

Gaelic Education: Building on the successes, addressing the barriers

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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Foreword | 1 |
| 1 Introduction | 2 |
| 2 Gaelic Medium Education in the early years and primary | 3 |
| 2.1 The current situation | 3 |
| 2.2 The way ahead | 6 |
| 3 Gaelic Medium Education in secondary schools | 7 |
| 3.1 The current situation | 7 |
| 3.2 The way ahead | 8 |
| 4 Gaelic Learners in primary and secondary schools | 10 |
| 4.1 The current situation | 10 |
| 4.2 The way ahead | 11 |
| 5 Gaelic Education: Leaders and partners | 12 |
| 5.1 The current situation | 12 |
| 5.2 The way ahead | 15 |
| 6 Conclusion | 17 |
| Appendix 1: Relevant reading | 19 |
| Appendix 2: Glossary | 21 |

Foreword

The inspectorate has a strong and well-established commitment to promoting Gaelic language, culture and education, most recently expressed in the publication of our Gaelic Language Plan. This report, which is designed to help those concerned with improving Gaelic education for our learners, is part of that commitment.

This report represents our first overview of progress and issues nationally, since our 2005 publication *Improving Achievement in Gaelic*. It is based on evidence from inspections in Gaelic education that have taken place over the period 2006 to 2011 and from interviews with key players involved in the development of Gaelic education. In this report, we have set out some key factors that we believe have contributed to the most successful, high quality, Gaelic education we have encountered. We have also identified factors that appear to constrain such provision and we make recommendations that are designed to address these constraints.

Resolving these issues, and realising the ambitions of the National Plan for Gaelic, will require sustained commitment and strong partnership working across schools, local authorities and national bodies. I am pleased to confirm, through the publication of this report, HMIE's commitment, and that of the new agency, Education Scotland, to playing our part in that partnership to maximum effect.

Dr Bill Maxwell

1. Introduction

1.1 In recent times, there has been significant interest in reviving the Gaelic language. The National Plan for Gaelic¹ aims to secure a sustainable future for the language. Gaelic Education plays a major role. The term 'Gaelic Education' covers a spectrum of opportunity ranging from raising an awareness of Gaelic as a Scottish language to the achievement of fluency through immersion. Along this spectrum sits the opportunity to learn Gaelic as a subject and a wide range of other opportunities such as those offered by Sradagan² to use and develop the language. This report refers to Gaelic Education throughout but focuses specifically on Gaelic Learners and Gaelic Medium. It summarises for further action the findings of a task undertaken by HMIE in 2010/11, drawing on evidence from inspections in the period from 2006-2011 and from interviews with key players in the development of Gaelic Education³.

1.2 HMIE have an established history of supporting Gaelic Education. This has been most recently re-stated in our Gaelic Language Plan⁴. HMIE recognise the growth and success of Gaelic within the distinctive and diverse cultures of Scotland. Against this context, and in consultation with partners, HMIE undertook this task with the aim of:

- **identifying the successes and constraints in the provision of quality Gaelic Education;**
- **recommending how constraints to the development of Gaelic Education can be overcome so that momentum is gathered to meet the targets of the National Plan for Gaelic; and**
- **working with Gaelic establishments, partners and agencies to achieve improvements in Gaelic Education.**

1.3 The report is based within a framework of strong support for Gaelic from legislation and promotional activities throughout Scotland. Within each chapter of the report, recommendations for further development are made in the form of action points to map the way ahead. These give a direction to all those involved in Gaelic Education to secure continued success for Gaelic. HMIE will use the information in this report to inform and make evaluations in inspections, to engage in professional dialogue with staff and as an agenda for discussion with partners.

1.4 This report refers throughout to a wide range of relevant documents from a range of partners. These are listed in Appendix 1.

¹ <http://www.bord-nagaidhlig.org.uk/NationalPlan/National%20Plan%20for%20Gaelic.pdf>

² Sradagan - Youth clubs for Gaelic speaking children aged 5-12.
<http://www.sradagan.org/>

³ See chapter 6.

⁴ <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/glpce.pdf>

2. Gaelic Medium Education in the Early Years and Primary

2.1 The current situation

2.1.1 In 2010-11, there are approximately 2000 children learning Gaelic in birth to five provision in different areas of Scotland. Currently, there are 60 primary schools in 14 education authorities providing Gaelic Medium Education. Typically, this means that one or more Gaelic medium classes will sit alongside English medium classes in the same school. In 2010-11, there were 2312 children being educated in Gaelic medium primary provision. In the past five years, two schools have been established as 'standalone' schools providing education through the medium of Gaelic. A further two schools have been classified as Gaelic schools with English medium classes. In these, most children learn through the medium of Gaelic. In addition, discussions are ongoing about the possibility of establishing a further six Gaelic schools. These numbers reflect a continuing demand from parents for Gaelic Medium Education for their children.

2.1.2 Typically, most children now entering Gaelic medium provision do not have Gaelic as their first language. A large percentage come from homes where no Gaelic is spoken. Education through the medium of Gaelic has been a growth area in pre-school and primary since its inception some 25 years ago. There is now a body of experience and expertise for policy makers and practitioners to draw upon. In recent years, examples of strong practice have been identified. The National Plan for Gaelic contains ambitious targets for the expansion of Gaelic medium in the primary, aiming for 4000 enrolments in P1 by 2021. *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, in its action plan, *Ginealach Ùr na Gàidhlig*⁵, identifies as one of its main priorities an increase in the number of people able to speak Gaelic. In recognition of this, the Scottish Government has produced a comprehensive report that maps the way ahead in pre-school provision⁶.

2.1.3 Gaelic Medium Education is based on the principle of language immersion. The early stages of learning through the medium of Gaelic and where no other language is used, is referred to as **total immersion**. The next phase – where the development of the other language (English) is introduced - is referred to as **immersion but with all of the curriculum continuing to be delivered through the medium of Gaelic**. Learning in the immersion classroom is enhanced by opportunities to use Gaelic in contexts outwith the classroom. These include those described in the four contexts of Curriculum for Excellence.

2.1.4 In the best examples, across pre-school and primary, staff show a very strong commitment to ensuring that the curriculum is delivered totally through the medium of Gaelic. They transform all learning into opportunities for children to learn Gaelic with an initial emphasis on listening and talking. They use creative ways to enable children to learn the language with ease and in situations which they enjoy. This includes a planned approach to language structures. Staff work with others to support children and parents to develop and use the language at home and in the community. Examples where schools have developed Gaelic language opportunities beyond the classroom are included on page 10.

⁵ http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk/Downloads/Ginealach_Ur_na_Gaidhlig_B.pdf

⁶ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/07/09110935/0>

2.1.5 In the best immersion practice, the purpose is to ensure that children will have achieved **equal fluency and literacy** in both Gaelic and English. In these cases, schools have identified **two outcomes** which they use **as a focus for improvement**. These are that children:

- feel equally confident in the use of Gaelic and English; and
- are able to use both Gaelic and English in a full range of situations within and outwith school.

2.1.6 The positive benefits of immersion approaches resulting in **bilingualism** are highlighted in a report produced by Edinburgh University.⁷ The research for this found that children in Gaelic Medium Education are outperforming children in English medium in English language, as well as having fluency in another language. Children in Gaelic medium also find learning another (third) language easier than children in English medium.

2.1.7 In the most effective examples, children experience high quality **total immersion** in Gaelic medium until late in P3 or P4. This is so that children have a secure foundation in the language and a level of fluency that will enable them to build on the progress made in Gaelic while, at the same time, acquire skills in reading and writing English. In deciding when to introduce reading and writing in English, the teacher will take account of each child's learning needs. For example, a child may be becoming more fluent in Gaelic as a result of having Gaelic in the home and therefore need a quicker pace of learning. In cases where classes are multi composite, the total immersion experience may be extended. This enables younger children more time to develop their early fluency in Gaelic language.

2.1.8 A variety of interpretations of immersion and total immersion have emerged across the country. This is resulting in too great a variation in practice and in children's learning experiences. For example, schools move from the total immersion phase at different stages. Where this happens too soon, children are not sufficiently fluent with the phonics and structures of Gaelic before they begin to develop their skills in English language. This can impact adversely on children's progress in Gaelic.

2.1.9 Learning beyond the total immersion phase is referred to as the **immersion phase**. In best practice, teachers will lead learning in all curriculum areas, including the newly introduced English, through the medium of Gaelic. They will enable children to develop vocabulary connected to the different areas of the curriculum, language skills, grammar and an appreciation of Gaelic language. They will have clear plans and strategies in place to support them in doing this. In best practice, non-contact time for teachers of Gaelic medium provision is covered by Gaelic-speaking staff. School leaders will have a clear rationale on how they are ensuring that the balance is kept in favour of Gaelic. When Gaelic Medium Education is being delivered successfully, the immersion phase is planned to operate throughout primary and into secondary. In secondary, Gaelic immersion is taken forward within a broad general curriculum up to the end of S3 as a minimum entitlement.⁸

⁷**Gaelic-medium Education in Scotland: choice and attainment at the primary and early secondary school stages.** Fiona O'Hanlon, Wilson McLeod and Lindsay Paterson. September 2010

⁸ **Building the Curriculum 3** A framework for learning and teaching
<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/buildingyourcurriculum/policycontext/btc/btc3.asp>

2.1.10 In practice which is less than satisfactory, schools do not have a strong enough focus on Gaelic immersion and/or the initial total immersion phase. Some schools and education authorities refer to the phase after total immersion as a bilingual stage and allow English to be too dominant in the learning process. This results in children not being as fluent as they can be. In weaker practice, some schools think that only certain subjects can be delivered through the medium of Gaelic. One of the reasons given for this is that young people do not have the Gaelic vocabulary to deal with specialist terms in the range of subjects available. Some schools dilute the Gaelic immersion input when they use visiting specialists who are not able to speak Gaelic to deliver some aspects of the curriculum. In these cases, school leaders have not always explored an alternative to keeping children's learning experiences rich in Gaelic language.

2.1.11 Approaches to learning and teaching of **Gaelic language skills** have developed significantly over time. In the best examples, schools have agreed and well thought out approaches for developing children's knowledge and use of language. Teachers are, for example, skilled in modelling accurate use of Gaelic for the children without diminishing their confidence in using the language. They intervene sensitively and effectively to correct and model the correct use of language. The learner, in turn, sees the intervention and their repetition of the correct language as a natural part of the learning process. Teachers spontaneously create other situations for the young people to hear and use accurate language. In doing this, they draw on good approaches for teaching and assessing. Following a period of time, teachers check to see that young people have mastered the aspect of language being developed and return to it as necessary. Teachers then decide whether more teaching is required on that development area. Such practice requires teachers to be flexible and move away from over-rigid planning for courses. This approach is also used when children need new vocabulary for specialised situations. Inspection reports highlight the need to improve young people's writing skills. This can be partially linked to inconsistencies in teachers' approaches to the correction of errors in what children write and say.

2.1.12 Commendable work has been done to develop **resources** through the medium of Gaelic by, for example *Stòrlann* and Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS). There is, however, a shortage of magazines, novels and information and communications technology (ICT) resources available through the medium of Gaelic⁹. The most effective schools use English resources only when a Gaelic equivalent is not available. Sometimes children will use English resources when following the curriculum design principles of personalisation and choice. Gaelic is used to good effect with English texts¹⁰ by ensuring that all related talking and writing is done in Gaelic. This includes, for example, the use of the internet for research. This may be considered to be the use of a high order skill whereby children are simultaneously translating from English to Gaelic to talk and write. However, other schools allow the use of English resources to lead to activities being delivered through the medium of English which takes away from the richness of immersion.

⁹ Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Gaelic Resources, Terminology and Translation Report July 2010

¹⁰ "A text is the medium through which ideas, experiences, opinions and information can be communicated." Literacy and Gàidhlig: principles and practices. Curriculum for Excellence.

2.2 The way ahead

2.2.1 A lack of a shared understanding remains about terminology and this is linked to inconsistencies in practice. In particular, the use of the terms **total immersion** and **immersion** have come to mean different things across schools and authorities. It would be useful to have a clear and shared understanding of what **total immersion** and **immersion** means for young people based on the most effective practice.

2.2.2 The same is the case for, the term **bilingualism**. While there is a developing understanding of what this can mean for young people, the benefits and expected outcomes are not sufficiently to the foreground in debates about the development of Gaelic Medium Education. Two outcomes are identified in this report as being helpful in assisting schools assess and evaluate how effectively they are enabling young people to be bilingual citizens. These are that children:

- feel equally confident in the use of both Gaelic and English; and
- are able to use Gaelic and English in a full range of contexts within and outwith school.

2.2.3 It would be helpful for all engaged in Gaelic Education to consider these two outcomes when planning for improvement in Gaelic Medium Education. When explaining the benefits of Gaelic Medium Education to others, all those involved in doing so should be basing this on a shared understanding of bilingualism and immersion.

2.2.4 There is no written **national guidance** for Gaelic Medium Education which defines best practice in delivering Gaelic medium provision. Such guidance would be useful for practitioners, parents, policy makers and providers. It should take full account of Curriculum for Excellence. National guidance would help to define the unique and specific identity of Gaelic Medium Education in Scotland. It could underpin the potential Scotland has to become an international model of best practice in the promotion of minority language communities across Europe. The following points could usefully be considered for inclusion in this guidance:

- the central role of immersion approaches in Gaelic Medium Education;
- the minimum expectations for immersion and total immersion;
- promotion of immersion as a continuum that spans birth to 18;
- advice on how to maintain the focus on Gaelic immersion while dealing with issues such as the contribution to learning from supply or visiting specialists who do not speak Gaelic;
- advice on how to maintain the focus on Gaelic immersion while dealing with multi composite classes; and
- advice on the use of non-Gaelic resources when there is no other alternative.

2.2.5 In relation to the development of **Gaelic language skills**, it would be important to continue the practice of schools having a policy on how to correct children's language errors so that these errors are not allowed to become the norm. Left uncorrected, language errors become more challenging for children to address.

2.2.6 Recognising that all subjects can be taught through the medium of Gaelic, there is potential for primary and secondary teachers to be working more closely to develop young people's specialist vocabulary in all areas of the curriculum.

2.2.7 *Stòrlann*, LTS, the BBC and other groups that develop **resources** are already working together and with teachers to decide on priorities for producing resources. They aim to ensure that texts use a common terminology and that they are accessible for young people's stage in fluency. Their work is greatly informed by the focus that there is on creating consistency in terminology led by organisations involved in the *Seotal*¹¹ project. A number of public bodies, such as Scottish Natural Heritage, independently produce Gaelic resources for schools. The potential for more groups and bodies to produce resources should be explored. In doing this, main partners should be assisting in ensuring that these resources are fit for purpose.

3. Gaelic Medium Education in secondary schools

3.1 The current situation

3.1.1 Gaelic Medium Education in secondary schools is still at a very early stage of development. Of the 46 schools currently offering Gaelic in some form, only 14 are providing subjects other than Gaelic, through the medium of Gaelic. These subjects are available in S1 and S2, but only a few schools provide continuity through to S4. Subjects available in S1 and S2 include geography, home economics, history, mathematics, modern studies, personal social education, religious and moral education, and science. In 2010-11, 84 young people were presented for Standard Grade examinations in three subjects through the medium of Gaelic. Presentations were higher than in the previous year (62). The subjects available to S4 are geography, history, mathematics and modern studies. Higher mathematics was available for the first time in the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) diet of examinations in 2011. Almost all of the 46 secondary schools provide courses to develop young people's Gaelic language skills – *Gàidhlig*. These courses are available up to Advanced Higher. In 2010-11, 302 young people undertook National Qualifications for *Gàidhlig*.

3.1.2 There is some limited use of **ICT** to enable Gaelic medium learning to take place. Many schools use a Gaelic medium ICT geography course in S1 and S2, often with the assistance of a Gaelic-speaking teacher or support assistant, to make the course more interactive. This course is currently being updated to take account of Curriculum for Excellence.

3.1.3 The provision for Gaelic Medium Education at secondary is less developed than that in primary. It does not provide for effective **progression** for young people learning through the medium of Gaelic. As a result, there are instances of young people not continuing with Gaelic Medium Education beyond primary in some areas of Scotland. Those interviewed as part of this task also identified that some parents can be discouraged from continuing with Gaelic Medium Education if progression is not available in the local associated secondary. Schools and education authorities do not always take sufficient account of young people's needs in relation to progression.

3.1.4 Schools do not always include a focus on improving their provision for Gaelic as part of their **planning for improvement**. There is, as yet, limited evidence from inspections that the potential presented by Curriculum for Excellence in the development of Gaelic Medium Education is being realised. In the HMIE report,

¹¹ <http://www.anseotal.org.uk/>

*Improving Achievement in Gaelic*¹² it was noted in the foreword that there was “limited progress being made with teaching through the medium of Gaelic in secondary schools”. Five years on, this remains the case.

3.2 The way ahead

3.2.1 Curriculum for Excellence presents exciting opportunities for the development of Gaelic Medium Education. Secondary schools could have a stronger focus on how they will work towards achieving young people’s entitlement to a **Gaelic medium curriculum** and include this in implementation plans. Young people should be able to use Gaelic in their study of discrete subjects and in interdisciplinary learning, in opportunities for personal achievement and to participate in, and contribute to, the life and ethos of the school.¹³ These plans should be developed in full consultation with staff, parents and young people and other providers such as colleges and community learning and development. Colleges and community learning and development should be working more closely with schools to assist them in providing a curriculum through the medium of Gaelic. Regular reviews of progress and impact should also be part of the arrangements.

3.2.2 In the immediate term, schools could usefully match the availability of teachers who are fluent in Gaelic to the delivery of discrete subjects and interdisciplinary learning through the medium of Gaelic. They could ascertain how links with the community, businesses and Gaelic organisations can assist their staff take forward the other contexts of the curriculum. To allow **progression in immersion**, schools should aim to deliver a sufficient proportion of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic to enable young people to continue to develop their fluency in Gaelic through immersion. Schools should include subjects and opportunities through the medium of Gaelic that take account of local circumstances, and others which promote young people’s personal development.

3.2.3 In December 2009, *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* consulted nationally on aspects of secondary provision¹⁴. Based on current practice, they identified five subjects for further development. The subjects are geography, history, mathematics, modern studies and science. Given the work now going on in secondary schools with the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, it would be useful if these findings could be reviewed against the guidance set out in *Building the Curriculum 3*¹⁵. It would also be useful to provide examples of secondary schools who are successful in delivering the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic.

3.2.4 The potential of learning through **ICT** was reviewed by the Gaelic Secondary ICT Implementation Group in 2005. The group recognised the importance of ICT as a way forward for Gaelic Medium Education in secondary. The group identified a number of

¹² Improving Achievement in Gaelic

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/iage.html>

¹³ Building the Curriculum 3 A framework for learning and teaching

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/buildingyourcurriculum/policycontext/btc/btc3.asp>

¹⁴ Bòrd na Gàidhlig Gaelic Medium Secondary: Curriculum Proposals December 2009

¹⁵ Building the Curriculum 3 A framework for learning and teaching

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/buildingyourcurriculum/policycontext/btc/btc3.asp>

areas for development¹⁶. It would be helpful to now review the progress being made in the areas identified in the group's report in relation to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

3.2.5 For ICT delivery in Gaelic Medium Education to be more successful, teachers of Gaelic could usefully extend their role as language teachers to include being facilitators of other subjects. This would enable teachers of Gaelic to have an overview of how language is developed across the curriculum. This would help coordinate the development of Gaelic language across the curriculum. It would also help teachers with tracking the progress of learners. Young people would be helped in maintaining momentum for learning using ICT and also have the specialist vocabulary to be confident learners in other subject areas. In the short-term, ICT may be one of the best ways to overcome timetabling and staffing constraints in many schools.

3.2.6 It is essential to have effective **transition** arrangements in place for young people learning through the medium of Gaelic as they move from primary to secondary schools. If a subject has been taught in primary and not in secondary, or vice versa, young people require to be familiar with the specialist terminology and vocabulary to increase their confidence in learning. It is essential for primary and secondary staff to have regular discussion. This should include tracking how well young people are progressing. Young people themselves should have a clear understanding of their strengths and how to improve their fluency in Gaelic.

3.2.7 Staff need to be proactive in encouraging young people to continue with their study of Gaelic. Young people have to be kept aware of the next steps available to help them continue with Gaelic, whether in school or in further and higher education. It should be assumed that young people who choose to discontinue learning Gaelic at transition points will return to learning it at another time. In cases where young people discontinue their learning of Gaelic, staff should be clear that this has been an informed choice and not as a result of gaps in provision.

3.2.8 It would be helpful if education authorities checked for patterns of continuation from Gaelic medium primaries, or otherwise and consulted parents on emerging trends.

3.2.9 School staff, working with partners from colleges, community learning and development, and careers have important roles to play in promoting Gaelic-related **work experience placements** and **career opportunities** with young people. All those with responsibilities in this area should be continually focusing and promoting the career opportunities available in Gaelic. This should include promoting Gaelic teaching as an integral part of the continuing development of 16+ Learning Choices.

¹⁶ Gaelic ICT Implementation Group Report. Scottish Government Gaelic and Scots Unit.
<http://ictgaelic.blogspot.com/>

Examples where schools have developed Gaelic language opportunities beyond the classroom

- To ensure that young people have a “Gaelic start” to their day, all young people learning through the medium of Gaelic are grouped together for the purposes of registration. Gaelic-speaking teachers lead these registration classes to ensure that Gaelic is the language spoken. Mixed-stage registration is cited as promoting opportunities for young people to take responsibilities and develop their confidence. It also assists registration teachers’ planning when registration time is used as part of young people’s entitlement to support.
- In some schools with Gaelic medium provision, staff make lunchtime in the school’s dining room an occasion for Gaelic to be used socially. If these schools also have English Medium provision, arrangements like this work more effectively if **all** children have opportunities to learn Gaelic. This helps develop an understanding of the relevance of creating opportunities to use Gaelic.
- Young people learning through the medium of Gaelic are all in the same “house group” which is led by a Gaelic-speaking support teacher. Young people’s entitlement to support is delivered through the medium of Gaelic.
- Pupil councils and other committees are conducted through the medium of Gaelic. Young people having clear responsibilities and remits linked to planning for improvement. These committees sometimes run alongside and complement similar arrangements through the medium of English.
- Young people studying through the medium of Gaelic have an option of attending after-school and lunchtime clubs led by speakers of Gaelic from the community. For example, baking, drama, instrumental tuition and shinty. All leaders of the clubs speak Gaelic to help enrich young people’s fluency. When literacy is coordinated well in schools, clubs can be another way of enhancing young people’s fluency.
- Schools hold assemblies through the medium of Gaelic, including religious observance assemblies.

↳ **See also Journey to Excellence** <http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/>

4 Gaelic Learners in Primary and Secondary Schools

4.1 The current situation

4.1.1 Courses are available for young people in English medium to learn Gaelic as a second language. In primary, these courses are referred to as Gaelic Language in the Primary School (GLPS) and in secondary as Gaelic (Learners). Gaelic (Learners) is available up to Advanced Higher level. In 2009/10, approximately 5500 children in primary schools were learning Gaelic as part of the GLPS programme. In secondary schools, 2691 young people learn Gaelic in 2010-11.¹⁷. These young people are largely

very interested and motivated by their learning experiences. There is now a body of best practice in teaching and learning across both primary and secondary to build upon.

4.1.2 There is, however a lack of **consistency** as to when Gaelic Learners Education (GLE) is available to young people and whether progression is provided. Delivery can be driven by whether suitably qualified staff are available and sometimes by the interests of the primary or secondary headteacher. Too often, there is a lack of continuity in learning Gaelic within primary schools. In some schools, for example, Gaelic is provided to one particular year group, and another language (as part of Modern Languages in the Primary School (MLPS)) to another year group. In some schools, for example, MLPS is seen as an essential part of the P6-P7 curriculum, with GLPS timetabled before children embark on the MLPS programme, and then discontinued. Sometimes, continuity is provided for primary learners by the associated secondary school but this is not always the case. In other situations, GLE is taught in a secondary school but not in its associated primaries. Where this happens, as a feature of best practice, promotional activity is undertaken by the secondary teacher with the associated primary schools. Young people and their parents say that they would like more progression to allow them to improve their fluency.

4.1.3 There are very good examples of **continuing professional development** for teachers who are delivering GLPS. However, the training provided by each authority can be fragmented. The training for GLPS does not include secondary teachers delivering Gaelic (Learners). As with Gaelic medium, there is no clear national guidance for provision and best practice for Gaelic learners.

4.2 The way ahead

4.2.1 There is a need to ensure that **GLE** courses are part of a more coherent **3 – 18 programme**. This coherence could usefully be developed from an extension of the training for GLPS to include secondary teachers delivering Gaelic (Learners). It could explore the possibilities for young people who wish to achieve full fluency having followed a Gaelic learners pathway. This might include, for example, an additional year of study through immersion. A benefit of this would be to increase the number of fluent speakers available to contribute to a range of professions, including teaching. A coherent programme could then be part of a longer term strategy to give larger numbers of Scotland's young people the opportunity to learn Gaelic.

4.2.2 In the short term, taking into account limitations of staffing, all schools could be **raising awareness** of Gaelic language and culture as a defining feature of Scotland's identity. In schools where Gaelic medium provision sits alongside English medium, there should be an expectation that all young people in these schools have the opportunity to learn Gaelic. This assists with promoting equality and fairness among young people and deepens their understanding of immersion processes and practices.

4.2.3 The development of **national guidance** was suggested earlier in this report for Gaelic Medium Education. It would be equally appropriate for Gaelic learners.

¹⁷ Bòrd na Gàidhlig

5. Gaelic Education: Leaders and Partners

5.1 The current situation

5.1.1 Leadership for Gaelic Education comes from a range of sources. Parents have had, and continue to have, a role in the growth and development of Gaelic medium provision in particular. Education authorities, school and early years' leaders and staff have worked with a range of partners to address and shape the aspirations of parents and to meet the needs of learners. At national level, leadership and support comes from a number of bodies such as *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, Scottish Government's Learning Directorate, and Gaelic and Scots Unit, LTS and HMIE, SQA, the universities and *Stòrlann*.

5.1.2 Historically, growth in Gaelic Education could be portrayed as a grass roots development. This applies in particular to the growth of Gaelic Medium Education where parents initially took the lead. As requests for support and accommodation were met by education authorities and schools, the commitment of parents was matched by teachers making decisions to move from teaching in English medium to Gaelic medium. Partnership between parents and teachers was a very real necessity in order to establish Gaelic medium practice. For example, parents worked together to adapt and prepare basic resources for teachers to use with children. The level of commitment between parents and teachers remains very high. When this is supported by school and education authority leaders, progress in Gaelic Education is notable.

5.1.3 The Scottish Government has put in place legislation and measures which have extended and strengthened the development of Gaelic Education over the last 20 years. These have included The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, Specific Grants Regulations, The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000. Gaelic is also listed as a national priority in the Education (National Priorities)(Scotland) Order 2000. Under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* has a statutory function of offering advice and issuing guidance in relation to Gaelic Education. *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* has set out a National Gaelic Education Strategy within its National Plan for Gaelic.

5.1.4 Education authorities have responsibility for putting provision for Gaelic Education in place. They are supported to do this by funding from Scottish Government. This funding, known as Specific Grant for Gaelic Education, is allocated by ministers on the basis of bids received by authorities to assist with any additional costs of Gaelic Education. 21 authorities offer Gaelic Education and are represented by the Management Review Group (MRG). MRG acts as a forum for discussion about issues relating to funding. They have a specific role, for example, in approving *Stòrlann's* programme for resource delivery.

5.1.5 Effective leadership of Gaelic in **education authorities and schools** has a clear commitment to the growth, development and continuous improvement of Gaelic provision. Features of effective leadership include:

- the promotion of Gaelic Education;
- identifying and celebrating successes;
- supporting and challenging staff to continuously improve;
- acting on opportunities to develop and enhance provision;
- sharing best practice; and
- strong partnership working.

5.1.6 Where leaders are not sufficiently aware of the quality of provision for Gaelic Education, opportunities for development are missed and successes are not acknowledged. In some cases, senior managers in education authorities and schools do not always feel equipped with the knowledge and confidence to assure the quality and develop further Gaelic Education. In these cases, the following features may be evident.

- Senior managers can allow their own lack of Gaelic language to be a barrier to monitoring learning and teaching. They feel that they can not advise on generic aspects of learning and teaching if Gaelic is being used as the language of communication in the classroom.
- The lack of clarity of understanding highlighted earlier in this report in relation to Gaelic Medium Education terminology and practice, and particularly immersion, is often shared by senior managers. This impacts on their confidence and ability to talk to parents about the range of issues that relate to Gaelic Medium Education.
- Some senior managers are not aware of how to access support for Gaelic. They are not aware of how organisations such as *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* promote and support Gaelic Medium Education.

5.1.7 There remains, some 25 years on in the development of Gaelic Medium Education in particular, a debate about the difficulties faced by the legitimate expectation of parents to establish Gaelic medium provision. It would appear that there remains within some education authorities a degree of ambivalence about the value and worth of providing and developing Gaelic Medium Education.

5.1.8 Almost all **parents** who engage with Gaelic Medium Education are positive about their experiences and show a high level of commitment. Some parents feel that the setting up of continuous Gaelic Medium Education provision involves a lot of time consuming negotiations with education authorities. They would like to have more support in securing their entitlement to Gaelic Medium Education. In some cases, parents cited examples of negotiations taking so long that children missed out on learning through the medium of Gaelic.

5.1.9 Some parents have difficulties accessing Gaelic Medium Education due to gaps in pre-school provision. Although Gaelic medium part-time provision exists in the form of *Pàrant is Pàiste*, *Cròileagan* and *Sgoil Àraich*, this provision is typically only available for two hour sessions from Monday to Friday. There is very little provision in child minding, for wraparound care, holiday provision and care for children under the age of three available through the medium of Gaelic. This lack of support mitigates against learning through the medium of Gaelic.

5.1.10 Organisations like *Comann nam Pàrant*¹⁸ were set up to promote and support parents with Gaelic Medium Education. They organise events and visits to parents to

¹⁸ **Comann nam Pàrant** provides information and support to parents on Gaelic medium <http://www.parant.org.uk/>

address queries relating to Gaelic Education. They assist parents in setting up Gaelic medium provision. This support is not yet available consistently across the country to all parents. In the most effective practice, *Comann nam Pàrant* will work with education authorities to promote the benefits of Gaelic Medium Education to parents from an early stage. They will support parents to enrol their children in pre-school provision. Parents expect Gaelic medium provision that is of the highest quality, with tangible and transparent benefits for their children.

5.1.11 In the **early years**, *Pàrant is Pàiste* for birth to three years is almost always led by voluntary groups. Parents are in attendance at all times, with Gaelic-speaking parents leading the development of the Gaelic language. If the parents are not fluent in Gaelic, someone is employed to lead Gaelic language development. Historically, birth to three year groups have had more of a social emphasis than an educational one. There is now a shift towards a greater emphasis on more structured approaches to language acquisition.

5.1.12 Most of the 3-5 groups across the country are managed by education authorities. Currently, more 3-5 groups are moving from independent status to being part of education authority provision. Staffing in Gaelic nurseries varies across authorities. Each education authority has its own policy as to how they staff their 3-5 provision. Emerging practice shows that some authorities place qualified Gaelic-speaking teachers in their nurseries, others have qualified early years' workers with no teacher employed, and others operate a cluster system where a peripatetic teacher gives support to the early years' workers. Frequently, early years' workers are fluent in Gaelic but have not had formal training in Gaelic language development. At present, there is no specific training through the medium of Gaelic for early years' workers.

5.1.13 Commendably, **initial teacher education** has been made more accessible with distance learning courses and collaboration between the universities and centres such as Lews Castle College and *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig*. The impact of this has been an increase in the number of teachers of Gaelic. There remains an issue, because of personal circumstances, in matching newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who have followed distance learning routes to posts located in different areas of Scotland. There is effective initial teacher education but this is not yet consistent across all provision.

5.1.14 Many parents and education authority providers feel discouraged as a result of difficulties with recruiting teachers for Gaelic medium posts. Over the years, a shortage of Gaelic **staffing** has caused concerns and hampered the growth of Gaelic Medium Education. Staffing in the primary sector has improved but can still be difficult, especially with cover for absences.

5.1.15 The availability of secondary staffing is complex. A previous initiative focused on encouraging teachers to work on a cross sectoral basis¹⁹. This worked well where teachers taught in primary and then in S1/S2 in secondary. It had many advantages which went beyond building a curriculum for Gaelic. Unfortunately, the uptake for teaching on a cross-sectoral basis was low.

¹⁹ The General Teaching Council for Scotland: **Initial Teacher Education Arrangements for Teaching in Gaelic Medium Education**: Report to the GTC
http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/FormUploads/teaching-in-gaelic-medium-education1659_221.pdf

5.1.16 An area of specific need identified by schools is the recruitment of staff with the skills necessary to support young people with additional support needs. In the absence of Gaelic-speaking teachers qualified in additional support needs, staff feel that advice needs to be developed on supporting young people with specific needs within immersion learning.

5.1.17 In relation to their **continuing professional development**, Gaelic medium teachers identify the following as priorities:

- the need to be regularly sharing expertise in learning and teaching; and
- the need to continuously develop their own Gaelic language skills.

5.1.18 The programme *Streap*²⁰ by Aberdeen University, in partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, is identified by stakeholders as being successful in enabling teachers to acquire the terminology and confidence to teach specific subjects through the medium of Gaelic. Professional documents, such as those produced by HMIE, have helped practitioners develop a focus for improving practice as well as providing support for language.

5.1.19 The use of **ICT** has tangible benefits for teachers and learners. LTS has plans to enable teachers and learners of Gaelic to use GLOW²¹ to communicate electronically, share and receive resources, and learn and meet online. There are still difficulties in accessing broadband, and therefore GLOW, in the more remote areas of Scotland where Gaelic is taught.

5.2 The way ahead

5.2.1 The role of **education authority** and **school leaders** is pivotal to the success of Gaelic education. Their commitment and knowledge is essential. This report identifies a number of areas where they could make a significant difference. There should now be a clear focus on supporting education authority and school leaders to develop their confidence and capacity in Gaelic Education. Partners currently involved in Gaelic Education, should work with education authority staff to establish approaches to make this happen.

5.2.2 Events such as the Scottish Learning Festival²², *An t-Alltan*²³ and websites such as Journey to Excellence²⁴ raise the awareness of Gaelic Education within the wider educational audience. Consideration could be given to how this showcasing could be extended to more diverse national and international audiences. There is a need to target growth areas such as emerging best practice in Gaelic Medium Education in secondary in order to share and develop expertise.

²⁰ *Streap* Aberdeen University

http://www.abdn.ac.uk/pldc/programmes/gaelic_english.php

²¹ GLOW: Scotland's national schools' intranet

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/usingglowandict/>

²² Scottish Learning Festival LTS <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/slf/index.asp>

²³ *An t-Alltan* is organised by *Stòrlann* on an annual basis to provide continued professional development for teachers <http://www.storlann.co.uk/an-t-alltan/index2>

²⁴ <http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/>

5.2.3 All Gaelic organisations have a responsibility in assisting schools to advance Gaelic Education. It would be useful for schools to have a database that summarises the roles and remits of all the Gaelic organisations and identifies how they can support schools. For example, *Comann na Gàidhlig* (CNAG)²⁵ is one group who has been proactive in providing young people with opportunities to develop their fluency in contexts outwith the classroom.

5.2.4 Parents who are committed to Gaelic Education, and in particular Gaelic Medium Education, need to know that gaps in provision are being addressed. In particular, the gaps that exist in pre-school provision and in secondary to provide progression in learning. Parent groups need ongoing support to network and provide mutual support and advice. It would be useful for recognised parent groups such as *Comann nam Pàrant* to have more formal links with national groups such as *Scottish Parent Teacher Council* (SPTC)²⁶ and the *National Parent Forum* (NPF)²⁷. Partnerships with parents and young people in the provision of homework clubs, online support for homework and with language learning classes for parents present potential growth areas.

5.2.5 Too many parents continue to face significant obstacles in accessing Gaelic Medium Education. More effective ways of enabling all children to access continuous and coherent Gaelic Medium Education should be considered.

5.2.6 Parents not yet involved with Gaelic Education look to be reassured and convinced that their children will enjoy additional benefits by following a Gaelic Education pathway. This includes a clearer understanding of the increasing number of career opportunities associated with Gaelic. The promotion of the benefits of Gaelic Medium Education, and in particular the advantages of bilingualism, requires to be revisited at key transition points. Organisations that advise parents have a crucial role in ensuring that they have up-to-date and relevant information to support parents and address concerns.

5.2.7 Improving the availability of Gaelic medium **pre-school provision** would result in a substantial increase in the numbers embarking on Gaelic Medium Education. Ideally, the full range of childcare and pre-school provision, as is available through the medium of English, should also be available through the medium of Gaelic. In doing this, learning provision could usefully be rationalised as: *Pàrant is Pàiste* for birth - 2/3 years, *Cròileagan* for 2-3 years and *Sgoil Àraich* for 3-5 years. Currently, children join Gaelic Medium Education at any or all of these levels. A clear language development plan would help providers at different stages and across sectors ensure continuity in children's learning. The National Plan for Gaelic 2007-2012 has an ambitious target for increasing the number enrolled in Gaelic medium P1 by 2021. In recognition of this, the Scottish Government has produced a comprehensive report that maps the way ahead in pre-school provision²⁸.

5.2.8 Early years' workers and teachers are essential resources in developing young people's language. Priority should be given to ensuring that their **initial education** and

²⁵ *Comann na Gàidhlig* Gaelic development agency <http://www.cnag.org.uk/>

²⁶ <http://www.sptc.info/>

²⁷ <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/NPF/>

²⁸ **Report on the review of Gaelic medium early education and childcare** Christine Stephen, Joanna McPake, Wilson McLeod, Irene Pollock, Tessa Carroll, www.scotland.gov.uk › Publications › 2010

their **continuing professional development** is of the highest quality. The recent national report on teacher education²⁹ provides a useful vehicle to review current provision, recognise strengths and address development needs. Improvements to continuing professional development should take account of the needs of the wide range of partners who work with young people learning Gaelic. These include, for example, support staff and community learning and development staff. When support staff and partners work closely with teachers it is important that they are aware of how to develop young people's fluency. Improvements should also make best use of GLOW to communicate electronically, to engage in high quality professional dialogue and access mentoring, to share and receive resources and to learn and meet online.

5.2.9 There is a consensus that all Gaelic medium student teachers should have a strong Gaelic language input in their course. Some of the other components that **initial teacher education** from pre-school to secondary should consistently include are:

- the rationale and methodology of language immersion at all key stages;
- specialist subject terminology;
- addressing any individual needs in language skills;
- ensuring that teaching placements are completed through the medium of Gaelic during training;
- equipping students with knowledge of how they access support as teachers of Gaelic; and
- enabling newly qualified teachers of Gaelic to assist young people who require support with their learning.

5.2.10 *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, working with other partner organisations, is a key player in the recruitment of high-quality teachers of Gaelic for full-time, supply and specialist positions. Recruitment remains a high priority. It would be useful to review how well schools and education authorities feel they are supported on **staffing** issues. A review could also consider how staff are deployed and supported once they are in post. Issues to consider further might include the following:

- staff working on a cross sectoral basis with mentor support;
- staff supporting young people to access learning through ICT ;
- staff working alongside English medium specialist staff to support continuity in learners' Gaelic language but also to develop their own skills; and
- supporting staff to develop expertise in supporting young people with additional support needs.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The main purpose of this report is to increase the impact of Gaelic Education. There is a particular focus on immersion at pre-school, primary and secondary to help secure improved outcomes for young people learning through the medium of Gaelic. A number of points for action have been identified for leaders and partners to look at in establishing how best to build on the successes of Gaelic Education and address constraints. These should be read in conjunction with the findings in papers and reports from *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* and others referenced in this report, and the Gaelic Excellence

²⁹ *Teaching Scotland's Future* Graham Donaldson January 2011

Report³⁰, published in 2011. Progressing all of these involves committed partnership working between all those leading the development of Gaelic Education.

6.2 There is considerable optimism and support for Gaelic across Scotland. Legislation and initiatives are in place with the aim of creating a sustainable future for Gaelic. The compilation of a second National Plan for Gaelic presents an opportunity to give the Gaelic language a real focus for revival and development. Gaelic holds a unique part in the national heritage of Scotland. In protecting and preserving Gaelic, education has a key part to play. There are significant strengths in Gaelic Education, and Gaelic medium in particular, for schools, leaders and partners to build on. In achieving continuous improvement, Scotland has the potential to become an international model of best practice in the promotion of minority language communities across Europe.

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- Parents
- Teachers
- Headteachers of primary and secondary schools
- Education authority staff
- University staff
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- HMIE Associate Assessors.

³⁰ Curriculum for Excellence Gaelic Excellence Group, Group's report February 2011
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/91982/0114490.pdf>

Appendix 1

The following documents and websites are relevant to this report.

An Seotal <http://www.anseotal.org.uk/>

An t-Alltan <http://www.storlann.co.uk/an-t-alltan/index2>

Bòrd na Gàidhlig <http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk/>

Building the Curriculum 3 A framework for learning and teaching

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/Building%20the%20Curriculum](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/Building%20the%20Curriculum)

Comann na Gàidhlig <http://www.cnaq.org.uk/>

Curriculum for Excellence Gàidhlig Excellence Group. Scottish Government February 2011 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/91982/0114490.pdf>

Curriculum for Excellence

[https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-\(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5\)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence?](https://education.gov.scot/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-(building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5)/What%20is%20Curriculum%20for%20Excellence?)

Gaelic Medium Education in Scotland: choice and attainment at the primary and early secondary school stages. Fiona O'Hanlon, Wilson McLeod and Lindsay Paterson. University of Edinburgh. 2010.

Gaelic Secondary ICT Implementation Group Report. Scottish Government. 2005 <http://ictgaelic.blogspot.com/>

GLOW <https://connect.glowscotland.org.uk>

National Plan for Gaelic <http://www.bord-na-gaidhlig.org.uk/National-Plan/National%20Plan%20for%20Gaelic.pdf>

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/index_gd.html

Scottish Learning Festival <https://education.gov.scot/what-we-do/Scottish%20Learning%20Festival>

Scottish Natural Heritage SNH <http://www.snh.org.uk/gaelic/>

Sradagan <http://www.sradagan.org/>

Gaelic Education: Building on the successes, addressing the barriers

Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig <http://www.storlann.co.uk/>

Streap http://www.abdn.ac.uk/pldc/programmes/gaelic_english.php

Teaching Scotland's Future. Graham Donaldson January 2011

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 <http://home.scotland.gov.uk/home>

The General Teaching Council for Scotland: **Initial Teacher Education Arrangements for Teaching in Gaelic Medium Education:** Report to the GTC
http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/FormUploads/teaching-in-gaelic-medium-education1659_221.pdf

The Scottish Government www.scotland.gov.uk

Appendix 2

Definition of terms related to Gaelic as used in this report

| | |
|--|---|
| An t-Alltan | Conferences organised by Stòrlann for teachers of Gaelic. |
| Bòrd na Gàidhlig | The main statutory body charged with the responsibility of securing the future of Gaelic. |
| Comann na Gàidhlig (CNAG) | A coordinating Gaelic Development Agency |
| Comann nam Pàrant | Organisation to support parents with Gaelic Medium Education. |
| Cròileagan | Playgroup provision through the medium of Gaelic. |
| Gaelic (Learners) | In secondary, the programme for young people to learn Gaelic is referred to as Gaelic(Learners) . |
| Gaelic Learners Education (GLE) | Children may learn Gaelic as a second language in English medium schools, often alongside another European language. In primary, this is referred to as Gaelic Learners in the Primary School (GLPS) . The equivalent in secondary programme is referred to as Gaelic(Learners) . When referring to both the provision in primary and secondary this report uses Gaelic Learners Education (GLE) . |
| Gaelic Learners in the Primary School (GLPS). | The programme used in English medium primary schools to learn Gaelic. |
| Gaelic Medium Education | All education takes place through the medium of Gaelic. This begins with a total Gaelic immersion phase and is followed by an immersion phase. The aim of Gaelic Medium Education is to enable children and young people to be bilingual – to have equal fluency in both Gaelic and English. |
| Gàidhlig | The Gaelic course that young people who are fluent in Gaelic study in secondary schools is known as Gàidhlig . |
| Ginealach Ùr na Gàidhlig: | An Action Plan to increase the numbers of Gaelic speakers. |
| Immersion and total Immersion | The method of learning Gaelic in Gaelic medium provision is referred to as immersion . Children in Gaelic medium provision learn Gaelic by being immersed in the language. From pre-school to late P3 or P4, children are totally immersed in the language. |

Gaelic Education: Building on the successes, addressing the barriers

| | |
|--|---|
| | Teachers speak Gaelic to children and provide learning activities that afford opportunities to develop acquisition of Gaelic. Immersion still continues beyond P3 /P4, with all of the curriculum delivered through the medium of Gaelic. By the end of P7, children's attainment in English language will be broadly similar to that of children in English medium education. Immersion should continue into secondary with schools providing progression from primary by delivering subjects through the medium of Gaelic. |
| <i>Parant is Pàist</i> | Parent and Child. |
| <i>Sabhal Mòr Ostaig</i> | Scotland's Gaelic College. |
| <i>Seotal</i> | A project which co-ordinates the creation of on-line terminology databases to support Gaelic-medium subject teaching. |
| <i>Sgoil Àraich</i> | Nursery provision through the medium of Gaelic. |
| <i>Sradagan</i> | Youth Clubs through the medium of Gaelic organised by CNAG. |
| <i>Stòrlann Nàiseanta na h-Alba</i> | The agency that has responsibility for developing Gaelic resources and organising conferences for teachers of Gaelic. |
| <i>Streap</i> | The programme by Aberdeen University in partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig to enable teachers to acquire the terminology and confidence to teach specific subjects through the medium of Gaelic. |

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