



# Tuistí an Tuaiscirt campaign: #busanois!

## Report

Between the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> June 2014, parents from north Belfast with children being educated in Irish medium schools carried out research to assess the impact of the existing transport provisions for post-primary Irish medium education sector both on parents and the development of the sector itself.

In total, 37 parents of students being educated in post-primary and 67 parents of pupils being educated at nursery and primary level were surveyed. The results and findings found that parents were paying a significant amount of household income on ensuring their children had access to post-primary education.

**If your child does not have a bus pass, how much money do you spend every week on transport to Coláiste Feirste?**



were paying a significant amount of household income on ensuring their children had access to post-primary education.

If, as is likely, these experiences are representative of the other families who make up the the north Belfast student enrolment for Coláiste Feirste, the combined annual bill for these families would be approximately **£31,418** for the 2014/2015 year.

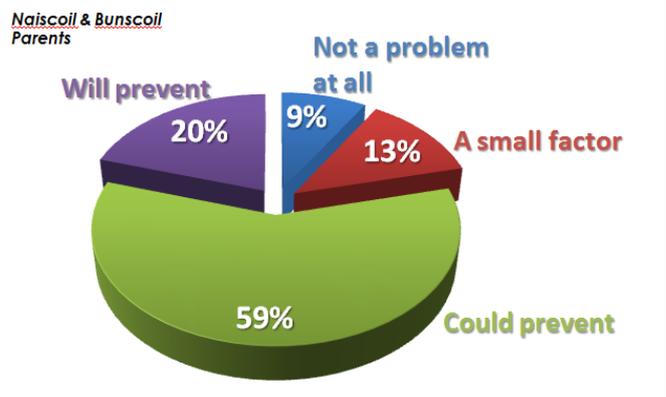
This is a significant financial burden for families living in some of the most deprived areas of the north.

Of even more importance and relevance to the statutory obligation to “encourage and facilitate” the development of Irish medium education, arising from the Good Friday Agreement and contained in the Education (1998) Order, was the finding that the current inadequate transport provision was acting as an obstacle towards the development of the sector.

**79%** of surveyed parents of children in North Belfast *Naiscoil & Bunscoil* say that current transport provisions are a significant obstacle to sending their children to Irish medium secondary school

As such, Tuistí an Tuaiscirt’s campaign for transport provision for north Belfast to Coláiste Feirste is not simply about a bus.

**If you want to send your child to Coláiste Feirste is the issue of transport (travel length and cost):**



It is fundamentally about taking positive steps to encourage and facilitate the development of Irish medium post-primary education by making it a viable option for parents.

## Growing demand which needs to be encouraged and facilitated

The tables below provide evidence of both the growing demand for access to Irish medium secondary education in north Belfast and the potential for its further development.

### North Belfast Enrolment in Coláiste Feirste:

	2010-11	2014-15	% increase
BT14	41	62	51
BT15	17	41	70
BT36	7	19	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>88</b>

### Potential for development of post-primary in North Belfast:

	p.5	p.6	p.7	Total Enrolment
Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin	19	20	6	108
Bunscoil Mhic Reachtain	10	8	11	61
Gaelscoil Éanna	17	6	15	139
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>308</b>

Parental and student choice for Irish medium post-primary education in Belfast is not comparable to parental choice in other sectors, as there is only one post-primary Irish medium school.

Clearly, the long term solution is the development and enhancement of the Irish medium post-primary sector in other areas across Belfast and indeed the north. However, encouraging and facilitating the growth of the sector cannot await these longer term decisions. There is an existing demand from north Belfast which should be met and a short to medium-term solution is removing access barriers where possible.

## Proposals

We firmly believe that this can be achieved by providing effective transport. This should take two forms:

- **Provision of an additional bus by the Department.** The service provided by Translink from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 is a welcome development, however there are key gaps in the route – notably Lower Antrim Road and Ligoniel. It is proposed that another service be provided in this school term.
- **Provision of bus passes to students.** In acknowledgment of the Minister’s duty to encourage and facilitate the development of the sector, and until enhanced post-primary provision is available, it is proposed that the Minister consider provision of bus passes for students of Coláiste Feirste. The vast majority of parents whose children attend Irish medium education come from some of the most economically deprived areas of Belfast. Provision of bus passes would remove any financial barriers facing families (as identified in our report) choosing whether or not to keep their children in Irish medium education at post-primary level.