

Agenda Item	5
Report No	G/2/25

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Gaelic Committee

**Date:** 26 February 2025

**Report Title:** Gaelic Education Update

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive – People

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report informs Members of the recent key areas of improvement and development within Gaelic Education, including:

- Inverness Royal Academy's leadership of Gaelic ethos across the curriculum to create a positive and inclusive ethos for Gaelic across the school;
- an overview of pupil numbers in Gaelic education across Highland for 2024/2025; and
- an update on progress towards creating Gaelic Medium provision in Lochaline Primary School.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i) Note the report;
- ii) Agree to welcome the continued expansion of GME and GE education in Highland; and
- iii) Agree to recognise the leadership shown at the IRA to grow interest and involvement in Gaelic across the school.

### 3. Implications

3.1 Resource – For the financial year 2024/25 the Council submitted a Gaelic Specific Grant (GSG) application for £1.3M against total projected expenditure of £8M and was awarded £915,000.

The funding provided by the Scottish Government through the GSG provides invaluable support for a wide range of projects that assist the Council in delivering its commitments under the Gaelic Language Plan with the majority dedicated to the delivery of Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Learner Education.

In addition to core Council funding and the GSG, the Gaelic budget also secures additional funding through project-specific bids to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and the Strategic Gaelic Plan Fund (GPF).

- 3.2 Legal – The Highland Council has a statutory duty to implement its Gaelic Language Plan in terms of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005. Section 15 Education (Scotland) Act 2016 imposes a statutory duty on all Education Authorities to promote and support Gaelic Education.
- 3.3 Risk – There are no risk implications arising from this report.
- 3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people). There are no Health and Safety implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 Gaelic – The report supports Gaelic Education development within The Highland Council area and the implementation of The Highland Council’s Gaelic Language Plan and the National Plan.

#### 4. Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is a monitoring and/or update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

#### 5. Inverness Royal Academy – Gaelic and Gaelic Medium Case Study

- 5.1 In November 2024 the Inverness Royal Academy held an initiative for all pupils called ‘Gaelvember’: [Inverness Royal Academy - GAELVEMBER 2024 | 30 Day Gaelic Challenge for All Pupils](#)



During November, pupils participated in daily challenges to promote and encourage the use of Gaelic around the school. Activities included creating motivational Gaelic posters, writing Gaelic social media posts, creating Gaelic podcasts, and teaching Gaelic to friends or family.

Pupils were asked to document their Gaelvember journey, winning prizes for "most creative challenge" and "best efforts to complete every challenge."

A Duolingo Google classroom was also created for all pupils as part of Gaelvember. All information about Gaelvember opportunities were available in the pupil notices on their Chromebooks.

## 5.2 Leadership of Gaelic in Secondary Schools

Creating a whole school Gaelic positive ethos is a requirement from both the Statutory Advice on Gaelic Education and the policy framework from Education Scotland: Advice on Gaelic Education. This ensures Gaelic is promoted for all and not restricted to the pupils who are actively taking a Gaelic course option. Pupils should have opportunities to use and see Gaelic out with their classrooms. This creates an inclusive environment, where all pupils feel valued and are encouraged to learn and use Gaelic.

Within the Gaelic classroom, immersion in the language is crucial to ensuring continuity of fluency in the transition from primary to secondary school. The proportion of the curriculum delivered through immersion during the Broad General Education phase in Gaelic is planned according to the curriculum rationale within the school.

## 6. Gaelic Language Plan Outcomes – Expansion of Gaelic Medium Education

### 6.1 Lochaline Primary School – Establishing Gaelic Medium Provision

Within the Education Strategic Theme, The Highland Council's GLP commits to:

"Expand the delivery of Gaelic Medium Education with increased secondary subject delivery, creation of new standalone schools and new early years, primary and secondary provision."

### 6.2 Highland Council received a request from 4 parents at Lochaline Primary School on 6 November 2023 to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) at the school.

As part of the Initial Assessment, The Highland Council reviewed the need for GMPE in line with [Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education](#). This indicated that Highland Council should secure provision of GMPE. Thereby exercising its discretion to take such steps as are necessary to secure the provision of such GMPE without carrying out a full assessment.

Officers met with the Head teacher of Lochaline and the community to provide an update on establishing GME provision. The Highland Council is currently recruiting to the post of GME teacher, a positive step towards supporting the community achieve their request.

In the interim, access to Gaelic education is provided with support towards the 0-3 group in the area as well as 10 hours of GME EYP in the ELC.

## 7. Pupil Numbers in Gaelic Education

7.1 The following table illustrates pupil numbers in 2023/24 and 2024/25. The table provides pupil numbers in GME ELC, Primary, Secondary and Secondary GLE.

November 2024	GME Pupil Count	GLE Pupil Count	Total Pupil Count	% GME	% GLE
Nursery	354	0	2798	12.6%	
Primary	1091	0	15982	6.82%	
Secondary	460	2050	13998	3.3%	14.6%
Total	1905	2050	32777	5.8%	6.25%

November 2023	GME Pupil Count	GLE Pupil Count	Total Pupil Count	% GME	% GLE
Nursery	330	0	2849	11.5%	0
Primary	1087	0	16265	6.7%	0
Secondary	442	2127	13868	3.2%	15.3%
Total	1859	2127	32982	5.6%	6.4%

### ELC GME

- **GME Pupil Count:** There is a noticeable increase in the number of pupils in Gaelic Medium Education (GME), rising from 330 to 354.
- **Total Pupil Count:** The overall number of nursery pupils has slightly decreased from 2849 to 2798.
- **% GME:** The percentage of GME pupils has increased from 11.5% to 12.6%, indicating a growing interest in GME at the nursery level.

### Primary

- **GME Pupil Count:** The number of primary pupils in GME has slightly increased from 1087 to 1091.
- **Total Pupil Count:** The total number of primary pupils has decreased from 16265 to 15982.
- **% GME:** The percentage of GME pupils has increased from 6.7% to 6.82%, showing a sustained interest in GME at the primary level.

### Secondary

- **GME Pupil Count:** The number of secondary pupils in GME has increased from 442 to 460.
- **GLE Pupil Count:** The number of secondary pupils in Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) has decreased from 2127 to 2050.
- **Total Pupil Count:** The total number of secondary pupils has increased from 13868 to 13998.
- **% GME:** The percentage of GME pupils has slightly increased from 3.2% to 3.3%.
- **% GLE:** The percentage of GLE pupils has decreased from 15.3% to 14.6%.

## Overall Trends

- **Total GME Pupil Count:** There is an overall increase in the number of pupils in GME, from 1859 to 1905.
- **Total GLE Pupil Count:** There is a decrease in the number of pupils in GLE, from 2127 to 2050.
- **% GME:** The overall percentage of GME pupils has increased from 5.6% to 5.8%.
- **% GLE:** The overall percentage of GLE pupils has decreased from 6.4% to 6.25%.

In summary, there is a general trend of increasing GME. The total number of pupils in GLE has seen a slight decline, but the interest in GME is growing.

- 7.2 The number of pupils in GME as a percentage increase in Highland over the last GLP period has been as follows:

Cumulative % increase from 2017/18 to 2022/23\*

ELC – 22.76% increase  
Primary – 20.17% increase  
Secondary Gàidhlig Fluent – 23.16% increase  
Secondary GME – 25.81% increase  
Secondary GLE – 8.67% increase

The total number of the Highland primary pupils within GME provision as part of the total Highland primary numbers, shows there has been a steady year on year increase in these numbers, with extensions and new school builds to several schools where GME provision is available. This is on the context of falling school rolls overall.

- 7.3 \*An updated analysis of Gaelic pupil numbers in Highland to 2025 will be provided at the next Gaelic Committee. This will allow for gathering of data from Primary 1 and ELC enrolment, which will contribute to the overall trend in Highland GME numbers.

Officers are currently working to identify trends and target schools where support may be required due to changes in pupil numbers or GME ELC enrolments.

Designation: Interim Chief Officer Primary and ELC

Date: 31/1/25

Author: Ruairidh MacKay, Lena Walker

Background Papers: n/a

Appendices: n/a