

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY (NI CURRICULUM) · P1–P7

Gaeilge i dTuaisceart Éireann

Irish Language in NI Catholic Schools

Irish language in Northern Ireland

1 Status in NI schools

Irish is taught in Catholic-maintained schools. The NI Curriculum does not require Irish in controlled (mainly Protestant) schools, though some controlled schools do teach it. Irish-medium schools (Gaelscoileanna) teach all subjects through Irish.

2 Gaelscoileanna in NI

Irish-medium primary schools where everything is taught through Irish. Over 30 Gaelscoileanna operate in NI. They serve both Catholic and Protestant families who want Irish-medium education.

3 The Irish Language Act (NI)

Long-debated legislation — the Identity and Language (NI) Act (2022) gave Irish a formal footing in NI for the first time. Irish will have official recognition and public bodies must accommodate it.

4 Gaeilge and identity

For many NI nationalists and republicans, speaking Irish is an expression of Irish cultural identity as much as a language skill. This gives Irish a political dimension in NI that it doesn't have in the Republic.

5 Ulster Irish dialect

NI Irish belongs to the Ulster dialect — distinct from Connacht and Munster Irish. Donegal Irish is the closest related dialect. Notable differences in pronunciation and some vocabulary.



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Resources specific to NI

Iontaobhas ULTACH (Ultach Trust) supports Irish in NI. Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta supports Irish-medium education in NI specifically.

Common resources — applicable in NI

Resources that work for NI Catholic-ma

- Our Gaeilge vocabulary mats (available in the Irish/IE section) cover the same vocabulary as taught in Republic schools — the language is the same, dialects vary slightly.
- COLOURS AND NUMBERS: used from P1 onwards. Our Gaeilge — Dathanna agus Uimhreacha mat applies directly.
- CLASSROOM PHRASES: Gaeilge — An Scoil agus an Seomra Ranga mat. The classroom phrases are universal across dialects.
- EMOTIONS: Gaeilge — Mothúcháin mat. Essential for PDMU/circle time in Irish.
- SPORTS: Gaeilge — Spóirt mat. GAA vocabulary in Irish is particularly relevant in NI where GAA is very widely played.
- NOTE ON DIALECT: our mats are in standard Irish (caighdeán). Ulster Irish speakers will notice some differences in pronunciation. This is normal and can be a teaching point.

