

Irish stream for Newtown school



Newtown pupils – (Back, l-r) Dylan Whelan, Cathal Burke, David Walsh, Jake Murray, Eoghan Casey. (Front, l-r) Vivienne Dowd and Katie Mullens.



(l-r) Clodagh Collins, Grace Walsh-Neill and Aoife Gormley.



Grainne Murray (left) and Bridget Daly-Lynam.



Patricia Walsh (left) and Susan Whelan at the meeting.

by Kate Donoghue

THE VICE-principal of Newtown NS held a meeting last Wednesday (1st March) to present his plan of introducing an Irish language stream into the school in 2017.

Mr Brian Ó Luasa hopes to see a new stream of junior infants commence in the school in 2017 who would be taught entirely through Irish.

The Immersion Model of Teaching, or *tumoideachas*, would run alongside the existing English language stream in the school.

This is in an effort to address the greater demand for Irish Education within the local area.

Scoil Uí Riada in Kilcock, though recently granted a third stream last week, still has in excess of 50 applicants for whom they are unable to cater.

At the meeting, Mr Ó Luasa outlined the advantages of learning through Irish, the common concerns associated with the transition and took questions from the floor.

Among the concerns he addressed was what happens when the pupil cannot understand the teacher who is speaking in Irish.

"At the start there's definitely that kind of lead-in time," he said.

"It takes time to get to know your teacher but after a couple of months it's not an issue," he added.

"It comes to them naturally."

Mr Ó Luasa explained that an education in Irish would not affect the child's ability to gain fluency in English.

"That doesn't happen," he said.

"The world around them is saturated in English. In fact, the opposite is true with Irish. I know that if I don't push it with them in here, it's gone.

"Another concern is that it's not suitable for children with special needs, I would disagree with that.

"They would have the exact same supports as they would have in an English stream and they do fine.

"It's differentiated. In any classroom, when there's a difference of a need, you cater for the children in front of you as for how to help them best."

Mr Ó Luasa also explained that, while it is advantageous, it isn't necessary for parents to be fluent in Irish in order for their children to be educated as gaeilge.

"With immersion, with *tumoideachas*, they're getting that here, but it is important that the parents support the child's learning of Irish.

"It's not essential that they would be fluent or anything like that, but maybe use whatever words they have.

"In time, I would set up classes at night where I would give the basics to

parents so that they could help their children going forward."

The advantages outlined by Mr Ó Luasa in Irish Education included improved cognitive skills, children become "bigger, better, broader thinkers".

"They're better able to understand and communicate. They tend to do better in standardised tests.

"They have increased tolerance and self-esteem, are proud of their achievements, have a strong sense of self and increased confidence in their abilities."

During the meeting, Mr Ó Luasa spoke about how the school would operate with the two language streams running simultaneously.

"It's not an elitist thing. It's not about Irish being here and English is over there. It's about the two being together in the best possible way.

"At the moment I think that this is the way that this will work most effectively," he said.

"In an Irish stream, you get the benefit of both; it's not one versus the other."

Although the students in the Irish stream would be taught entirely in Irish, all students would share a playground and the communal areas in the school.

"This would benefit the English stream just as much as the Irish stream because there is that opportunity to all work together at various times.

"I think it's a case of the rising tide raises all boats.



ABOVE: Enjoying the evening were (l-r) Tara Holton with Alicia and Olivia Bermingham.

RIGHT: Kate Doherty (left) and Jacqueline Rowland.



Pic: Ian Scully

explained to parents

That's how I see it. Mr Ó Luasa said the staff are in the process of contacting the parents who have been trying to get their children accepted at Scoil Uí Riada in nearby Killock.

"We're contacting the parents and letting them know what we're doing," he said.

"There's a bus coming through Newtown, past this gate, going to Scoil Uí Riada when in here I can do the exact same thing."

Social Riada's third stream

• A meeting between the school's patron and the Department of Education on 1st March, Scoil Uí Riada was given a third stream starting next September.

Local TD, Catherine Murphy was told that a "full and constructive discussion" taken place between to the Patron and the Department.

"The Department agreed to the Patron's request for the introduction of a third stream from September 2017 in Scoil Uí Riada," Deputy Murphy was told.

"In light of the introduction of the third stream and to facilitate the orderly planning of future enrolments, it was considered timely and appropriate that the school authority will prioritise a review of the school's enrolment policy."

RIGHT: (l-r) Alvin Jensen with Eithne Maher and Aifric Ridge-Collins.



ABOVE: Pupils (l-r) Dylan Whelan, Eoin Mulligan, Daniel Erskine and Eoghan Casey with school secretary Maura Milner.



Acting Principal Mary Cooke-McCarthy with Susan Mahon.



Emma O'Keefe (left) and Carol O'Rourke.



ABOVE: (l-r) SNA Sharon Grady with Newtown teachers Siobhan Dougan, Siobhan Finnerty, Cathy McCarthy and school secretary Maura Milner. INSET: (l-r) Cayla Jensen with Sophie Maher and Hannah Murray.





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