

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	CLH 20/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Care, Learning and Housing

Date: 14 March 2019

Report Title: **Highland Virtual Academy and É-Sgoil**

Report By: Interim Director of Care and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the work of the Highland Virtual Academy and on our engagement with é-Sgoil (the Western Isles Virtual Academy)

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Note the levels of engagement of both the Highland Virtual Academy and with é-Sgoil Highland schools; and
 - ii. Note the plans to develop this further for session 2019-20.

3. Background

- 3.1 *The Highland Virtual Academy* was established by Jim Steven, previous Head of Education, to enhance the curriculum for schools across the Highlands by giving them access to courses and qualifications that they did not have the staff to deliver themselves. At the same time it allowed some schools to secure stable staffing by centrally taking over the employment of a percentage of some staff (usually 0.2 or 0.4FTE) to deliver these online courses.
- 3.2 *É-Sgoil* was established in August 2016 with funding provided by the Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Its aims include
- provide a wider and more equitable choice of subjects for pupils across all secondary schools in the Western Isles
 - support the expansion of Gaelic medium education locally and nationally
 - develop a network of staff who are able to deliver online learning in all subject areas throughout Scotland.

4. Current engagement

- 4.1 Please see **Appendix 1** for details of the numbers of pupils involved in Highland Virtual Academy this session. The reasons behind the high drop-out rate are currently being investigated.
- 4.2 Please see **Appendix 2** for details of current work between Highland Council and *é-Sgoil*.

5. Offer for session 2019-20

- 5.1 Pupil uptake and pupil attainment were both taken into account when reviewing which courses to offer for session 2019-20. Please see **Appendix 3** for details of which courses are provisionally being offered. It can only be provisional at this stage until school staffing is agreed for next session and capacity to share staff has been agreed with schools that supply tutors.
- 5.2 The Head Teacher of the Virtual Academy engages with the pupils and tracks and monitors their performance over the course of the year. This information is shared with the base school of these pupils to allow mentors or Year Heads to support the young people in their learning. It also allows the Head Teacher to feed back to the teachers about the quality of the pupil experience.

6. Implications

- 6.1 Resource. There is a cost to the authority in buying out the staff time required to deliver this and in the allocation of a Head Teacher to support the development of the Highland Virtual Academy. It is likely that schools will have to start paying for the provision that they require in the future. *É-Sgoil* already charge schools across Scotland for the courses that they facilitate/deliver.
- 6.2 Legal. There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations of this report.
- 6.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural). The provision offered by the Highland Virtual Academy enhances the curriculum in small rural schools.

- 6.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever. There are no climate change implications arising from this report.
- 6.5 Risk. There are no risk implications arising from this report.
- 6.6 Gaelic. É-Sgoil is committed to supporting the development of Gaelic Medium education.

Designation: Interim Director of Care and Learning

Date: 12 February 2019

Author: James Vance, Interim Head of Education

Background Papers:

Appendix 1: Highland Virtual Academy January 2019 Update

August 2018 data

Number of schools with pupils enrolled = 21 (out of 29)

Number of pupils enrolled in August = 140

Range of pupils from a single school = 1 to 25

January 2019 data

Number of schools with pupils enrolled = 20 (out of 29)

Number of pupils enrolled in January = 94

Range of pupils from a single school = 1 to 9

Subject - level	Number of pupils		Number of schools	
	August 2018	January 2019	August 2018	January 2019
AH Chemistry	10	9	4	4
AH Physics	10	7	4	4
AH Maths	12	5	4	3
AH Music	4	3	2	2
AH German	4	3	2	1
AH History	4	2	4	2
AH Modern Studies * pilot delivered by é-Sgoil	6	3	3	1
H German	9	11	5	6
H Spanish	5	3	4	2
H Latin	2	1	2	1
H Music	3	2	3	2
H Photography	31	13	8	5
H Modern Studies	17	1	6	1
H Physics	0	12	0	1
H Human Biology	8 to 2	Course dropped as tutor no longer had capacity		
N5 German	9	8	7	7
N5 Spanish	11	3	4	4
N5 Latin	1	1	1	1

Higher Physics (12 pupils) delivered to Golspie High School from December, through HVA, to cover staff vacancy (N5 physics delivered by é-Sgoil).

Requests from schools to cover H Chemistry and H Maths, unable to fulfil but directed schools to é-Sgoil.

Pupil Focus Groups Feedback

Criteria	Comments
Overall	Very positive
IT	Connectivity has improved since August and much better than last session but some schools using 'work arounds' e.g. laptops used instead of chrome books as they can connect via Ethernet cable to wi-fi or 3 pupils around 1 laptop as can't get connectivity if using individual chrome books. Photography pupils can't edit pictures on chrome books as they don't support necessary software
e-Safety	Pupils know who to contact if there was an issue. However with the scenario discussion pupils didn't think it was an issue and wouldn't report it

	to anyone. This has been discussed with the schools
Learning and Teaching	<p>Predominantly lecture style, explaining topics, going over work posted on Google classroom. Work posted on a weekly basis and includes notes, video clips, activities and worked examples.</p> <p>German and Spanish taught on a 1:1 basis, 1 period per week. Pupils very positive about their experiences.</p> <p>All other subjects taught in groups</p>
Feedback	<p>Constructive, pupils know strengths and areas of development Swift feedback from tutors – any issues and tutors are emailed/messaged. They respond very quickly.</p> <p>Further investigation required for Photography, some pupils feel they haven't been given enough detailed feedback</p>
Monitoring and Tracking	<p>Pupils know levels - working grade and target grade</p> <p>Most schools have put data into SEEMiS, this has been discussed with schools concerned.</p>
Curriculum	<p>Pupils took on-line subjects for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progression 2. Required for university 3. Interest 4. Had to fill timetable
Improvements	<p>Language students would like more languages offered – e.g. N5/H Italian, AH Spanish (for progression), AH French</p> <p>Science/STEM students would like more sciences offered e.g. Engineering science</p> <p>Would like at least 1 face to face visit to build up relationship with tutor</p> <p>Pupils showed an interest in BSL and subjects beyond the 'core offering' in schools</p>

Appendix 2: É-Sgoil Partnership

School	Subject	Level	Number of Pupils
Nairn Academy	Gaidhlig	S1 and S2	12
Thurso	Modern Studies	Advanced Higher	3
Dornoch Academy	Gaidhlig	National 5	2
Golspie High School	Physics	National 5	16
	English	S1, S2, N5, Higher	90
	Mathematics	S1, S3, N5	18

Currently discussing:

- procedures for sharing of resources and formalising AH modern studies pilot and reciprocal arrangement between HC and WI
- ICT e-safety protocols
- Evaluating Up Helly Aa presentation by Shetland schools to 9 HC primary schools and potential reciprocal presentation back
- Science presentation to primary schools by WI teacher
- Requests for é-Sgoil staff to cover HE, Accounting, Gaelic, Engineering Science, Graphic Communication.
- IT issues in schools that have large classes e.g. not enough broadband width to deliver using Vscene to 27 Golspie students (English).
- SQA verification and moderation procedures

Requests from HC schools for:

- H Accounting, H Gaelic , AH Computing
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Developments:

- ASN curriculum investigated and demand for Nat 3 Maths and English (numeracy and literacy), BSL, social subject. No capacity of ASN staff to deliver courses without backfill to schools.
- Trialling VScene as a an alternative to Google Meet as its connectivity may be better and resolve issues with 'freezing'
- Recording of lessons to allow pupils to catch up (flipped learning)

Appendix 3

Highland Virtual Academy 2019-20

Courses

LEVEL	SUBJECT
National 5	German
	Spanish
	Latin
Higher	German
	Spanish
	Latin
	Human Biology
	Modern Studies
	Music
	Photography
Advanced Higher	Chemistry
	Physics
	Maths
	German
	Music
	History

Timetable

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	8.50-9.40	9.40 - 10.30	10.30- 11.20	11.35- 12.25	12.25-1.15	2.00-2.50	2.50-3.40
MON				H	H	Nat 5	AH
TUE		AH		Nat 5	Nat 5		
WED	Nat 5			H	AH		
THU	H			AH	AH		
FRI		H	Nat 5				

Depending on the nature of the course not all periods may actually be required. Languages are delivered 1 period per week on a 1:1 basis plus in addition the possibility of a group lesson.

All the courses would be using G Suite with Google Meet or V-Scene as the face to face part of the delivery.