

# Advice on Gaelic Education

**Gaelic Medium Education: secondary stages**

Updated March 2022

## 9. Gaelic Medium Education: secondary stages

### Key messages:

- The **rationale** for the curriculum needs to be based on a shared understanding of Gaelic Medium Education and bilingualism.
- Staff, young people, parents and partners need to be clear on the purpose and value of Gaelic Medium Education.
- The **Gaelic Medium curriculum from S1 to S3 and into the senior phase remains one based on the principles of immersion.**
- Young people need to experience a continuum of learning pathways in the broad general education and the senior phase with opportunities to develop their fluency across all four contexts of the curriculum.
- To allow progression in immersion, schools need to aim to deliver **a sufficient proportion of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic.**
- Gaelic Medium Education needs to be a compulsory part of the broad general education up to the end of S3, after which learners move into the senior phase from S4-S6 that offers a range of qualifications and awards in and through Gaelic.
- The “1+2 Approach to Language Learning in Scotland” should be used in schools with Gaelic Medium provision to enable all young people in English medium education to learn Gaelic as an additional language. This includes celebrating Gaelic as an official language of Scotland and the rationale for collective ownership of its promotion and protection, along with its associated culture and heritage.

**9.1** This Advice applies both to dedicated **Gaelic Medium provision or where Gaelic and English provision operate alongside each other.** Other documents on the curriculum also apply to Gaelic Medium Education, including the Chief Inspector’s Report, Building the Curriculum series, The Refreshed Narrative and Curriculum for Excellence Briefings.

**9.2** The Advice in this section may also be useful to the broad general education at the primary stages, including for transitions. At the secondary stages, Gaelic Medium Education is still at a very early stage of development. **Subjects available** in the broad general education include French, Gàidhlig, geography, home economics, history, mathematics, modern studies, personal and social education, physical education, religious and moral education and science. These subjects are generally available from S1 to S3. At the senior phase, qualifications are generally undertaken in Gàidhlig in geography, history, mathematics and modern studies.

**9.3** Ideally, all subjects and contexts of the curriculum are delivered through the medium of Gaelic. Teachers need resources and career-long professional learning to support them in the delivery of this aim. Teachers of Gaelic have an important role to play at the secondary stages in **teaching specialist terminology and vocabulary** so that young people can continue their learning through the medium of Gaelic. In addition, all teachers of Gaelic Medium Education have a role to play in the development of children’s and young people’s fluency and specialist vocabulary, as part of the development of literacy.

**9.4** The **rationale** for the curriculum needs to be based on a shared understanding of Gaelic Medium Education and bilingualism. Staff, young people, parents and partners are clear on the purpose and value of Gaelic Medium Education. They are aware of their role, irrespective of whether they can speak Gaelic, in being positive and supportive to Gaelic Medium Education. This is augmented further with the design of the curriculum for those in English medium education being able to learn Gaelic as part of the framework for Gaelic Learner Education, which leads to awards and qualifications. There needs also to be regular opportunities for all to learn of the value and contribution that Gaelic language and culture

makes to Scotland's identity. Young people should experience a curriculum that develops the knowledge and understanding, skills, values and attitudes towards Gaelic to enable them to engage in its promotion and protection, and prepare them for life as global citizens.

**9.5 The Gaelic Medium curriculum from S1 to S3 and into the senior phase remains one based on the principles of immersion.** Gaelic Medium Education needs to be a compulsory part of the broad general education up to the end of S3, after which learners move on into the senior phase from S4-S6. Its purposes span all the key aspects of a young person's learning and development, as expressed in the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. Young people still need to experience a continuum of learning in the broad general education and the senior phase with opportunities to develop their fluency by:

- studying Gàidhlig as a subject;
- studying other subjects through the medium of Gaelic;
- engaging in interdisciplinary learning;
- engaging in opportunities for personal achievement; and
- using Gaelic to participate in, and contribute to, the life and ethos of the school.

**9.6 To allow progression in immersion, schools need to aim to deliver a sufficient proportion of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic at the secondary stages to enable young people to continue to develop their fluency in Gaelic through immersion.** An exact proportion is not, at this stage, specified. However, it has to be sufficiently substantial to impact on young people's fluency. Secondary schools associated with all Gaelic Medium schools need to aim to continue to build on fluency by providing substantial learning, teaching and assessment through the medium of Gaelic. To ensure equality of access to Gaelic Medium Education, all secondary schools need to be ambitious in aiming for a substantial proportion of the curriculum being delivered through the medium of Gaelic.

**9.7 Teachers monitor and track children's progress in developing fluency across the four contexts of learning.** The curriculum offers sufficient flexibility to enable any lapses in fluency to be addressed through planned opportunities and events for total immersion. Such total immersion experiences also enable young people to apply their learning of Gaelic to achieve breadth, depth and challenge. Young people who have discontinued their learning of Gaelic at transition points need also to be offered these total immersion experiences so that they have opportunities to maintain and extend their fluency. Such total immersion experiences are part of children's and young people's entitlement to Gaelic Medium Education. These total immersion opportunities are based on groupings of Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes from the curriculum areas. They provide relevant, challenging and enjoyable learning experiences and stimulating contexts to meet the learning needs of children and young people learning through the medium of Gaelic.

**9.8 Learning through immersion at the secondary stages is developed in an ethos of understanding and respect to the young people who are developing bilingualism through Gaelic Medium Education.** The ethos of the school needs to support the learning of Gaelic as detailed in this Advice. The *1+2 Approach to Language Learning in Scotland* needs to be used in schools with Gaelic Medium provision to enable all young people in English medium education to learn Gaelic as an additional language. A key feature of an ethos which supports the learning of Gaelic is when all young people have an opportunity to learn Gaelic as part of Gaelic Learner Education, if they wish. Such situations present interesting possibilities for making connections across learning. These include embedding Gaelic within shared areas and activities such as assemblies, dining room routines, classroom instruction. In making connections, the principles of immersion should be carefully adhered to. Gaelic Medium Education is a compulsory part of the broad general education up to the end of S3, after which learners move on into the **senior phase** from S4-S6. The purpose of Gaelic Medium Education spans all the key aspects of a young person's learning and development, as expressed in the attributes and capabilities of the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence. The senior phase now presents schools with more flexibility to meet better the needs of all learners to improve learners' achievements in Gaelic and through Gaelic. Gaelic Medium Education needs to be included in the senior phase.

**9.9** Long-term planning for progression in Gaelic Medium Education needs to ensure that curriculum designers are **using all of their staff, partners and Gaelic organisations to deliver and support young people's learning**. The obvious curriculum context is to have teachers delivering their subjects through the medium of Gaelic. However, to have a sufficient proportion of the curriculum delivered through the medium of Gaelic also requires a planned approach to the place of Gaelic across all four contexts of the curriculum. This includes awards for personal achievements through the medium of Gaelic. Schools should aim for there to be at least a daily input where young people in Gaelic Medium Education hear and use their Gaelic language in purposeful and meaningful situations.

**9.10** Features of **curriculum design** such as specialisation, enrichment courses, electives and master classes need to be used to increase the proportion of the curriculum to be delivered through the medium of Gaelic. In the immediate term, schools need to be matching the availability of teachers who are fluent in Gaelic to the delivery of discrete subjects and interdisciplinary learning through the medium of Gaelic. All schools should know their curriculum partners for Gaelic Medium Education and be using them to build coherent and progressive learning. They need to be mapping existing partnerships and developing new ones with different providers including parents, Gaelic organisations, colleges, community learning and development, and others in the wider community including local employers and businesses to assist their staff take forward the other contexts of the curriculum. The report on **Developing Scotland's Young Workforce** and the Young Person's Guarantee gives new impetus to learning taking place at relevant, real-life settings with 16+ learning pathways being through the medium of Gaelic.

**9.11** Teachers of Gaelic routinely deliver Gàidhlig as part of young people's entitlement to a Gaelic Medium Education. Their flexibility in teaching across the curriculum from S1 to S3 is highly recommended. There are many highly effective examples of teachers already doing so. The **flexibility of teachers of Gaelic**, or teachers able to speak Gaelic, is already evidenced through teaching religious and moral education, religious education and health and wellbeing/personal and social education across stages. In turn, teachers need to be supported with high-quality key resources in Gaelic and their non-contact time needs to recognise that they are teaching across curriculum areas and need extra time to plan.

**9.12** Teachers of Gaelic have a role in devising a strategy for the development and assessment of **literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing through the medium of Gaelic**, which links to its development through the medium of English.

**9.13** In many schools, young people's entitlement to **universal and targeted support** is implemented as a daily or weekly planned time with a teacher, sometimes as part of registration. In some schools, this is delivered by a named person, registration teacher, tutor or mentor. For those learning in Gaelic Medium Education, this may present an opportunity for the support to be delivered through the medium of Gaelic. In some schools, this is achieved by having a multi-age group.

**9.14** Schools need to be developing a framework for **interdisciplinary learning** through the medium of Gaelic to ensure that young people experience their entitlement to a sufficient proportion of learning through the medium of Gaelic. This can help to ensure that interdisciplinary learning is planned around young people's needs and makes use in another context of the combined language skills of curriculum partners. Interdisciplinary learning provides a stimulating and self-motivating context for developing and applying fluency, while also being enjoyable and relevant. It leads to a better, more rounded understanding of important ideas and to an increased competence in using knowledge and skills in transferable ways. Staff will need to be clear about the connections across learning that they want young people to explore and understand. They will also know what young people have learned previously, and how they will apply and develop this learning in new and different ways. Everyone involved will know which skills and ideas from different subjects or disciplines they are bringing together, and why. They will also know how interdisciplinary learning is building on and extending young people's fluency.

**9.15** There needs to be much more flexibility and **cluster working** across primary and secondary stages, with teachers seeing themselves as teachers of the broad general education and collaborating on delivering learning and teaching. **Schools with 3-18 provision** open up possibilities for teachers to be working across stages and with multi-age groups. The same can be done with primary and secondary schools working in cluster arrangements. The use and promotion of Gaelic at **whole-school events** are also important. The Gaelic language should be included and embedded in these events to enable all to experience Gaelic. On other occasions, whole-school events such as assemblies are delivered through the medium of Gaelic for young people in Gaelic Medium Education. This enables young people to develop literacy through Gaelic, while also developing the outcomes of religious and moral education, for example.

**9.16** Opportunities for **personal achievements** are an important context for applying language, building confidence and a range of skills for learning, life and work. A number of programmes, such as the John Muir, Duke of Edinburgh and Saltire awards are already enhancing Gaelic Medium Education, while also providing opportunities for learning in residential and outdoor. Events like An Deasbad Nàiseanta and Film G develop skills in Gaelic, while also those associated with learning, life and work. Personal achievements need to be part of a planned process with partners collaborating closely with teachers in planning progression and coherence in learning. They should also, while respecting the confidentiality of children and young people, assist with meeting the outcomes of monitoring and tracking to build on fluency. It is also a national expectation that partners are involved in self-evaluation. Opportunities for personal achievement need to provide rich opportunities to develop further language skills and may include:

- after school clubs, summer camps, and excursions which focus on expressive arts, creativity, singing, debating competitions, making of films;
- support with homework and learning;
- sports and pastimes;
- links to other provisions which offer Gaelic Medium Education and other countries that develop learning through immersion; and
- development of personal achievements and awards.

**9.17** Community learning and development and others need to continue to provide opportunities for learners to achieve **accreditation through the medium of Gaelic for skills for learning, life and work**. This needs to include sports coaching and leadership awards and a broad range of music, theatre and arts activities. Through these, learners build their own confidence and self-esteem, increase their creativity, and develop a range of skills leading to enhanced career pathways. It would also be useful to look at developing opportunities that encourage children's and young people's use of Gaelic at lunch time and after-school through clubs and other activities. Children need a catalyst to use Gaelic beyond the classroom. This is a contribution that partners, parents, volunteers and the community can have significant impact. In some areas, Active School Coordinators can help. Active School Coordinators also have a role in training young people to be leaders taking responsibilities for such activities. From September 2015, each local authority area will be producing a three-year plan that outlines how Community Learning and Development will be delivered. These plans need to clearly demonstrate how Gaelic Medium Education will be advanced. HM inspections need to check that the plans are showing how Gaelic will be supported in the curriculum.

**9.18** A key principle for curriculum design at the S1 to S3 stages is to ensure that all young people receive their national **entitlement to experience the full range of Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes at third level by the end of S3**. Schools should also aim to ensure that as many young people as possible go beyond to achieve success in relation to the fourth level Experiences and Outcomes. Until solutions are found to staffing issues, some of the national expectations for the curriculum will be delivered through technology, including the national digital platform e-Sgoil and through the medium of English. Young people's learning in Gaelic Medium Education needs to ensure full coverage of national guidance and advice, be it through Gaelic or English. Young people learning through the medium of Gaelic need to have opportunities for



personalisation and choice across many aspects of their learning throughout S1 to S3. These can include choices through learning, teaching and assessment approaches; topics or contexts; themes for interdisciplinary learning; the opportunities learners have to contribute to the life of the school as a community; and the activities they undertake for personal achievement. The activities that a young person chooses should build on their prior learning and provide progression through breadth, challenge and application. Many schools are planning their curricula so that young people will experience a degree of choice and specialisation in S3. The design needs to take account of coverage, as far as possible, being through the medium of Gaelic. Ensuring sufficient opportunities for learning through the medium of Gaelic is an important part of maintaining young people's motivation for developing their fluency in Gaelic. It is equally important that these opportunities are planned to enable learning, which is progressive, coherent, challenging and is preparing them for progression into the senior phase and qualifications. Care needs to be taken, however, to avoid closing off options for progression in Gaelic Medium Education.

**9.19** S3 marks an important milestone in young people's learning. This may well be their last experience of some curriculum areas or subjects. In the case of Gaelic Medium Education, it is important to celebrate and to capture what young people have achieved, and to give clear direction as to where young people are with their progress in fluency and their next steps to improve further. A well-maintained and evidenced **S3 pupil profile** is a valuable record, which supports learners' future progress. For young people, the profile and the profiling process serves as an important document for transition with learning and progression beyond the broad general education to pathways such as the senior phase, future employment and training. The process of profiling and the Profile is very important in assisting young people who are learning through the medium of Gaelic recognise their achievements and next steps in developing their language skills. Dialogue between the learner and the teacher is at the heart of this process. This is a key process for reflecting on what has been achieved as well as the learning experienced. It needs to advise young people of how they will continue to experience learning through the medium of Gaelic both in classrooms and beyond.

**9.20** At the end of **S4**, learners may be in school, college, with training providers, in the workplace, engaging in programmes offered by community and youth groups or in programmes offered in collaboration, such as those offered through school-college, school-employer, or school-university partnerships. They may be in full- or part-time programmes. They may be studying through a combination of face-to-face classes and distance learning. As they move through **S5 and S6**, they may experience an increasing range of delivery and partnership arrangements and be taking more and more responsibility for their own learning. The S3 profile and profiling needs to provide a platform to inform planning for these varied achievement pathways through the senior phase.

**9.21** As the senior phase is being developed and different approaches emerge for learners from S4 to S6, schools will ensure that young people are studying courses leading to **National Qualifications** in Gàidhlig, Gaelic (Learners), and subjects delivered through Gaelic in sufficient numbers. Schools need to track trends in presenting young people for National Qualifications in Gaelic Education to ensure that the numbers presented are maintained and increased as appropriate. As part of monitoring and tracking of progress and achievement, schools and local authorities need to reduce the number of young people leaving 3-18 Gaelic Medium Education with no award or qualification in Gaelic/Gàidhlig or through Gaelic. Schools need to look at providing appropriate and challenging pathways for these young people to build more effectively on their fluency and avoid underachievement. The design of the senior phase opens up opportunities for better meeting of learners' needs.

**9.22** In reviewing how well schools are delivering a curriculum through the medium of Gaelic, useful steps may be:

- checking to ascertain that staff who are fluent in Gaelic are delivering Gaelic Medium Education;
- checking to see if there may be more sharing of staff expertise between both primary and other secondary schools;
- checking to see how technology can be used as a medium of delivery, including the digital platform e-Sgoil for all or part of course content;

- checking to see if approaches to career-long professional learning is encouraging staff to learn and improve their fluency in Gaelic;
- working with primary schools to ensure that progression is not being hampered by switching medium of delivery;
- reviewing how well curriculum design such as specialisation, enrichment courses, electives and masterclasses are being used to increase the proportion of learning through Gaelic;
- reviewing how well interdisciplinary learning is used for Gaelic Medium Education;
- encouraging partners to deliver aspects of the curriculum in Gaelic;
- reviewing how well colleges, community learning and development and Gaelic groups contribute to Gaelic Medium Education, including with the use of blended learning approaches;
- reviewing how opportunities for personal achievements and accreditation can provide learning through Gaelic;
- using lunchtime and after-school clubs as an opportunity for young people to use Gaelic;
- checking to see if progression from the broad general education to National 4, 5 and Higher in any subject is feasible; and
- checking to see if progression from Higher to Advanced Higher is feasible.





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