continued strong interest in our playgroup and pre-school provision by parents. A total of 14 children have attended Naíscoil na Seolta and we received expressions of interest for 31 places in 2023-2024. The period 2023-2024 has been our first year of funded pre-school PEG (Pre-school Education Group) places. The decision by PEG to allow us a concessionary 5 funded places (usually a minimum of eight places is required) has allowed us to get off the ground as a funded voluntary IME/Integrated pre-school and we now look forward to 11 PEG funded places in 2024-2025. Naíscoil na Seolta is now fully established as a voluntary pre-school provider. Further to this we have had 49 expressions of interest for 2024-2025 with 26 of these now having allocated Naíonra places (pre-pre-school). We now have over 100 expressions of interest for the next 4 years. These figures undoubtedly reflect the excellent work of staff, volunteer staff and committee members in attracting parents in the community and in promoting the many advantages of bilingual education. The past year has witnessed the consolidation of an especially talented and well qualified staff team (both paid and voluntary) reflected in our increased PEG and naíonra numbers for 2024-2025. 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.

The continued growth and increased numbers are essential to the future success of the project and the committee's plan to create an IME/Integrated primary school. The current site at Garnerville Presbyterian Church alas limits all future developments - for the expanded numbers, sessions times and the development of Scoil na Seolta. Thankfully we have been able to proceed substantially with plans for further development on a more permanent site. In 2022-2023 we successfully applied for substantial funding from Ciste um Oileán Comhroinnte (The Shared Island Fund) to fund a feasibility study which resulted in finding a site located on Montgomery Road, Castlereragh Road/ Lisnasharragh area. Since then, further successful negotiation has resulted in attracting very substantial funding from An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán (Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media). This funding will eventually amount to over £700k and will allow us to redevelop the site and erect suitable modular buildings on the site at Montgomery Road. The plans for developing the site are regrettably still at the stage of receiving planning permission by Belfast City Council. However, we have received a very positive response from the planning office and the otherwise lengthy process is well advanced.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Overall, we expect to have the site ready for children before the end of this year. We had hoped to move on to the site before September of this year but the above-mentioned delay along with delays in negotiating the lease with the owners and in turn employing the contractors has postponed our move until the end of the year. The downside of this has meant we have been forced to postpone our original plan to have Rang 1 (P1) in place for September 2024. As you can imagine, it has been an onerous task trying to encourage parents to send their children to a school that is not yet built on what is presently a vacant industrial site. We did have a plan B for this scenario of various delays but with a number of parents understandably withdrawing their children for Rang 1, the numbers became too low to realistically proceed. This is particularly regrettable as we had secured funding for a teacher's salary from the Integrated Education Fund. We hope that this funding can be likewise postponed until 2025.

Notwithstanding the postponement of Rang 1 we have had to consider reorganising the management of the IME/ Integrated pre-school and primary school, possibly moving to the legal status of a board of governors rather than a committee in 2024-2025. With this in mind we have started to refer to the project as "Scoil na Seolta" as a generic term for both the naíonra, pre-school and future primary school.

We have been fortunate in being able to continue to work with Ciarán McCavana of Quarter Chartered Accountants who undertook last year's feasibility study on behalf of Scoil na Seolta. Likewise, we have also been able to work with Pilib Ó Ruanaidh of Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta. Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta have agreed to assist in the management of the substantial funding money for the development of Scoil na Seolta. Neither Turas nor East Belfast Mission can manage this fund currently.

An official development proposal to be presented to the EA/DENI is close to completion. This development proposal has largely been completed in cooperation with NICIE and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

Committee work can be challenging and even tedious at times. I'd like to thank all the committee members for their assistance over the past year. However, much work remains for the committee, and I look forward to establishing a more active committee for 2024-2025, with re-activated sub-committees and more input from all committee members.

As Chairperson I would like to thank the valuable contributions made to the committee by Annelies Taylor who did a massive amount of work in establishing the committee and previously held the office of Chairperson. I would also like to extend the committee's thanks to Sandra Jackson who has been our dedicated secretary for several years. Both have now stepped down.

Finally, I would like to express gratitude to the massive contribution of Gearóidín Monroe, Stiúrthóir Naíscóile/Pre-school Leader and Manager over the past two years. Gearóidín's management and overall work at Naíscóil na Seolta has played a significant role in creating a stable and successful staff team which has nurtured our success.

Financial review

Reserves policy

It is the policy of the that unrestricted funds which have not been designated for a specific use should be maintained at a level equivalent to between three and six month's expenditure. The Trustees consider that reserves at this level will ensure that, in the event of a significant drop in funding, they will be able to continue the 's current activities while consideration is given to ways in which additional funds may be raised. This level of reserves has been maintained throughout the year.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Structure, governance and management

The Trustees who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

N McDowell
A Mac Séafraidh
N Uprichard
C Mitchell
A McCammon
Mrs Linda Ervine
H Floyd
Paul Lynas
J Waterworth
A Burns
I McMillan
A D Harrison
G Monroe
S Jackson
A Taylor

The Trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



N McDowell
Trustee

27 May 2025



A Mac Séafraidh
Trustee