

Inspection briefing note for the Gaelic sector: provisions with Gaelic Medium and Learner Education

1. Introduction

This briefing note gives information on the purpose and nature of inspections for Gaelic Education. It is complementary to the inspection briefing notes for [Early Learning and Childcare](#), [Primary Schools](#), [Secondary Schools](#) and [All-through Schools](#).

Our powers to inspect establishments and services are set out in a range of legislation, which is detailed in our [Standards and evaluation framework](#). In addition, HM Inspectors have a legislative commitment, which is specific to inspecting Gaelic Medium Education (GME). This is based on the Gaelic Language Act (Scotland) 2005. For all inspections of GME provision, there will be a specialist HM Inspector, or Associate Assessor on teams to inspect GME.

We will sample Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) as part of our inspections. In so doing, we will review the leadership for GLE as part of [Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach](#) and in supporting the principles of [GME](#).

2. Aims of inspecting the Gaelic sector

Our inspections of the Gaelic sector aim to:

- promote improvement and successful innovation to enhance learners' experiences and achievements;
- provide assurance on the quality of Gaelic Education; and
- contribute to evidence gathering for national policy for Gaelic.

Our [Standards and evaluation framework](#) has further information to support the inspection of GME.

3. How will we inspect GME and GLE?

When inspecting GME provision, we will use the same national quality indicators (QIs) and themes as we do for English medium (EM) provision. In a provision that has English and Gaelic Medium Education within the same school/setting, we will evaluate the quality of the provision jointly using QIs. In standalone Gaelic Medium provisions, QIs will be used to evaluate and grade each school/setting. We will also make evaluative comments, from a GME perspective, on the QI which is negotiated between the school and HM Inspectors.

In evaluating the provision, we use the six-point scale in How good is our school? 4th edition and How good is our early learning and childcare?. Gaelic and English versions of these self-evaluation frameworks are available [here](#). [Education Scotland's Advice on Gaelic Education](#) provides additional, Gaelic-specific advice to complement How good is our school? 4th edition and How good is our early learning and childcare?. A Gaelic version of Education

Scotland's Advice on Gaelic Education is available [here](#). In evaluating QI 3.1: Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion we will collect evidence on the school's compliance with [Guidance on Gaelic Education, February 2017](#). A Gaelic version of the Guidance is available [here](#).

4. What happens during the inspection week?

In advance of the inspection, we appreciate that the school/setting will make available to us some documentation. Other documentation will be made available to us during the inspection week. In a provision that has EM and GME, there is no need for separate documentation. However, we would appreciate GME being reflected within the documentation. For example, it will be useful to include evaluative comments on GME in the summary self-evaluation paper alongside those for EM. HM Inspectors will use the summary self-evaluation paper as a basis of their discussion with staff. We will invite the headteacher/manager and their team to outline their priorities for improving GME, the progress thus far and evidence of impact on learners. In gathering evidence on GME, our activities will include:

- observing learning;
- working with groups of children and young people;
- looking at children's and young people's work;
- reviewing documentation specific to GME;
- discussing specific aspects of GME with groups of children and young people, staff, senior leaders, parents and/or partners. These will include: attainment and progress; planning; monitoring and tracking; learning pathways and the principles of immersion;
- discussing [statutory duties for Gaelic Education](#);
- discussing the strategic leadership of GME, including the school's use of [Education Scotland's Advice on Gaelic Education](#) and the local authority's Gaelic Language Plan.

Professional dialogue will take place in a range of ways during the inspection. For example, this may be as part of observations of learning, in focus groups, during voluntary discussion sessions and at the final discussion of findings. Meetings will be arranged with selected members of the staff to discuss aspects of school improvement relating to GME. We welcome the opportunity to engage in professional learning with practitioners of GME. It is important that all engagement is seen as an opportunity to develop thinking and to learn from each other.

The Managing Inspector will discuss with the headteacher/manager the most appropriate format for voluntary professional dialogue sessions. These will take place at the end of Tuesday.

In a full establishment inspection, the Managing Inspector may invite the headteacher/manager, or a nominated colleague (promoted or non-promoted), to accompany an inspector on one or more learning visits. The purpose of this is to support professional dialogue about key features of learning and teaching. We welcome the opportunity to engage in this type of professional learning to support GME. However, this type of engagement is voluntary.

In the inspections of early learning and childcare settings for GME, we may be jointly inspecting with the Care Inspectorate. The Managing Inspector will confirm this when making the initial contact with the school/setting.

5. How do HM Inspectors gather the views of stakeholders?

HM Inspectors will invite meetings with practitioners, children and young people, the Chairperson of the Parent Council and partners as part of our evaluative activities. These should represent GME. If the school has a *Comann nam Pàrant*, we would welcome an opportunity to meet with a representative.

We will explore with parents and carers of those in GME:

- the quality and impact of the school's partnership and engagement with parents and carers;
- their role and impact in supporting and improving the school;
- their role in their children's learning, including how the school is increasing parental engagement;
- communication with the school;
- issues that have arisen from the pre-inspection questionnaire, whilst strictly safeguarding the confidentiality of individual questionnaires.

We will make available a pre-inspection questionnaire for children and young people, staff, parents and partners. This may be completed in Gaelic. The inspection administrator from Education Scotland will provide the school with details of the link to the Gaelic version of the online questionnaire. All families of children in GME should receive a parental questionnaire. All responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire are treated in confidence unless they raise issues about the safety and welfare of children, young people or staff in the school. HM Inspectors will discuss a statistical summary of the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire with the headteacher/manager. There is no separate analysis for GME.

6. What happens after the inspection?

The Managing Inspector, in consultation with the team members, will write a letter to parents/carers to summarise our findings. In a provision that has EM and GME, the letter will summarise our findings for both mediums of learning. We will include evaluative comments on Gaelic as appropriate. The letter will provide a statement of our confidence in the school's/setting's capacity to improve the quality of its own work. We will review this separately for GME and, if required, undertake any further inspection and continuing engagement activity tailored to GME. The headteacher/manager, the chairperson of the Parent Council and the local authority will be asked to provide any comments, or suggested amendments, to the confidential draft letter. When finalised, the letter, including evaluations, will be published on our website. This will be part of a range of information about the school/setting. In the case of GME provisions, this letter will be available through the medium of Gaelic as well as in English.

At the end of the inspection, we will summarise our evaluative evidence in a document called the **Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF)**. This will contain main messages on GME and/or

GLE. We will share these messages with the headteacher/manager and the local authority at the end of the inspection. The SIF is intended for those involved in delivering the educational provision and will be written using professional language.

For more information about inspections and review, please visit [our website](#).

For more information on inspecting other sectors, please select from: [Early Learning and Childcare](#), [Primary Schools](#), [Secondary Schools](#) and [All-through Schools](#).

7. Definition of terms related to Gaelic Education as used by HM Inspectors

<i>Comann nam Pàrant</i>	Organisation to support parents with GME.
Gaelic Education/Gaelic Sector	An overarching term which describes Gaelic provision across stages and ages.
Gaelic (Learners)	In secondary, the programme for young people to learn Gaelic is referred to as Gaelic (Learners).
Gaelic Learners Education (GLE)	Children and young people may learn Gaelic as a second or third language in English medium schools. This is part of Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach . Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) is used when referring to 3-18 provision.
Gaelic Medium Education (GME)	There are two mediums through which children and young people may learn as part of Scottish Education. These are the mediums of English and Gaelic - Gaelic Medium Education (GME). In GME, children learn the Gaelic language through immersion to then use the language to access other curricular areas and contexts as part of Curriculum for Excellence. The majority of children who are in Gaelic Medium provision begin their experience of GME in early learning and childcare, known in Gaelic as Cròileagan (0-3) and Sgoil Àraich (2/3-5). Some children will commence GME in P1. GME can be in a school in which there are two mediums of learning with separate classing arrangements for those learning through the medium of English and Gaelic. Alternatively, GME may be in an all Gaelic/Gaelic Medium school in which only GME is delivered.

All of children and young people's education takes place through the medium of Gaelic. This begins with a **total Gaelic immersion** phase and is followed by an **immersion** phase. The aim of GME is to enable children and young people to be equally confident in the use of Gaelic and English. They should be able to use Gaelic and English in a full range of situations within and outwith school.

Immersion and total immersion

The method of learning Gaelic in GME is referred to as **immersion**. Children in GME learn Gaelic by being immersed in the language, which they then use to access Curriculum for Excellence. In early learning and childcare to late P3 or P4, children are **totally immersed** in the language. **Immersion** still continues beyond P3 /P4, with all of the curriculum delivered through the medium of Gaelic. This is the stage at which children embark on the experiences and outcomes of literacy and English. By the end of P7, children's attainment in English language will be broadly similar to that of children in English medium education. Immersion should continue into secondary, with schools providing progression from primary by delivering the contexts of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic.

For more information, please see [Education Scotland's Advice on Gaelic Education](#).