

Agenda Item	6
Report No	G/03/24

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Gaelic Committee

Date: 28 March 2024

Report Title: Gaelic Education Update

Report By: Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This Report informs Members of:

- a) An update on recent key activities within the development of Gaelic Education
 - Key messages from the 3-18 Gaelic Medium Education (GME) for Inverness Feasibility Study
 - Pupil data 2023-24
- b) An update on the progress of Gaelic Learner Education including Digital Learning GLE and progress in strategic priority for 1 plus 2 Gaelic Learners.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Consider the key messages from the Inverness 3-18 Gaelic Education Feasibility Study;
- ii. Note the increase in Gaelic pupil numbers across Highland;
- iii. Note the next steps as detailed in paragraph 4.7.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource – The resource implications are within the current main budget streams which include Gaelic Specific Grant, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and Gaelic Plans Fund (Bòrd na Gàidhlig) alongside core Council revenue funding.

- 3.2 Legal – The Highland Council has a requirement to implement its Gaelic Language Plan under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005. The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 requires that an education authority has a duty to promote and support Gaelic Education (section 15).
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) – there are no specific risks arising because of this report.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – Where possible, meetings take place online.
- 3.5 Risk – Gaelic Education outcomes within the Gaelic Language Plan and National Plan are not achieved.
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people). None.
- 3.7 Gaelic – The report enhances Gaelic Education development within The Highland Council area and supports the implementation of The Highland Council’s Gaelic Language Plan and the National Plan.

4. Feasibility Study 3-18 GME provision Inverness

- 4.1 The 3-18 GME Provision feasibility study has been submitted to The Highland Council.
- 4.2 The feasibility study is structured into the following stages:

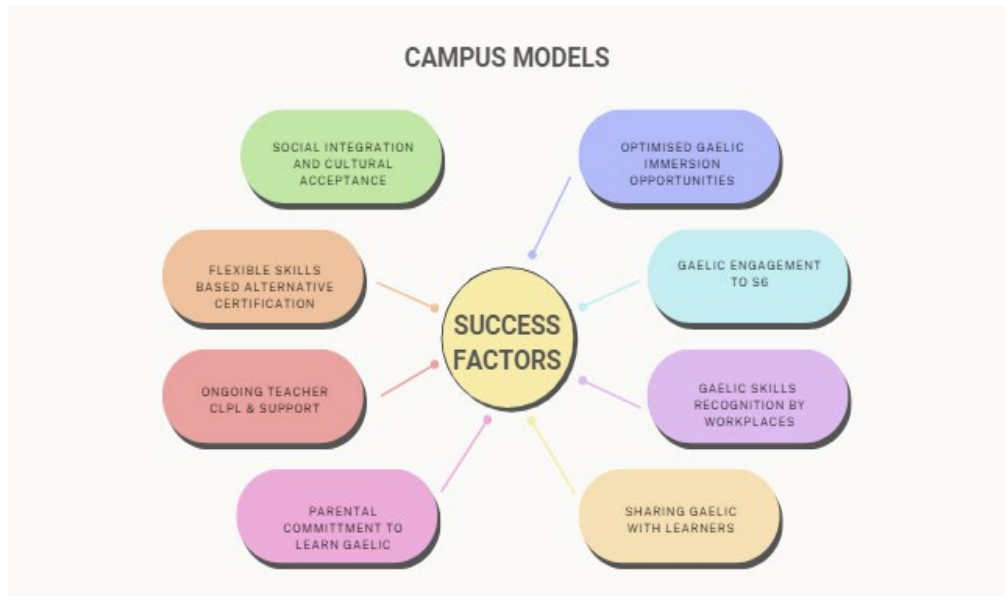
- Stage 1 Inform
- Stage 2 Explore
- Stage 3 Feasibility Analysis
- Stage 4 Articulate and Recommend

The report has provided key findings and recommendations that will inform and populate the ‘road map’ to informing the best GME campus model for Inverness.

4.3 Success Factors for a future Campus Model (practitioner adviser perspective)

The feasibility study provides advice on a way forward to sustain and grow GME in Inverness and other Highland Communities. The recommendations aim to support achievement and improved attainment outcomes in Gaelic in Inverness and across the whole of the Highlands.

The feasibility study engaged and interviewed approximately 40 practitioners and advisers. The following factors illustrated in an infographic, are proposed by practitioners as crucial to delivering quality GME.



- 4.4 The study has shared the following proposed success factors across 3 areas for a GME 3-18 approach.

Gaelic Immersion -

There should be an emphasis on the quality of immersion experiences from 3-18. Alignment of wider social integration of secondary pupils should be a consideration while ensuring proportional immersion. Opportunities for alternative secondary certification at SQA standard will enhance achievements. Ensuring annual evaluation of immersion lead by senior management team will contribute to quality improvement. Gaelic Learner pupils and Gaelic Medium pupils benefit from planned contexts for language usage.

Supporting young people to further understand and make links with the value of Gaelic in their future outcomes as part of their skills for life, learning and work.

Staffing -

Senior Management structures incorporate Gaelic essential specification for a co-located Gaelic school. The importance of external relation Gaelic partnership work for wider curriculum development. A focus on Gaelic specific leadership development as advised by the Advice on Gaelic Education, Education Scotland. Planning for experiences and outcomes for wider Gaelic usage and project working. Recognise the importance of the link between adult role models for improved outcomes in Gaelic fluency.

Space

Design phases for GME learning environments consider projections at the early stages.

- 4.5 Key learning points were proposed by the study as essential to sustain and grow GME. These indicate that inclusion of these points can contribute towards success in attainment and achievement in Inverness and other Highland Communities.

Accredited Gaelic literacy qualification achieved before leaving school. Flexible Gaelic language training and further training support needs for immersion through CLPL.

Normalise the usage of Gaelic within and across co-located GME and English Medium schools. For secondary level, a national approach in standardised curriculum pathways for BGE and SQA Gaelic courses.

4.6 This table describes the scope, profile and output of the research undertaken to inform the full study. The table below shows the focused research undertaken -

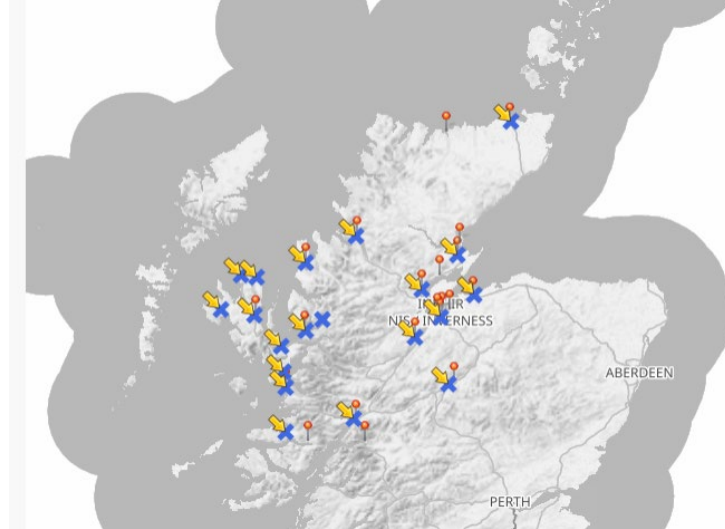
No.	Profile	When	Impact of findings	Research output (Number of contact sessions)
1	Review of key reports, advisory and policy documents	May - Dec 2023	Integrated throughout report	10 x direct documents & 5 x websites
2	Primary and secondary class interviews	Sep 2023	Integrated throughout report	15 class interviews (p5 to S6)
3	Teacher and staff discussions	June- Dec 2023	Integrated throughout report	13 one to one teacher interviews 1 x grp discussion.
4	BSGI & BSGI Nursery & IRA parents surveys	Sept-Oct 2023	Integrated throughout report	3 x customised surveys
5	Parent Councils & Parent Groups	Sept-Dec 2023	Integrated throughout report	2
6	Gaelic sector advisors and practitioners	May – Dec 2023	Integrated throughout report	28 (30 mins to 1.5 hours each)
7	Case studies; comparative primary and secondary schools in Scotland	Sept- Dec 2023	Integrated throughout report	2 x direct teacher interviews and 4 x online reviews on ES website.
8	The role of Digital learning in the Gaelic Medium secondary curriculum – practitioner providers, secondary and primary teachers	Sept-Dec 2023	Integrated throughout report	Teachers and 2 x digital education providers
9	Sustainability in terms of pupil projections; teacher supply retention; training and support; and curriculum availability and development	June- Dec 2023	Integrated throughout report	THC Officers, teachers, and Gaelic sector advisors.

4.7 Next Steps

An initial meeting has been held with Scottish Government in February 2023 to provide an update on 3-18 provision in Inverness. The next steps are to meet stakeholders to discuss and agree the vision for GME 3-18 for Inverness, using the feasibility study to inform the appropriate steps to strengthen the expansion and sustainable growth of Gaelic education going forward.

5. Gaelic Pupil Numbers 2023-24

5.1 In session 2022-23, a total of 1,827 pupils in the Highland area are currently in 3–18 GME with 2,030 recording Gaelic Learner Education opportunities in secondary schools. This data is from an ingathering of data in our February 2024 Gaelic pupil survey. Data for 2023-2024 is not available at the time of writing this report.



The Council’s website contains an online map, which shows parents/guardians the areas where the Council provides nursery, primary and secondary Gaelic education.

The map above shows the following information:

- All Gaelic nursery school provision (yellow arrows)
- All Gaelic primary school provision (blue crosses)
- All Gaelic secondary provision (red pins)

5.2

Gaelic Education Pupil Numbers in The Highland Council’s Schools						
Year	GME Nurseries	Commissioned Playgroups	GME Primary School Pupils	Secondary Schools		
				GME – Studying Gàidhlig	GME – Studying Subjects through Gaelic	GLE
2020–21	260	23	1,058	414	286	2,208
2021–22	274	33	1,082	438	287	2,204
2022–23	303	36	1,101	436	354	2,030
2023-24	346	16*	1,087	485	296	2,123

*This number has decreased due to a decrease in the number of partner providers from 2 to 1. Dingwall GME ELC is no longer a partner centre. This is now a Highland Council provision.

5.3 The following table provides information on ELC enrolment data from ingathering February 2023.

Pupils in Publicly Funded Nurseries/Commissioned Playgroups – Pupil Numbers as at Start of Academic Year			
Year	2021–22	2022-23	2023-24

Gaelic Medium ELC	307	339	362
% change Gaelic Medium ELC	+7.82%	+9.43%	+6.35
Enrolment increase	+24	+32	+23

The data indicates that there is an increase of 23 children to a total number 362 in GME nurseries and partner centres in February 2024.

Dingwall GME ELC has recently re-opened following an interruption to partner provision. The provision has recently transitioned from partner provider to The Highland Council. Enrolment data for session 2024-25 indicates that numbers have not been impacted by the interruption.

As ELC pupils don't have a unique identifier we are unable to give a total number of pupils across Highland as there will be some double counting because of split placements. Therefore, the table compares year on year changes in GME nurseries and partner centres.

5.4 Primary GME pupil data is provided in the following table.

Pupils in Publicly Funded Primary Schools				
Year	2020–21	2021–22	2022-23	2023-24
The Highland Council Total	16,843	16,799	16,657	16,194
Gaelic Medium Pupils	1,058	1,082	1,101	1,087
% Gaelic Medium Pupils	6.28%	6.44%	6.61%	6.71%

The percentage of pupils in GME continues to increase as a percentage of the total number of pupils in GME against The Highland Council total.

The largest increases in pupil numbers are attributed to both Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Port-rìgh and Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Lochabar.

5.5 The following table for secondary GME pupil numbers has two measures: those pupils who study Gaelic for fluent speakers (Gàidhlig). There is also a separate measure for those pupils' studying subjects through the medium of Gaelic.

Pupils in The Highland Council's Publicly Funded Secondary Schools				
Year	2020–21	2021–22	2022-23	2023-24
The Highland Council Total	13,841	14,046	13,903	13,988
Gàidhlig	414	438	436	443
% Gàidhlig	2.99%	3.12%	3.14%	3.17%
Gaelic Medium Subjects	286	287	354	309
% Gaelic Medium Subjects	2.07%	2.04%	2.55%	2.21%
Gaelic (Learners)	2,208	2,204	2,030	2,123
% Gaelic (Learners)	15.95%	15.69%	14.6%	15.19%

6. Digital Learning and Gaelic Learner provision

- 6.1 The rationale for the Digital School is to create equity for young people across Highland Council. By offering some courses in a digital environment young people from some of our smallest schools will be able to access a broader curriculum offer, thereby giving them more personalisation and choice in their senior phase studies.

The digital school will launch in session 24/25, starting with a pilot of 5 subjects being offered at National 5 and Higher level to a group of 11 rural secondary schools. All staff teaching these digital courses are currently employed in a Highland Council school and will be offering their subject in a digital environment regardless of the physical location of the learners which will create an equity of experience for all.

A number of schools (Wick and Dornoch so far) have expressed interest in Gaelic (learners) for a small number in each of the schools. By offering this course in a digital environment it allows for greater numbers to study the language without being constrained by school staffing and timetables. Longer term plans would hopefully be to expand the Gaelic offering to Higher and potentially Advanced Higher.

7. Gaelic Language Plan Strategic Priority - 1 plus 2

- 7.1 Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) & 1+2 Language Learning Approach 2023, the following data on GLE as 1 plus 2 was gathered -

L2 Schools	27 schools deliver Gaelic as L2
L3 Schools	63 schools deliver Gaelic as L3
Secondary Gaelic (Learners)	18 secondary schools offer Gaelic (Learners)

7.2 The Highland Council is currently undertaking the development and delivery of high-quality training for all staff delivering Gaelic as an L2 or L3 throughout the Highland area. Support and Training continues to be offered to schools across Highland this session.

In August '23, a Signposting session was held for L2 and L3 Gaelic teachers, to show them where resources are found that can support the Gaelic learning in the class, as well as opportunities for developing their own language learning. 12 teachers attended this session.

An August '23, a 6-week Gaelic Language Learning Course for L2 and L3 beginners began, which covers the vocabulary and structures required, from the initial topics in the Go!Gaelic programme of work. Attendee numbers averaged 25 throughout the course. Sessions were not recorded but Powerpoints along with an audio overlay was sent to all after each session.

In November '23, a 6-week online Gaelic Live Lessons course was delivered to schools across Highland with schools from other authorities also taking part. This course followed on from the successful pilot delivered in May '23. These sessions support teachers who are already delivering Gaelic as an L3 subject, but also as introductory sessions to other schools who may be interested in developing Gaelic learning within their school. The largest number attending was 29 but the average over the 6 weeks was 20 teachers attending.

In January '24 an additional 6-week Gaelic Language Learning Course, which continued on from the first 6-week course was held. This covered the vocabulary and structures within the remaining topics taught through the Go!Gaelic programme of work. This was a hybrid course, with a mix of live sessions and self-study recorded sessions. This was attended by 8 teachers.

In March '24, another 6-week online Gaelic Live Lessons course will be delivered to schools. This will give further schools an opportunity to take part in this team-teaching approach and allow teachers to improve their own learning alongside the pupils, through repetition and working through the follow-up activities.

The next steps are to align ongoing practice with targets as set by the increased status of 1 plus 2 as a strategic priority for Gaelic Education within the renewed Gaelic Language Plan.

Designation:

Date: 28 February 2024

Author: Lena Walker Gaelic Education Manager and Ruairidh MacKay Education Development Officer

Background Papers:

Appendices: