

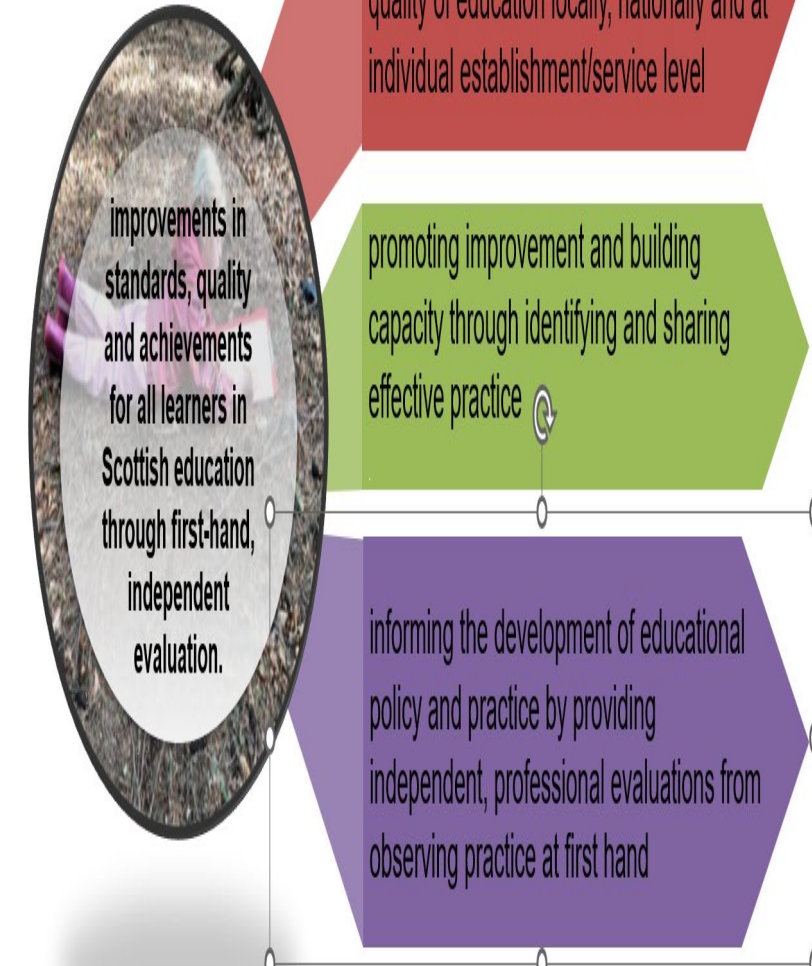
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His Majesty's Inspectors of Education

Gàidhlig Local Authority Network - GLAN

**Supporting system improvement for
Gàidhlig**

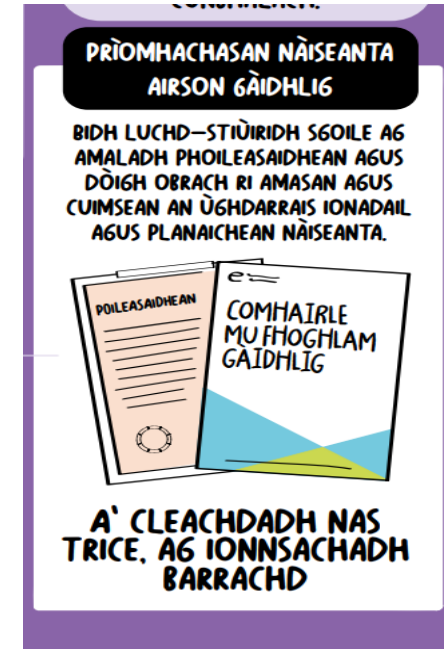
Joan Esson HM Inspector of Education
Lead inspector – Gàidhlig Sector
April 2025



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HM Inspectors' Update to support self-evaluation for improvement with:

- A national report on local authority thematic inspection
- Key inspection findings on leadership of change; learning, teaching and assessment; learning pathways
- Sharing examples of highly effective practice



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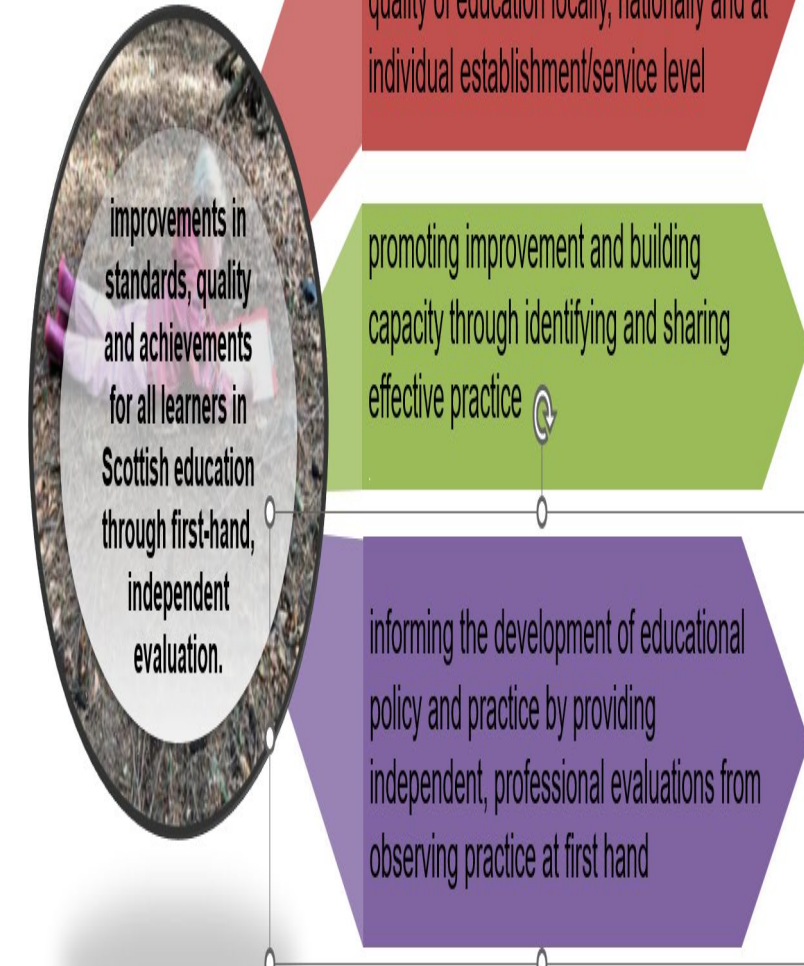
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National Report - Local authority approaches to supporting school improvement

April 2025



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Modhan ùghdarras ionadail airson taic a thoirt do leasachadh sgoile

Aithisg sgrùdaidh chuspaireil nàiseanta bho Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam



Local authority approaches to supporting school improvement

A national thematic inspection report from His Majesty's Inspectors of Education

12 March 2025

Ri fhaighinn/Report available in Gàidhlig and English



Across Scotland, there is much to commend. We have seen many examples of local authorities working effectively with schools to improve outcomes for children and young people.

However, we also found that support for school improvement is too variable. Stronger leadership development, more consistent self-evaluation, and clearer action planning for schools requiring additional support will be key to driving improvement.

Janie McManus

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education

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Specific references to Gàidhlig in the report, 'Local approaches to supporting school improvement'

Local authorities that have **higher proportions of speakers and learners of Gàidhlig** have substantial, bespoke support for schools that offer Gàidhlig Medium Education. In the most effective practice, central teams give schools feedback on the distinctive features of Gàidhlig Medium Education and on pedagogy. They use a range of evaluative strategies, such as visiting classes, analysing learners' work and assessing learners' progress through focus groups.

Specific references to Gàidhlig in the report, ‘Local approaches to supporting school improvement’

Teachers of Gàidhlig contribute significantly to the work of central teams in a few local authorities. They often have enhanced roles for Gàidhlig Medium Education, beyond their own sgoil (school).

In addition to role-specific networks, a range of more **subject-specific and cross-sectoral approaches** are also used, for example for staff working in Gàidhlig Medium Education, or with a specific focus on additional support needs.

Specific references to Gàidhlig in the report, ‘Local approaches to supporting school improvement’

All local authorities use the skills and experience of **Associate Assessors (AAs)** to enhance their understanding of national standards and expectations, but to varying degrees. AAs work in partnership with local authority officers and headteachers to build capacity and support improvement. This includes providing support for Gàidhlig.

Specific references to Gàidhlig in the report, ‘Local approaches to supporting school improvement’

In a few local authorities, officers provide training sessions for **Elected Members**, for example on interpreting attainment data and on Gàidhlig, on Gàidhlig Medium Education, and the local authority’s statutory plan for Gàidhlig.

Recommendations in the national report

Ensure that all schools receive high-quality, consistent support through **robust universal provision**. This should reduce variability within and across local authorities and secure equitable outcomes for learners.

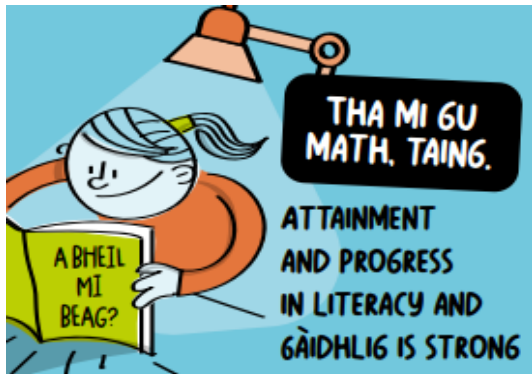
For sgoiltean (schools) requiring targeted support, **implement robust action planning**, monitoring and accountability. This is essential to ensure that necessary improvements for learners are secured at pace.

Prioritise leadership development for middle leaders, particularly in àrd-sgoiltean (secondary schools), where improvement outcomes are less consistent, with a focus on the principles of self-evaluation for self-improvement.

Recommendations in the national report

Establish a **national professional learning programme for local authority central officers**. This will help to build capacity and professional knowledge in school improvement and effective support And challenge practices.

Develop **flexible models of support** that address the specific needs of rural, remote and island sgoiltean (schools).



Recommendations in the national report

Embed local authority collaborative approaches to foster collective accountability for school improvement, ensuring these are consistently grounded in robust self-evaluation, and lead to accurate understanding of individual and collective improvement priorities.

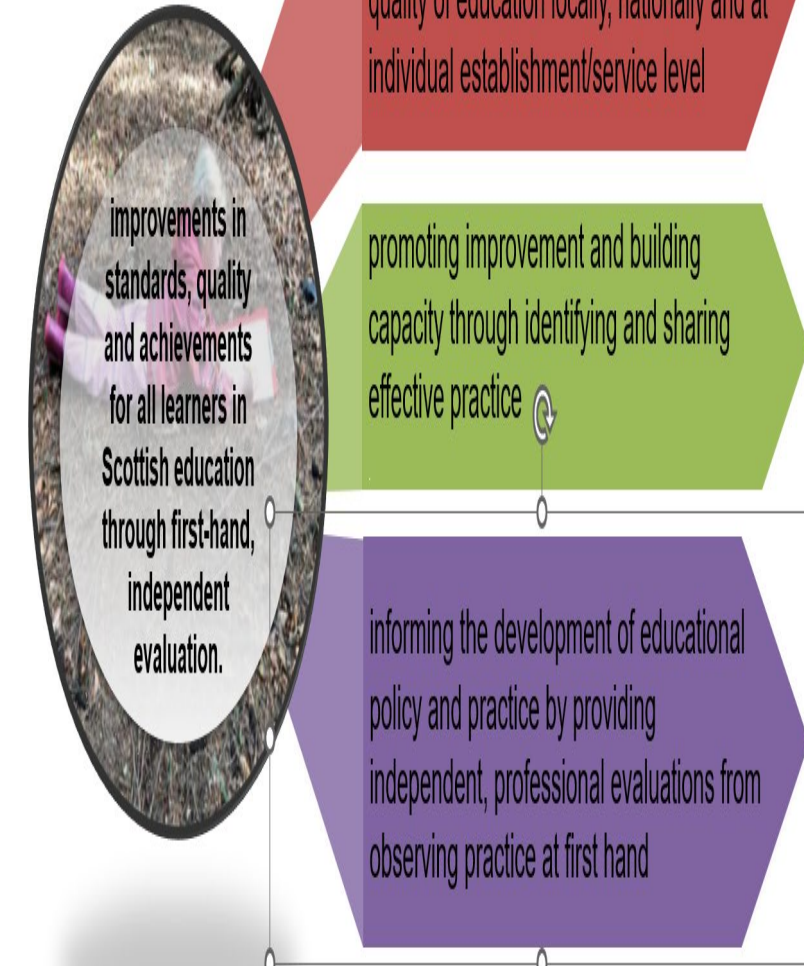
Improve the strategic use of data at both local authority and school levels. This includes developing staff capacity to interpret data effectively and use data-driven insights to inform self-evaluation, improvement planning, and resource allocation.



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Summarised Inspection Findings on Leadership of Change April 2025



- Most staff have a clear understanding of the social, cultural, and economic **context of their communities**, of which Gàidhlig is part. In successful practice, the agreed vision, values and aims focus on achieving impact for Gàidhlig as a language, medium and cultural community. Too often at secondary stages, the **vision, values and aims need to be connected more directly to Gàidhlig** and national priorities.
- As leaders of change, specialist staff for Gàidhlig across stages aim for the highest possible standards. The specialist staff team have a **shared purpose** to support children and young people's **fluency, progress and attainment**. They collaborate well with each other to support leadership.

- Strategic planning for improvement is clear at bun-sgoil (primary) in most cases. At sgoil-àraich (nursery) and àrd-sgoil the **distinctive features of Gàidhlig Medium Education** are not consistently captured well enough at a **strategic, whole-school/setting level**. This follows through to Standards and Quality Reports. This accounts for a slow pace of change.
- Senior leaders across 3-18 retain a strong emphasis on **planning improvements to raise attainment** and support children and young people in Gàidhlig Medium Education most affected by poverty and attainment gaps. In àrd-sgoiltean, raising attainment is **restricted to literacy and Gàidhlig rather than how the entirety of the curriculum** can support this.

- For Gàidhlig Medium Education, when senior leaders use **bespoke frameworks**, such as the ‘Advice on Gàidhlig Education,’ (HMI, 2022), **data and national objectives they increase impact and equity for learners**. Senior leaders need to be supported more in achieving more Gàidhlig-specific impact.

- Senior leaders' planning for Gaelic (Learners) across stages results in children's enjoyment of learning the language. Teachers need to be **more ambitious in what children can achieve using the national Benchmarks for Gaelic (Learners) across stages**. In àrd-sgoiltean, thorough planning is needed to **increase uptake** for Gaelic (Learners).
- Senior leaders' and staff's continued professional dialogue, learning and review needs to be explicitly focused on Gàidhlig and **impacting positively on quality of practice**.

- Senior leaders who are newly establishing Gàidhlig Medium Education are putting strong systems in place. Senior leaders revisit strategic direction and curriculum to plan bespoke learning, diversity and inclusion.
- In a minority of cases, Gàidhlig Medium Education is not commencing in **sgoil-àraich** and enabling parents' benefits of the **free 1140** early learning and childcare hours through Gàidhlig. This creates a **gap in learning at a crucial time in children's immersion.**

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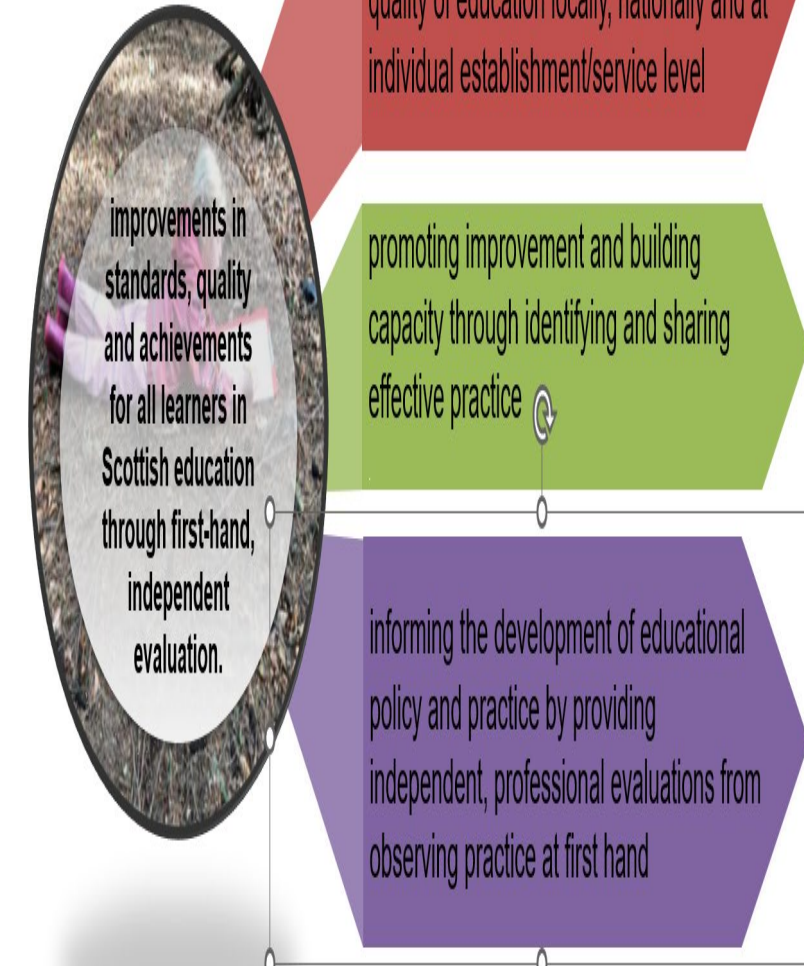
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Summarised Inspection Findings on

Learning, teaching and assessment

April 2025



- . Across all 3-18 settings, the climate for learning is an important strength. Staff, children and young people benefit from very positive, nurturing and caring relationships. This provides an important basis on which to take forward total immersion approaches.
- . Almost all children and young people are articulate, enthusiastic, and confident. Children are motivated by meaningful leadership opportunities through Gàidhlig. They are very proud of their ability to speak two languages.

There is an emerging trend for children and young people to only have a generic awareness of the rights of the child. Children and young people need to have a knowledge and apply their rights as indigenous learners of a language. They also need the specialist language to take this forward in Gàidhlig.

Staff who reflect on their practice continue to develop approaches to delivering high-quality learning, teaching and immersion. They place increased focus on ensuring appropriate immersion, differentiation, support, and level of challenge for all learners. Too often this is not captured in a policy for learning, teaching and assessment, which includes advice on the interface between Gàidhlig and English Medium Education.

In effective practice, staff use intensive total immersion approaches to increase children's fluency at pace. This has accelerated children's progress in literacy and Gàidhlig

‘Play the Gàidhlig Medium way’

In almost a quarter of sgoiltean-àraich and bun-sgoiltean, staff are asked to develop further approaches to **play-based learning**. In particular, staff are asked to be clear on total immersion and the **role of the adult in having high-quality, regular and Gàidhlig interactions**. Across stages, in effective practice staff have developed guidance on what high standards of learning and teaching through immersion looks like. Teachers use **intensive immersion** approaches to accelerate children’s standards of progress and fluency.

Staff use digital technology increasingly to enhance learning and enrich children's experiences, when applications and software are available in Gàidhlig. More of young people's learning could be through the use of digital to increase the proportion of the curriculum through Gàidhlig.

Teachers increasingly use a clear calendar of a planned range of formative and summative assessment strategies and methods to identify children's progress, next steps and attainment. In effective practice, staff have developed Gàidhlig language assessments, from which they provide children and young people with regular feedback and targets to help them improve. Too many schools are not moderating listening and talking in the broad general education.

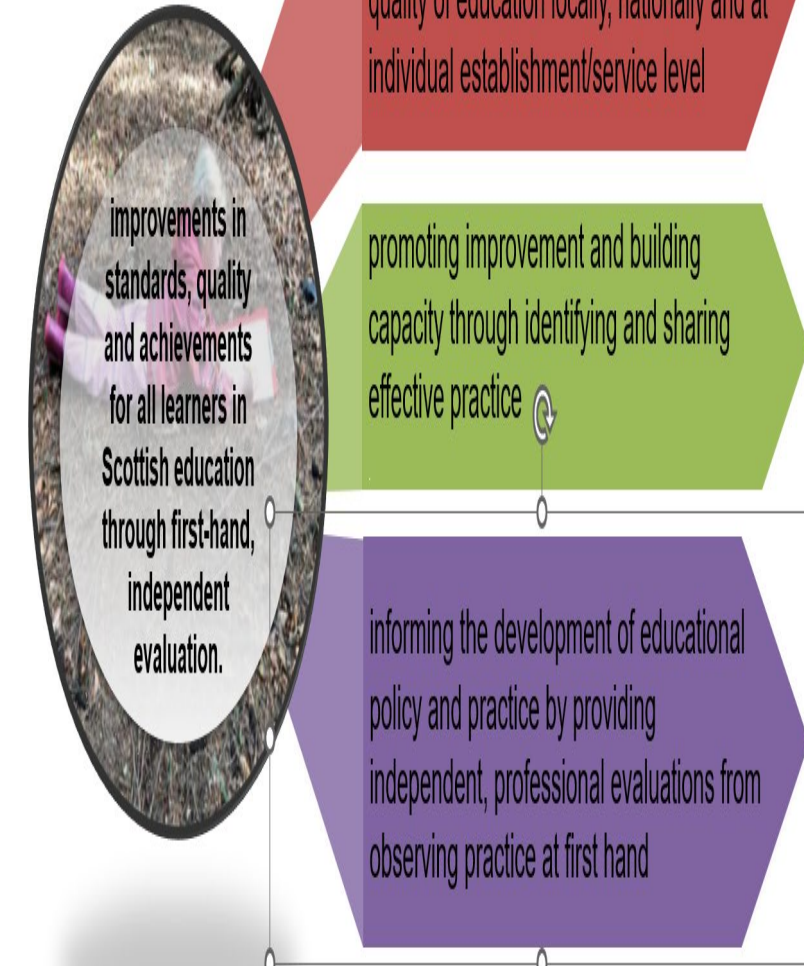
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Summarised Inspection Findings on Learning pathways

April 2025



- In English Medium Education bun-sgoiltean, there is much potential for more children to learn Gàidhlig as their first or second additional language. This has dual purpose. It is part of the curriculum for learning additional languages and strengthens immersion cultures within dual medium schools.
- Most sgoiltean clarify progression in and across curriculum contexts. This should be clear on how key entitlements, grammar, skills, capacities, culture and other important features are taken forward over a child's time in sgoil. The sgoil community should be clear on how important local matters and interests are part of the curriculum, within national and local expectations.

In àrd-sgoiltean, senior leaders and staff need to develop a rationale for curriculum design to deliver outcomes and increased numbers for Gàidhlig, Gàidhlig Medium and Gaelic (Learners). This should increase the time allocated to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing as a responsibility of all across the broad general education into the senior phase. Teachers should be encouraged to make more use of interdisciplinary learning (IDL) as another context by which to add to the proportion of the curriculum that is delivered through Gàidhlig.

Sgoiltean need **flexible and creative models of support** from partners to address the specific needs of the curriculum.

- In àrd-sgoiltean, staff need to make better use of digital technology, partnerships with the local community, businesses and colleges to support delivery of some of the curriculum through Gàidhlig.
- Across both Gàidhlig Learner and Medium Education, there are increasing concerns about young people's uptake for courses leading to qualifications and awards.
- Children and young people need to be clearer on how to access Gàidhlig-specific clubs and activities independently out with the school as a way of taking responsibility for enriching their fluency.

Partnerships are building children and young people's awareness of Gàidhlig locally and nationally. Young people know how the language may help them gain employment when they leave sgoil. We have seen an increase in Gàidhlig-specific career events. A useful next step would be to ensure clear progression in children and young people's learning through these Gàidhlig-rich activities, particularly as part of the secondary curriculum. This should include the use of qualifications, awards and formal recognition schemes. In so doing, children and young people should be assisted further in recognising important skills for learning, life and work that they are developing.

Partners working in immersion environments should have access to professional learning on immersion. They should plan with teachers to be part of accelerating children and young people's standards of progress and fluency.

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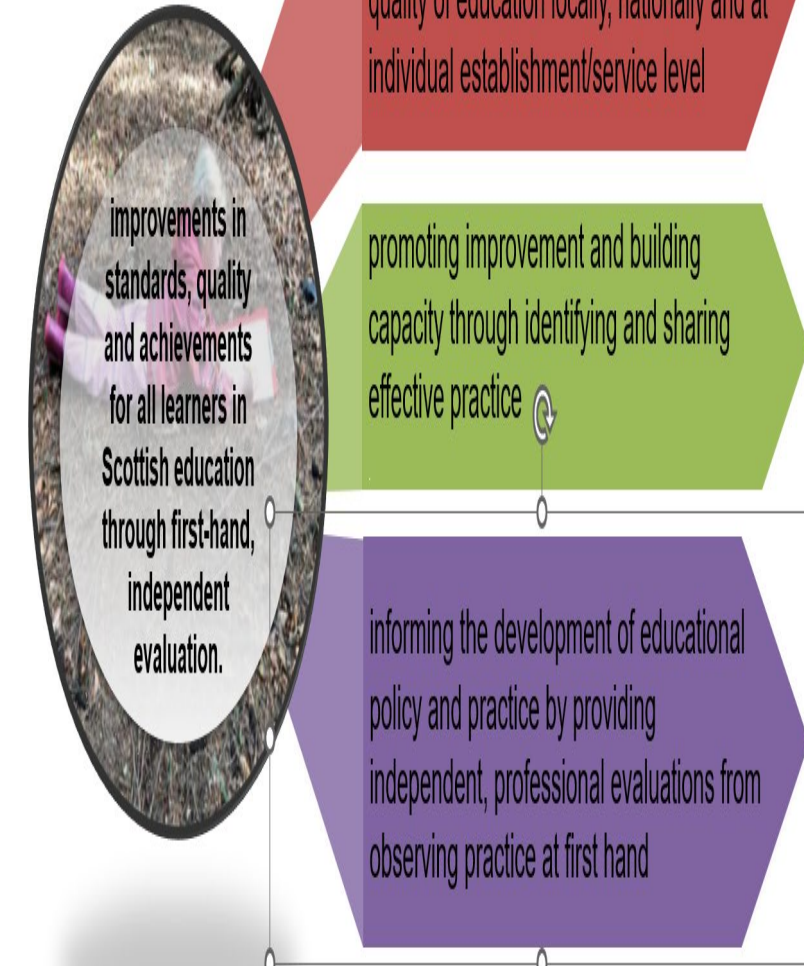
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Summarised Inspection Findings

Sharing highly-effective practice

April 2025



Gàidhlig (Gaelic) Medium Education at The Nicolson Institute

Promoting improvement through sharing highly effective practice on increasing learning through Gàidhlig across the secondary stages, leading to National Qualifications at the senior stages.

Resource available to read in Gàidhlig and English



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More information

[Gaelic Sector | HM Chief Inspector reports and guidance | Inspection and review | Education Scotland](#)

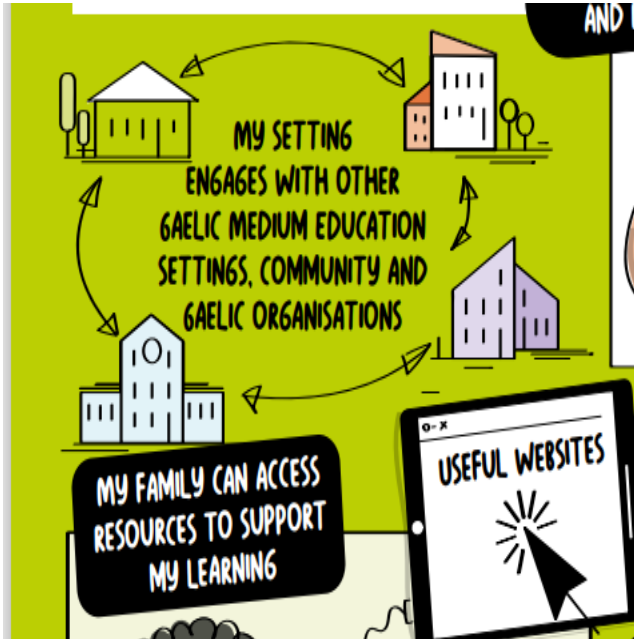
[IN GLOW Gaelic](#) an area for collaboration and collates practice worthy of sharing

[Advice on Gaelic Education | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

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