

Advice on Gaelic Education

Gaelic Medium Education: improving fluency with a planned programme for language, grammar and vocabulary

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Key messages:

- During the **total immersion phase**, the development of grammar and specialist vocabulary is embedded within learning and play through the use of high-quality Gaelic all of the time.
- Later and at the **immersion stages**, children will become more aware of the development of particular language areas. Particular points of grammar and specialist vocabulary are planned in programmes and courses across the curricular areas and contexts of the curriculum.
- It is important that schools continue the practice of having a **policy on how to correct children's and young people's language errors** so that these errors do not become the norm.

10.1 Approaches to learning and teaching of language skills for Gaelic have developed significantly over time. In the best examples, schools have agreed **well thought out approaches for developing children's and young people's knowledge and use of language**. Teachers are, for example, skilled in modelling accurate use of Gaelic for the children and young people without diminishing their confidence in using the language. They intervene sensitively and effectively to correct and model the correct use of language. The learner, in turn, sees the intervention and their repetition of the correct language as a natural part of the learning process. Teachers spontaneously create other situations for children and young people to hear and use accurate language. In doing this, they draw on good approaches for teaching and assessing.

10.2 During the **total immersion phase**, the development of grammar and specialist vocabulary is embedded within learning and play through the use of Gaelic all of the time. Throughout the total immersion phase, children are exposed to high-quality language with accuracy in grammar. Children hear, absorb and learn this without thinking about grammar. The teacher will include activities and tasks, for example, a particular rhyme or play area as they recognise this as the next step in developing children's learning. On other occasions, staff will have noted from observations of learning that children's language needs support in a particular area.

10.3 Later and at the **immersion stages**, children will become more aware of the development of particular language areas. Particular points of grammar and specialist vocabulary are planned in programmes and courses across the curricular areas and contexts of the curriculum. In doing this, schools need to have a clear framework for developing grammar which shows progression and coherence. This also needs to identify significant aspects of grammar that children and young people should be conversant with by a certain stage. Planning for grammar will also include opportunities to use and apply grammar on a more independent basis across curricular areas and contexts. The planning for the development of grammar needs to work very closely with monitoring and tracking of children's progress and achievement. Teachers will use assessment to check children and young people have mastered particular aspects of language development and return to it as necessary to consolidate and extend grammar. They should also use this information to review and improve their practice and planning of grammar as part of improving the curriculum. This will ensure on-going improvements in practice and in the accuracy and fluency in children's and young people's Gaelic. There needs to be a particular focus on embedding key grammar in the total immersion phase that may be considered more challenging to develop later as a discrete lesson in grammar. It is also helpful

with the older children and young people to gradually introduce grammatical terms to help them make connections with other languages.

10.4 It is important that schools continue the practice of having a **policy on how to correct children's and young people's language errors** so that these errors do not become the norm. Left uncorrected, language errors become more challenging for children and young people to address. Across stages, teachers need to have a consistent approach to the correction of errors in what children and young people write and say. Teachers need to have clear plans for developing fluency in a progressive and coherent way.

10.5 At the **secondary stages**, teachers who are specialists in Gaelic need to be coordinating this aspect of literacy and supporting those who are subject specialists, but not necessarily specialists in teaching languages. One approach may be that specialist teachers of Gaelic have a key role in promoting and/or teaching the language, specialist vocabulary and grammar required in curricular areas. They need also to be involved in tracking and monitoring children's and young people's language skills across all curricular areas. Teachers in Gaelic Medium Education are teachers of curriculum areas and subjects, and also teachers of language development.

