

# Together Towards inclusion

*Addressing the issues of integrating  
non-English-speaking children into  
mainstream primary education*





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## Participating Schools:

St. Francis Xavier Junior School, Castleknock  
Scoil Bhríde Girls National School, Blanchardstown  
Scoil Bhríde Girls National School, Palmerstown  
Scoil na Mainistreach, De la Salle, Kildare Town  
Holy Trinity Primary School, Cookstown  
Windmill Integrated, Dungannon  
Dungannon Primary School  
St. Patrick's Primary School, Dungannon

### Areas for immediate future collaboration

Agreement with the General Teaching Councils about: redefinition of existing specifications for classroom teachers, to include issues raised by multilingual and multiethnic school populations; the competences required for language support teachers.

Participation in the development of appropriate modules for pre-service training.

The collaborative development and piloting of toolkits for in-service professional development to support the challenge of integrating ESL pupils into the mainstream and to promote the achievement of the inclusive school.

## In conclusion

The experiences gained in this small-scale project have clearly demonstrated the richness of, and benefits to be gained from, 'inter-professional and inter-institutional linkages' North and South. The project has highlighted the potential for the effective joint delivery of INSET North and South. Furthermore, it has begun the process of building a new network of support for principals, teachers and teacher trainers on the basis of future collaborative planning.

The project has generated highly-focused ideas for future collaboration on a North-South basis. Such collaboration will depend on the explicit support, including financial support, of the relevant competent authorities.

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**August 2005**

# 1

## Purpose of the Project

*Together Towards Inclusion* is a North South project organised by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (a campus company of Trinity College Dublin) and the Southern Education and Library Board (N.I.). The aims of the project are to explore how structural and management issues must be addressed in order to meet the educational needs of pupils from non-English speaking backgrounds; and to develop a toolkit to provide support for principals and teachers in addressing the language and learning needs of non-English speaking children in the primary classroom.

The basis for seeking funding for this project was the practical experience already gained by IILT and SELB in meeting one of the particular challenges to primary education of the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The arrival in Ireland of children from families whose mother tongue did not allow ease of communication and whose cultural background did not appear to be immediately accessible, has caused those responsible for the educational success of children to question how such change may best be managed. The motivation to work in a North South collaboration was based on the conviction that the sharing of expertise gained throughout the island of Ireland would generate a variety of perspectives and a rich basis for examination of the crucial issues. This has proved to be the case.

Ireland, North and South, is not alone in facing the challenge of integrating children into education. The movement of people between and within continents is a marked feature of the early twenty-first century. Many educational systems across the European Union, as well as those further afield, must make informed adjustments to practice if they are to address the educational needs of newcomer populations. It is important that the competent authorities North and South in Ireland do not move forward on the basis that this educational challenge is a temporary one. Such a view would seriously underestimate the importance of 'finding the right answers'.

The purpose of this collaborative project is to inform the vision and to ensure that the integration of children, from different ethnic backgrounds and mother tongues, into primary education benefits educational culture as a whole. The funding of the project by SCoTENS has provided an opportunity for teaching professionals to meet, share experiences and ideas, identify common challenges, and learn from colleagues.

## Partners in the project

### 2.1 Integrate Ireland Language and Training:



*Through education and training, to empower people of other cultures and languages to achieve a place in Irish society.*

Integrate Ireland Language and Training was originally established by the department of Education and Science as the Refugee Language Support Unit (RLSU) in March 1999. The RLSU was a two-year pilot project under the aegis of Trinity College Dublin, Centre for Language and Communication Studies. At that time the primary function of the unit was to co-ordinate the provision of English language support for adult refugees admitted to Ireland.

By the end of the pilot project the RLSU had fulfilled the terms of reference laid down by the Minister of Education and Science. These included the development of English language proficiency benchmarks for the adult sector (vocational and pre-vocational) and for the school sector (primary and post-primary), and the design and delivery of English language courses appropriate to the needs of adult refugees. During the pilot project the RLSU also began to develop materials and provide in-service seminars to support primary and post-primary teachers specially appointed to teach English to non-English-speaking immigrant pupils.

In September 2001 the RLSU became Integrate Ireland Language and Training Ltd, a not-for-profit campus company of Trinity College Dublin. IILT has been allocated funding by the Department of Education and Science for the duration of the National Development Plan.

Since June 2000, IILT has been responsible for the development of a range of instruments and materials for use by language support teachers in primary and post-primary schools throughout Ireland. These teaching resources, and the appropriate approaches and methodology for their implementation in the classroom, are mediated through a series of regional in-service seminars which are held twice in each school year.

There has been a marked and steady increase in the numbers of language support teachers attending the seminars delivered by IILT. The sanctioning by the DES of additional posts each school year, as well as the provision of grant aid for schools, reflects a rapidly growing situation in primary education in southern Ireland. For details of the provision of language support see 6.4.4.

### Pre-service and in-service training

This project should help to inform the following:

- A module in pre-service training in all training colleges
- Training tools for delivery to whole-school staff – including janitors, catering staff
- Developing the expertise of classroom teachers to deal with varying levels of English language proficiency in the mainstream classroom
- School-based INSET
- Centre-based INSET

### Common learning and assessment instruments

The development, exchange and collaborative implementation of learning and assessment instruments to include the following:

- Entry testing to determine a pupil's language learning needs on admission
- Learning and assessment instruments to support learner autonomy and the mobility of pupils
- Means of monitoring/self-monitoring a pupil's progress in language learning and diagnosing particular areas requiring attention
- Pedagogically appropriate tests to confirm that a pupil has achieved the targets set for curriculum access

Language testing is a highly specialised area of activity and in this particular case will fulfil its functions only if it is integrated into the pedagogical processes by which language support is delivered. IILT has been in the process of developing and collaborating with teachers in piloting tests in the last two years. With the availability of funding, joint developments could be undertaken in this regard.

## Joint North – South Recommendations

Despite different systems for the provision of language support in primary schools north and south of the border, collaboration between IILT and SELB has illustrated clearly that many of the fundamental management and educational problems are the same. The identification of a strong common basis supports the view that progress in this important and dynamic area of education could be made through future joint action and, as a result, a number of common recommendations can be made:

### Policy

The competent authorities North and South should review the nature of the provision of support for non-English-speaking pupils in primary education in light of recent demographic changes and current examples of good practice.

The formulation of policy specific to either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland should take into consideration the effectiveness of North-South collaboration in relation to the following:

### Common whole-school issues

- Home-school communication and parental involvement
- Pastoral care/school ethos
- Appropriate induction procedures
- Creating intercultural environments
- Changing role of Boards of Management

### Partnership building

- Consolidate current partnerships (IILT and SELB)
- Involve other stakeholders within the educational sector
- Promote interagency partnerships, e.g. pre-school provision, health, community services.

## 2

### 2.2 Southern Education and Library Board:



*To be valued for providing coherent high quality services to meet the needs of our user community.*

The **Southern Education and Library Board** serves the district council areas of Armagh, Banbridge, Cookstown, Craigavon, Dungannon and South Tyrone, and Newry and Mourne. It covers 1,450 square miles, with a total population of approximately 332,000 people, including 75,000 school pupils.

The mission of the board is to ensure that high quality education, youth and library support services exist throughout the area in order to **promote learning, provide opportunities for personal development, and encourage individuals to acquire core skills**. SELB also seeks to **promote spiritual and moral values in individuals and, in the community, a sense of shared responsibility, respect for one another and appreciation of the worth of the individual person**.

## Background to the project

The primary sectors of the educational systems in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have had to address, in recent years, an increasing number of children enrolling in schools whose mother tongue is neither English nor Irish. This situation has developed as a result of the arrival of refugees, asylum seekers and, latterly, migrant workers. For the purpose of this document, such families will be referred to generically as 'migrant' families. The current trends of inward migration are set to continue, particularly as a result of enlargement of the EU in May 2004 and the strength of the economy in Ireland necessitating the wide recruitment of workers for different sectors.

In both jurisdictions, primary level education is a right of every child and, consequently, the status of parents does not affect the access of children to formal education. This entitlement, combined with the relatively widespread location of migrant families has meant that children have been enrolled in primary schools of all sizes, in all types of locations, and with variable levels of resources and support available to them.

The Department of Education (N.I.) and the Department of Education and Science (R.of I.) have addressed the particular needs of migrant children, and the schools in which they enrol, in different ways. Details of the current situation in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland are presented in sections 5 and 6.

 assessing the proficiency levels of pupils' language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) on entry to the school and monitoring pupils' progress in learning English as language support proceeds. With the cooperation of principals and teachers, it has been possible to trial examples of these tests in order to ensure their suitability for implementation in the classroom and their accuracy in relation to pupils' performance. The school year 2005-6 will see the conclusion of this project and the production of batteries of tests for use in schools. The testing process will continue to be monitored and evaluated and further adjustments to the tests will be made as necessary by IILT.

### 6.8 Recommendations (Republic of Ireland)

#### 1 Stability of teaching posts

- There is an urgent need for the establishment of permanent language support teaching posts.
- Regular changes of staff are impacting negatively on the consistency and success of language support.
- Many schools, in which the enrolment of non-English speaking children is used as a positive influence, cannot build on a vibrant dynamic because of uncertainty about the post of language support teacher in the following school year.

#### 2 Review of the 2-year rule

- It is necessary to review the rule which permits a child to have language support for two full school years. There is much evidence to demonstrate that while some children will achieve full integration into the mainstream within the two-year period, others will require language support for considerably longer and possibly throughout their time in primary education.

#### 3 Use of standardised tests

- A statement or circular is necessary regarding the use of standardised tests as a means of determining the educational progression of non-English speaking pupils



Validated by the Council of Europe's Validation Committee in 2001, these European Language Portfolios support the development of the individual learner's proficiency in English and at the same time provide teachers, principals, inspectors and parents with a dynamic record of progress. They coincide with key principles that underpin the Irish primary and post-primary curricula: learning how to learn; accommodating individual difference; basing learning on what is already known and on the immediate social and educational environment; integrating the development of new knowledge and skills; and, by making the learner an active agent in his/her learning, fostering the development of the learner's full potential.

It was decided to revise both European Language Portfolios to bring them into line with the revised benchmarks. The revision process began at the end of 2003 and the new draft versions were presented to teachers during the spring 2004 round of in-service seminars. Teachers greeted the new versions of the ELPs with enthusiasm and were immediately keen to use them with their pupils. The new ELP versions were then submitted to the Council of Europe for validation, which was granted in May 2004. This allowed for the production and distribution of the revised ELPs at the beginning of the school year 2004-05.

The European Language Portfolio has become a significant element in language support delivery in primary schools throughout Ireland. Many positive comments have been made by teachers about its use and implementation. An interesting feature of ELP use in schools is the support it provides to teachers who are new to the language support role in illustrating what pupils are capable of doing and guiding the direction of language support so that it is entirely relevant to each individual pupil.

### 6.6.3 Other tools and materials

In addition to the Language Proficiency Benchmarks and the European Language Portfolio, IILT has developed and disseminated tools for monitoring pupils' progress; for communicating children's progress to parents; for eliciting feedback on a child's performance in the mainstream classroom; informational handbook for schools. Classroom materials based on the curriculum have been developed for addressing literacy problems in older children, using school text books in language support, working with specific skills of language (speaking and writing), and working with very young learners.

### 6.7 Language proficiency tests

The development of language proficiency tests began in 2003. This is a critical phase in the overall development of the support programme for both primary and post-primary schools. The tests, which are based on the Language Proficiency Benchmarks and, therefore, reflect the demands of primary and post-primary education, are intended to provide a means of



## Working Method

### 4.1 Principals

A consultative group of eight school Principals, with particular experience in addressing this issue, were invited to meet in Integrate Ireland Language and Training on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2004. All Principals represented primary schools where the arrival of children whose first language is not English; has had an impact on the school as a whole; raises a number of questions about policy and sustainability; raises questions about the effective inclusion of such pupils into the school and their full engagement with the curriculum.

### 4.2 Teachers

Following the meeting of principals, a group of teachers was convened who are working with non-English speaking children in the schools represented by the Principals.

The teachers meetings provided a forum for discussion of the challenge under the following headings: *The community of the school and home/school relationships, the mainstream classroom, and language support*. These themes raised a number of questions but also many interesting suggestions, particularly examples of existing practice that should be shared and disseminated.

It is intended, therefore, that a second and subsequent outcome of this initial project, should appropriate funding be available, would be a document which demonstrates how learning may be made more accessible to children from migrant families and contains some examples of good practice at the level of the community of the school. Such a 'tool-kit' would have clear relevance both in pre-service teacher training and in-service professional development.



## The current situation in Northern Ireland

### 5.1 The newcomer population

In Northern Ireland the trend towards inward movements of population is of very recent date. The census conducted in 2001 predates the arrival of significant numbers of migrants to Northern Ireland and, as a consequence, can provide little statistical detail. The ethnic minority community, in general, is composed of migrant workers and existing minority ethnic communities including Chinese, Pakistani and Arabic speakers.

### 5.2 The impact on the SELB area

There are no precise figures for the number of migrant workers in the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) area, however, most are EU nationals in particular from Portugal, Poland, and Lithuania. Non-EU nationals may be found in the hospital sector with many nurses coming from the Philippines. There is evidence of increasing numbers of immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe since the enlargement of the EU in May 2004. This immigration is a direct consequence of the economic demands of the labour market in Northern Ireland and would appear to be set to continue for the foreseeable future.

Over a period of four school years the number of children starting school in the SELB area with little or no English has increased by 700%. The impact of the arrival of children whose mother tongue is not English has been felt in both urban and rural schools across the area. Because there is no information flow between local employers and the schools in different catchment areas, it has proved impossible to plan for the arrival of new pupils or for the mobility of the migrant population. In February 2005, at least thirty mother tongues were identified in schools in the area (see table below).

Arabic	German	Latvian	Polish	Swedish
Bengali	Hindi	Lithuanian	Portuguese	Tag-a-log
Bulgarian	Hungarian	Malayam	Punjabi	Thai
Cantonese	Indian dialect	Mandarin	Romanian	Ukrainian
Danish	Italian	Marathi	Russian	Urdu



## 6.6 Curriculum and tools for language support

In the summer of 2000, Integrate Ireland Language and Training agreed terms of reference for the provision of an in-service programme for primary and post-primary teachers providing language support, as follows:

- To analyse the linguistic demands of the primary and post-primary curricula and identify the language needed by non-English-speaking non-national pupils in order to participate fully in the educational process.
- To develop materials to support the learning of English as a second language in schools.
- To present materials, methodology and supplementary aids via an ongoing in-service training programme for language support teachers.

### 6.6.1 English language proficiency benchmarks

Work undertaken in fulfilment of the first of these terms of reference yielded two sets of English Language Proficiency Benchmarks which reflected the linguistic demands of the primary and post-primary curricula respectively. The first version of the benchmarks was in use in schools from autumn 2000 until June 2003. However, as more and more support materials for teachers were developed – diagnostic and assessment instruments as well as teaching aids of various kinds – it became increasingly clear that the original benchmarks were limited, especially as regards the relation between the five communicative skills – listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, writing – and the content of the curricula. It was decided, therefore, to overcome those limitations by defining global scales of English language proficiency in greater detail than previously, including a new global scale of underlying linguistic competence, and rewriting the thematic units to take specific account of the five communicative skills. These new versions draw fully on the wealth of experience and insights contributed by teachers at in-service seminars.

The English Language Proficiency Benchmarks (version 2) were originally presented to primary and post-primary teachers at the round of in-service seminars held during the autumn term 2003. Since that time, teachers' feedback and comments have been positive and many language support teachers in the primary sector now rely totally on the Benchmarks to guide the delivery of their courses. The resulting high levels of English language proficiency achieved by pupils confirms the accuracy and effectiveness of the second version of the Benchmarks.

### 6.6.2 European Language Portfolio

In fulfilment of the second term of reference IILT has developed versions of the European Language Portfolio for primary and post-primary learners of English as a second language.



were permanent positions and if they were perceived as key professionals within primary education.

The in-service training provided by Integrate Ireland Language Training is not available to class teachers. Only those employed as language support teachers (full-time or part-time) can avail of it. As indicated above, many of the qualified teachers will leave these posts in order to enter permanent teaching positions in the mainstream.

#### 6.4.5 Pre-service training and guidelines

As yet, there is no training provided in teacher training colleges to prepare newly qualified teachers for the challenges of dealing with classrooms in which some or many of the pupils are not native speakers of English.

#### 6.5 From the child's perspective

As soon as there are three children requiring language support in a school, application may be made for grant aid to provide language support hours. This grant aid, and the sanctioning of a full-time post, may take place at any stage during the school year as the numbers are reached by the arrival of new entrants to the school. Each child for whom language support is sought is entitled to two full school years of support. Support is provided on a withdrawal basis and recommendations about planning this support are provided by IILT on the basis of research carried out in schools.

Where provision is organised systematically in a school and delivery is focused and appropriate, two years of support is effective to support children in primary education to access the learning of the mainstream classroom. There is indeed evidence of a single year only of support being needed by some pupils in order to allow them to engage fully with mainstream education.

International research, however, indicates that there is considerable individual variation in rates of second language acquisition. Such factors as the age of the child on arrival, previous formal education, mother tongue, social interaction with other children, home attitudes, and the effect of the 'silent period', among others, will influence the rate of acquisition of English as a Second Language. Clearly there are cases where children would benefit from regular or sporadic access to a language support teacher over a longer period, possibly for the duration of their primary education.

This fact, combined with the current trends of inward migration, indicates that there is an urgent need for review of the current framework of provision for language support in the primary sector. It is essential, however, that such a review would be informed by the experience and observation of principals of primary schools for whom the education of non-English speaking children at all stages in primary education is an everyday challenge.



#### 5.3 Response to the challenge

There is currently no N.I. Department of Education policy on educational provision for those pupils for whom English is not the first language. The management of SELB has expressed, to the Department of Education, the urgent need for a coordinated strategic approach, with appropriate funding and within the current legislative framework (Northern Ireland Act).

Support in English as an Additional Language (EAL) has been provided in schools in the SELB area on a peripatetic basis\*. This system has also been used in the other four Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland. EAL teachers provide targeted language support to individual pupils or small groups on a withdrawal basis. Provision is generally of the order of one hour twice per week. The peripatetic language support teachers also offer guidance to classroom teachers and school principals.

#### 5.4 From the Principals' perspective

With changing contexts in education in Northern Ireland, there is considerable difficulty in addressing current needs for language support through the peripatetic system. There are several key obstacles to the provision of an effective language support programme. These obstacles include:

- The difficulty of recruiting suitably qualified/trained teachers
- The short contact time with pupils per week and the need to prioritise this time as new pupils arrive in a school, with the result that pupils must be dropped from the list before they have acquired adequate levels of English language proficiency
- The difficulty of managing the geographical spread of schools with newcomer pupils throughout the SELB area
- The absence of time and opportunity for joint planning between language support and classroom teachers
- The perception of peripatetic teachers as lower in professional status than other teachers in the school
- Meeting the cost of travel
- Issues and uncertainties arising between school management and EAL teachers with regard to accountability.

The Advisor in SELB who is responsible for the peripatetic team of EAL teachers has also identified new demands that arise from a changing landscape in primary education. These include:

- The need for the development of specific INSET provision as a matter of priority
- The requirement for interagency planning
- The need for liaison between all educational sectors and public and voluntary bodies
- The desirability of having interpreting and translation services available to SELB and/or individual schools as necessary.

### 5.5 Pre-service training and guidelines

As yet, there is no training provided in teacher training colleges to prepare newly qualified teachers for the challenges of dealing with classrooms in which some or many of the pupils are not native speakers of English.

#### 5.6 Recommendations (Northern Ireland)

##### 1 The peripatetic structure\*;

- Prohibits the exchange and planning necessary for each language support pupil's educational development
- Creates a perception of lower status teaching
- Results in essential knowledge and expertise being removed from the school
- Forces decisions to be made about priority needs with the result that pupils are removed from language support despite the fact that they may still need it (on the arrival of more pupils in the school).

##### 2 Budgetary provision

- It is essential that budgetary provision has adequate flexibility so that the needs of schools, resulting from the arrival of newcomer pupils during the school year, may be addressed appropriately
- There should be access to contingency budgets.

##### 3 Standardised tests

The inflexibility inherent in the system of standardised tests mitigates against pupils who require language support. It should be noted that this problem has also been identified south of the border.

##### 4 Transfer procedures

There is a need for clarification of transfer procedures, including exemption from standardised tests, for pupils moving from primary to post-primary education.

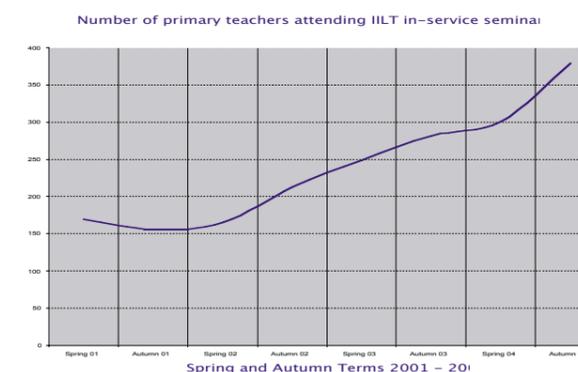
*\*From the first of September 2005, provision for ethnic minority pupils has changed in the Southern Education and Library Board. There is no longer a peripatetic EAL service. A new Ethnic Minorities' Achievement Team has been established. It consists of two advisory officers, managed by the Advisor for Languages. This team works with teachers and school leaders, providing advice and support on meeting the learning needs of ethnic minority children. It organises and delivers school and centre-based in-service support in both primary and post-primary schools.*

the overall effectiveness of language support as it mitigates against professional interaction between mainstream teachers and those providing language support. Inevitably, the pupil's progress, not only in language learning but also in relation to the curriculum in general, will fall victim to this environment.

#### 6.4.4 In-service teacher development for language support teachers

Evidence of the movement of teachers in and out of language support may be seen in the numbers of teachers attending in-service training provided by IILT. This intensive programme of in-service teacher development specifically for language support teachers and entirely related to the primary curriculum, has been provided by Integrate Ireland Language and Training and funded by the DES since June 2000.

Since autumn 2000 ten rounds of in-service seminars have been organized and delivered by IILT at regional locations. The seminars have been held in the autumn and spring terms of each school year. The initial national in-service seminar in June 2000 was attended by 28 teachers. The number of primary teachers attending seminars has increased steadily and significantly since that time, with in excess of 400 participants attending the spring round of six seminars held early in 2005. IILT expects to meet approximately 500 teachers in the round of seven seminars being held in autumn 2005.



The programme has resulted in many primary teachers throughout the country developing a high level of skill in the delivery of appropriate language support, then moving back to mainstream teaching because of the temporary nature of language support posts. The loss to language support is, obviously, a gain to the mainstream classroom but, nonetheless, has resulted in an on-going need for teacher development which is growing year by year with increasing numbers of children enrolling in schools. Rather than solving the problem, therefore, the provision of in-service training has become a growing and on-going necessity, the immediate effectiveness of which evaporates as the teacher leaves language support.

Anecdotal evidence would suggest that many qualified and experienced primary teachers would welcome the opportunity to continue to work as language support teachers if these

## 6.4 From the principal's perspective

### 6.4.1 Management

The effectiveness of the provision of a full-time post presents management difficulties because the temporary nature of this post requires that it should be renewed on a year-to-year basis. The principal may be informed by the end of June or beginning of July that a post has been sanctioned for the following school year. This allows for existing language support teacher(s) to have confirmation of employment or for the early recruitment of a teacher. However, where a third, fourth or fifth post is requested on the basis of large numbers of pupils requiring language support, this post is not confirmed until the list of children enrolled in the school is resubmitted to the DES in September. The difficulties of dealing with the situation in the school and recruiting an additional teacher after the school year has begun, should not be underestimated.

A further concern for principals is the evidence that has been growing, in recent years, of English speaking (Irish) children entering school with lower levels of language skills than in the past. Combining this situation with increasing number of non-native English speaking pupils there is a real possibility that language standards will decrease, in general, if appropriate measures are not put in place. Critical among any measures, is ensuring that children from non-English-speaking backgrounds receive the level of language support necessary to engage fully with mainstream curriculum learning and with the activities of the community of the school as a whole. It is important to note that the situation currently exists where in excess of 50% of the pupils in a classroom are not native speakers of English.

### 6.4.2 Temporary posts

The temporary nature of language support posts contributes to a sense of impermanence in the area of language support. From a planning perspective, it is virtually impossible, in many cases, to plan the language support programme so that it provides an effective element in the support structure of the school. With greater permanence of posts, it would be possible to develop language support in the school to meet more accurately and fully the needs of all concerned – the principal's management objectives, the needs of mainstream teachers, pupils' learning and socialization needs and parents' involvement in the education of their children.

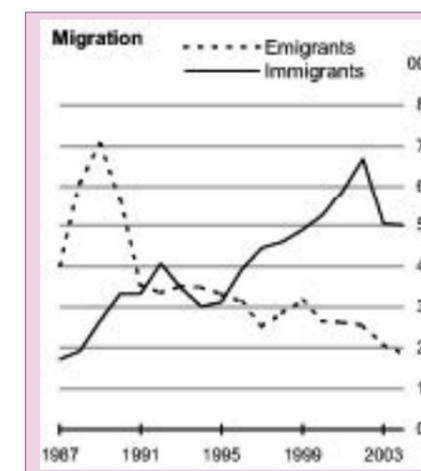
### 6.4.3 The professionalization of the domain

In part as a consequence of 'last minute' confirmation of posts and recruitment, there is frequently a lack of experienced primary teachers to take up language support posts. Furthermore, the post of language support teacher tends to be held in low regard and perceived as an *ad hoc* situation within the school. This perception is highly detrimental to

## The current situation in the Republic of Ireland

### 6.1 The 'newcomer' population

In addition to the Vietnamese and Bosnian refugees who came to Ireland between 1979 and 1996 through UNHCR and at the invitation of the Irish Government, the Republic of Ireland became a destination of choice for economic migrants and asylum seekers in the latter half of the 1990s. The 'sudden' arrival of migrants coincided with growth in economic prosperity.



Population and migration estimates April 2004

The estimated number of immigrants in the year to April 2004 was 50,100.

Source: Central Statistics Office, Dublin

Throughout the late 1990s the dominant groups of 'newcomers' came from sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe. The status of families as asylum seekers, migrant workers or refugees did not affect the rights of children to access formal education, often very quickly after arrival in Ireland. The Government policy to disperse asylum seekers to different parts of the country meant that the impact of the new arrivals was felt in both rural and urban schools with a wide range of available teaching capacity, facilities, and resources. Despite initial difficulties and concerns about dealing with pupils from such varied cultural, religious and ethnic groups, primary principals and teachers rose to meet the challenge. Within a matter of a couple of school years, a high level of familiarity with the educational and other needs of the newcomer pupils and their families had developed.

Apart from the asylum seeker population, another category of newcomer pupils was created by the location of clusters of migrant workers in particular areas of employment. For example, some schools located in areas where the meat packing industry dominated, enrolled numbers of Portuguese-speaking children from Brazil, while those school located near large hospitals often enrolled children from Pakistan or the Philippines whose parents were employed in the health sector.

A partial survey of primary schools carried out in December 2004 in the western suburbs of Dublin indicated that non-English speaking populations of a number of schools exceeded



25% and, in one case, reached almost 50%. Where newcomer pupil populations were large, typically in excess of twenty nationalities was represented in a school.

Albania	Italy	Nigeria	Sierra Leone	Vietnam
Angola	Japan	Norway	Spain	Zambia
Congo	Kosovo	Pakistan	South Africa	Zimbabwe
Croatia	Latvia	Philippines	Sudan	
Germany	Lithuania	Poland	Syria	
Ghana	Malaysia	Romania	Ukraine	
India	Moldova	Russia	USA	

Other countries represented in the primary educational system throughout Ireland include Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bosnia, Burundi, Cameroon, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Georgia, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Macedonia, Pakistan, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Syria, Tajikistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zaire. This list is by no means exhaustive.

It is in the context of migrant working families, that the recent growth in the school-going population may be seen. Anecdotal evidence gained from discussion with teachers around Ireland would suggest that current increases in pupils requiring language support are more representative of the new EU countries than of the previous asylum seeker population. While it may be the case that many EU immigrants are young and single, there would appear to be growing evidence of children from Polish, Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian family backgrounds. The table below gives some indication of trends in inward migration in the period from EU enlargement in May 2004 to end February 2005. The totals indicate the number of people from the 10 accession states who have been allocated PPS numbers.

Country	Total
Poland	32,648
Lithuania	14,700
Latvia	7,519
Slovakia	5,830
Czech Republic	3,755
Hungary	2,213
Estonia	1,952
Malta	148
Slovenia	75
Cyprus	28

Source: Dept. of Social and Family Affairs



## 6.2 Population projections

Population projections by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) forecast that immigration into Ireland will remain at significant levels until 2021. Two assumptions are proposed by the CSO which would entail inward migration at either 20,000 or 30,000 per annum for the next ten years, followed by a drop in levels after that time. Employers' organisations indicate the need for annual immigration of between 30,000 and 40,000 migrant workers in order to sustain the economy at existing levels. Inevitably, the levels of immigration suggested by these figures will continue to impact on the educational system as a whole and on the primary sector in particular.

## 6.3 The response of the Department of Education and Science (DES)

In the Republic of Ireland, the DES had, in the early 1990s, a system of peripatetic teachers who were responsible for addressing the language learning needs of Vietnamese and Bosnian refugee children. Because the settlement of refugee families was, at that time, the responsibility of the Refugee Agency, the families were located in a relatively small number of areas and the children were effectively 'clustered' in a small number of schools. The arrival of growing numbers of Bosnian families during the mid 1990s changed this situation and the addition of large numbers of asylum seeker families towards the end of the 1990s presented a challenge which demanded immediate action. In the late 1990s the DES set up a structure of 'language support teachers' which continues to the present day.

A full-time temporary post of *language support teacher* is sanctioned for a school when the number of non-English speaking non-national pupils requiring additional help with the English language reaches 14. If there are between 3 and 13 non-English speaking pupils in the school, the support is based on two levels of grant assistance which allow for the provision of teaching hours and the acquisition of resources.

The widespread location of migrant families throughout Ireland has resulted in the enrolment of children in all types and sizes of primary schools with varying levels of support, resources and accommodation available.

It is worth noting that the term *non-national pupil* is no longer accurate as there are now children entering primary school who were born in Ireland but whose mother tongue is not English or Irish.

The DES charged Integrate Ireland Language and Training (then the Refugee Language Support Unit) in 2000 with the responsibility of providing support to the teachers appointed to language support posts (see 6.4.4).