



IMPROVING SERIES



## IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT IN GAELIC





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## FOREWORD

Gaelic education has moved forward substantially since the Inspectorate published our last major report on the topic, *The Provision for Gaelic Education in Scotland*, back in 1994. In the 11 years since then, the numbers of children involved have grown steadily. In 1994, our report highlighted a number of key themes for improving provision. Looking back at them now, it is clear that very substantial progress has been made in a number of key areas. Good progress has been made, for example, in supporting quality improvement in pre-school provision and in expanding Gaelic-medium primary provision in response to parental demand. Equally, there has been progress in establishing approaches to 'immersion' learning that maximise children's acquisition of the language whilst also being sensitive to pupils' need to communicate and develop self-confidence. Furthermore, the need for a national source of Gaelic teaching resources, which was seen as a serious lack in 1994, has also been addressed by the establishment of Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig, resulting in an increasing supply of high-quality materials appearing in the classroom.

However, some of the key issues that were around in 1994 have proved more persistent and difficult to resolve, albeit renewed action is now underway to address them. One of the greatest challenges lies at the secondary stages of education, where very limited progress has been made in extending the reach of Gaelic-medium teaching into a range of curricular areas. The commitment, availability and retention of staff qualified in a subject and fluent in Gaelic remains a persistent obstacle to progress. Efforts to stimulate development by producing Gaelic-medium course materials in a range of subjects have had little impact, and the uptake of a conversion course for Gaelic-speaking secondary teachers has been low. We need to explore new, innovative approaches to expanding access to Gaelic-medium provision at the secondary stages, whilst also continuing to find ways of making the most of the relatively limited pool of secondary teachers currently in the system who do have the language skills to contribute. Key initiatives in this area include the establishment of a Gaelic secondary school and a national working

group to develop plans for a virtual school which will use information and communications technology (ICT) to provide secondary teaching across Scotland. More generally, it is also true that difficulties with the recruitment and supply of Gaelic teachers continues to be a critical issue at all levels in the system, constraining growth and potentially putting at risk the future sustainability of provision if not resolved.

Certainly, further progress needs to be made if Gaelic's long-term future as a living language is to be secured. The 2001 census indicated an annual drop in the active Gaelic-speaking population in Scotland of about 1000 per year. Last year there were 328 pupils in P1 Gaelic-medium classes. Even allowing for a contribution from Gaelic learning later in life, the implications of this imbalance are clear.

Much remains to be done, but there is also good cause for optimism. The passing of the Gaelic Language Bill this year should be a key milestone on the road towards developing a new, forward-looking role for Gaelic in Scottish society, and it places a direct responsibility on Bòrd na Gàidhlig to develop a national strategy which includes Gaelic education. The recent establishment of the *Gàidhlig air-loidhne* (Gaelic on-line) project, the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) initiative *Gaelic Secondary ICT Implementation Group* and the ministerial action group on teacher education and supply all aim to offer solutions to key practical difficulties highlighted in this report. If the system can capitalise successfully on these initiatives and build upon the achievements of the last decade, the future for Gaelic education can be more secure.



Graham Donaldson  
HM Senior Chief Inspector of Education  
June 2005



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# INTRODUCTION

## Aim and purpose of the report

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the development of provision for Gaelic education in Scottish schools, 11 years on from the Inspectorate's last major review of the area.<sup>1</sup> The report sets out to provide an update showing what progress has been achieved since that time, with a specific focus on pre-school, primary and secondary education sectors. More specifically it is designed to:

- indicate the scope and impact of national and local developments;
- identify and describe good practice; and
- indicate areas where there is scope for improvement.

This report is based on evidence drawn from the inspections of Gaelic-medium primary classes and Gaelic language classes in secondary schools between 1997 and 2005. The report also makes reference to provision for Gaelic learners in primary schools (GLPS) and the teaching of subjects other than Gaelic in secondary schools through the medium of Gaelic. However, in these aspects of provision direct inspection evidence is very limited and it is therefore not possible to make comment on the quality of delivery or attainment in these areas at this stage.

The report also draws on evidence from a range of other sources including:

- HMI surveys;
- Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) statistics;
- teachers' evaluations of Gaelic resources and A' Chuisle conferences; and

- published research reports from Lèirsinn and The Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching (SCILT) at Stirling University.

In addition, HMI visited a number of other primary and secondary schools outwith the regular inspection programme to observe practice, and inspectors conducted a number of interviews with key personnel in the field of Gaelic education.

Each section of the report identifies strengths and issues, as appropriate, at the pre-school, primary and secondary stages. Common features are identified and comment is made on features applicable to specific stages. The report also provides a series of questions which schools should find helpful in evaluating and improving their own practice.

In this report, the term **Gàidhlig** refers to courses in secondary schools for fluent speakers of Gaelic. **Gaelic** refers to classes for learners of Gaelic in secondary schools. **Gaelic-medium** refers to classes in primary schools where the language in which learning and teaching are wholly or predominantly conducted is Gaelic and also those classes in secondary schools where specialist subjects are delivered using the Gaelic language. **Immersion** is the period in early primary when pupils are acquiring or reinforcing Gaelic skills. **Gaelic Language in Primary Schools (GLPS)** refers to classes in primary schools where pupils experience a limited amount of Gaelic language in a model analogous to Modern Languages in the Primary School. These classes are predominantly delivered by non-Gaelic speaking teachers who have attended training courses to enable them to teach the initial elements of Gaelic.

<sup>1</sup> *The Provision for Gaelic Education in Scotland*, HM Inspectors of Schools, 1994.

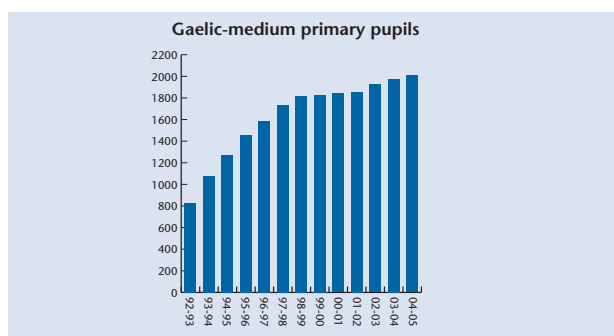


## Some key national developments since the 1994 HMI report

A considerable number of initiatives have been taken at national level to promote the development of Gaelic education since the publication of the 1994 HMI report. Appendix One sets out a chronology of key milestones in the intervening period. A number of these developments are worth briefly highlighting here.

Since 1994, there has been a major expansion in Gaelic pre-school provision, as part of the more general expansion to create access to pre-school education for all 3- and 4-year olds whose parents want it. The Scottish Executive offered dedicated grants to local authorities to enable partnership centres to achieve registration standard through improved training and resources. A number of authorities work with Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Àraich (CNSA) to support and extend their pre-five provision.

In the primary sector provision has grown considerably as education authorities have been generally successful in responding to meeting requests for Gaelic-medium primary education, although in a number of instances the growth has been constrained by difficulties in teacher supply. Some authorities have been proactive in developing Gaelic-medium provision in anticipation of parental demand.



In secondary education the development of the new National Qualifications (NQ) framework established a new suite of courses for Gaelic, for fluent speakers and learners, to complement Standard Grade courses. A working group was established which supervised the production of 25 supplementary booklets to complement and extend the 5-14 National Guidelines for Gaelic and extend Gaelic-medium teaching into secondary school subject areas, although, to date, relatively little use has been made of these booklets in the secondary sector. Consideration was given to different ways of developing other certificated courses that could be presented through the medium of Gaelic, including establishing a specific course on Gaelic culture or developing Gaelic-medium versions of a range of existing subject courses. Agreement was difficult to reach, however, and teachers' limited response to these ideas have resulted in them only being taken forward to a very limited extent.

In 1999, SEED with the support of education authorities established Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig (The National Gaelic Resource Centre). It has made a very significant contribution to improving the creation, production and distribution of learning materials for all sectors of Gaelic education.

In response to a ministerial initiative, a Gaelic Taskforce on the Public Funding of Gaelic reported in 2000. Its remit was very broad, and included consideration of education, but in the much broader context of Gaelic policy overall. It recommended the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory group on Gaelic which was duly convened and reported in May 2002. It made a number of key recommendations relating to a Gaelic Language Act and the establishment of a new Gaelic development agency, Bòrd na Gàidhlig. These recommendations are in the process of being implemented. The Gaelic Language Bill is in the

process of becoming law and Bòrd na Gàidhlig has been established.

In May 2000, the revised SEED *Circular 1144*, confirmed that the Scheme of Specific Grants for Gaelic education would continue. Funding for the Scheme of Specific Grants for Gaelic Education has steadily increased from £2.234 million in 1998-99 to £3.764 million in 2005-06.

The Scottish Executive set out its support for the Gaelic language and culture in its *Programme for Government* in 1999 and continued this in *Building a Better Scotland* and more recently in *Partnership for a Better Scotland*. Gaelic-medium education was given statutory recognition in the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000*, which required education authorities to include their plans for Gaelic-medium education in their annual statement of improvement objectives. Gaelic was highlighted explicitly in the Executive's National Priorities framework for schools, following an extensive consultation exercise in 2000.

Following on from the provisions in the *Standards in Scotland's Schools Act*, Ministerial guidance issued in 2004 introduced a specific requirement for local authorities in receipt of Gaelic specific grant to include their plans for Gaelic development in their improvement plans and to report on progress at regular intervals.

In 2004, SEED agreed to provide funding to support the extension of Glasgow City Council's Gaelic-medium primary school, Bunscoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu, into an all-through school incorporating secondary Gaelic-medium provision.

In parallel with this significant new development in relation to secondary Gaelic provision, the Minister for Education and Young People also initiated a wider review of how access to Gaelic-medium secondary provision could be taken forward across the whole of Scotland, with particular regard to capitalising on the potential of ICT based approaches.

The Minister also recognised the continuing constraints which teacher recruitment and supply difficulties had placed on expansion of Gaelic provision, and he established a second short-life working group to make recommendations for improvements in that area.

Both of these working groups were under way at the time of writing of this report, but had not yet reported their conclusions.

# 1



## ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

### Context

Evaluations of pupils' attainment in Gaelic-medium contexts have to start by taking account of the context in which their language skills are developing, in particular the fact that most have acquired the Gaelic language in school alone, and do not come from Gaelic-speaking households. Accordingly, their attainments in Gaelic and English language develop at different rates, although evidence indicates that they typically become broadly equivalent by the end of P7.

### Pre-school

The majority of children entering Gaelic-medium pre-school provision do not come from Gaelic speaking homes. For most, learning Gaelic at pre-school is their first experience of the language.

The overall experience of children in pre-school centres was positive. Children who entered with no Gaelic quickly gained an understanding of key phrases and language routines. Most staff effectively reinforced the language skills of those children who came with a degree of fluency in Gaelic.

## Primary

### *Gaelic-medium*

National data on Gaelic-medium pupils' Gaelic language attainments was last collected and analysed on a national basis in 2001/2002. The national report on 5-14 attainment in publicly-funded schools, 2001/02 (June 2002) indicated that a lower proportion of P2 to P7 pupils in Gaelic-medium classes was attaining the 5-14 level relevant to their stage in Gaelic reading and Gaelic writing compared with the equivalent results nationally for English reading and English writing at each of these stages. As would be expected from the pattern of Gaelic-medium immersion teaching, the differences in attainment between Gaelic- and English-medium reading and writing generally decreased from P2 to P7. However, at P7 there was still a gap with 67.5% of Gaelic-medium pupils achieving level D or above in Gaelic reading compared with 72% in English reading. Similarly, in P7, 55.8% of Gaelic-medium pupils had achieved level D or above in Gaelic writing compared with 59.2% in English writing.

Research carried out by the Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching (SCILT) in 1999 suggested that the proportion of Gaelic-medium pupils who reached appropriate national attainment targets for Gaelic at P3, P5 and P7 matched the expectations set out in the 5-14 guidelines for Gaelic. The report also indicated that they did not appear to be disadvantaged, relative to English-medium pupils, in terms of their attainments in English at P5 and P7. Indeed, it suggested that P7 Gaelic-medium pupils performed better in English than English-medium pupils. It also indicated, however, that P7 Gaelic-medium pupils' attainments in Gaelic tended to be slightly below their attainments in English, particularly in Gaelic writing.

*Are pupils under-achieving at particular stages in your school?*

# 1

## ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

In primary schools inspected between 1994 and 2004, attainment in Gaelic language in Gaelic-medium classes was judged to be very good in around 35%, good in around 60% and to have important weaknesses in 5%. In the same schools, overall attainment in English language (including those in Gaelic-medium classes) was very good in around 35%, good in 45% and had important weaknesses in almost 20%. In the more recent data, pupils' improved attainment reflected the expanded and improved range of resources available for Gaelic language development.

Inspection evidence suggested pupils' strengths in Gaelic language included:

- good performance in complex listening tasks and good use of notes to aid recall at the upper stages;
- clear and confident talking about personal experiences and in giving explanations and opinions;
- fluent and expressive reading;
- clear understanding of texts they had read;
- good ability to retrieve information from a variety of sources;
- a broad range of reading for information and enjoyment; and
- well presented, accurately spelt and expressive writing on a variety of topics in a range of genre.

*Do pupils in your school achieve equally good results at all stages in reading and writing as well as in listening and talking?*

Priorities for improvement included:

- increasing the amount of extended writing undertaken by pupils, and the range of topics they address;
- increasing the amount of imaginative writing and writing to give information;
- improving the use of grammar and idiom; and
- broadening the range of texts that pupils read.

### Secondary

#### *Gàidhlig*

At S1, almost all pupils studying Gàidhlig made good progress developing their skills in listening, talking, reading and writing. By S2 most Gàidhlig pupils were writing good quality extended prose pieces and were beginning to appreciate the author's craft.

Strengths in pupils' performance at S1/S2 included:

- good progress with appropriately challenging classwork;
- good development of writing skills in Gàidhlig classes;
- confident talking in groups;
- good understanding through listening and reading; and
- good command of Gaelic grammar and idiom in Gàidhlig classes.

*What is the scope to improve attainment in Gaelic in your school?*

# 1

## ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

There was a need for teachers to place a stronger focus on personal reading at the S1/S2 stages.

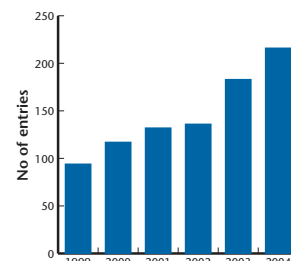
Features of pupils' attainment at the S3/S4 and S5/S6 stages were as follows.

- In Standard Grade Gàidhlig, presentations in S4 rose steadily from 94 in 1999 to 216 in 2004. Over each of the last six years around three quarters of pupils achieved Credit awards. Overall, pupils did substantially better in Standard Grade Gàidhlig than in their other Standard Grade subjects.
- Of the very small numbers taking Intermediate 1 Gàidhlig, most got A-C grades. There had been a correspondingly low uptake of Intermediate 2 Gàidhlig although presentations had risen marginally from 7 in 2000 to 11 in 2004. Almost all achieved A-C grades.
- Overall, there had been a steady increase in the number of Higher presentations from 41 in 2000 to 85 in 2004 with almost all pupils achieving A-C grades.
- Over the last 3 years, the very small numbers presented for Advanced Higher ranged from 11 to 14, almost all of whom achieved A-C grades.

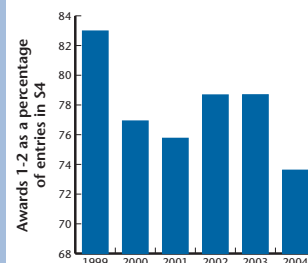
### Gaelic learners

In S1/S2, most Gaelic learners developed good, accurate pronunciation and showed a good understanding of the teachers' instructions in Gaelic. By S2 many showed good skill in oral presentations to their classmates. Others in S2 undertook the study of a linguistically simple novel.

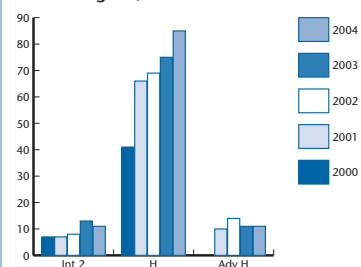
Gàidhlig Standard Grade entries in S4, 1999-2004



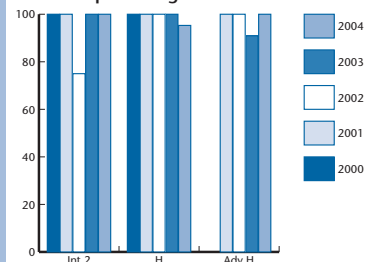
Gàidhlig Standard Grades (1-2) awards as a percentage of entries in S4



Gàidhlig NQ entries in S5/S6



Gàidhlig NQ passes (A-C) in S5/S6 as a percentage of entries





Strengths of pupils' performance in S1/S2 included:

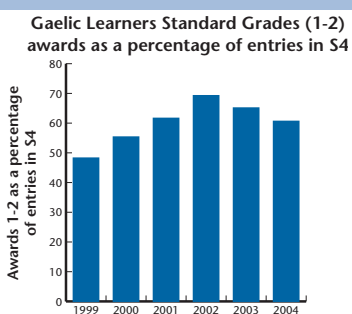
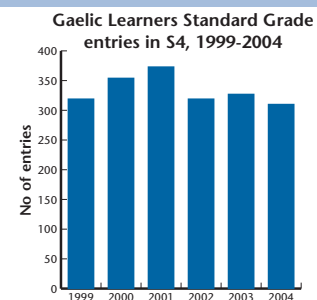
- good development of speaking skills in Gaelic classes;
- confident talking in groups;
- good understanding through listening and reading; and
- good progress in developing short pieces of writing.

Main areas for improvement included:

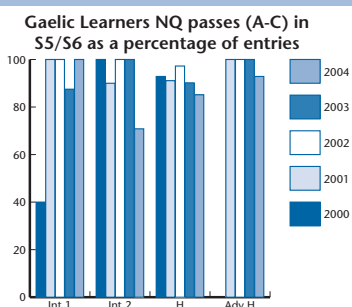
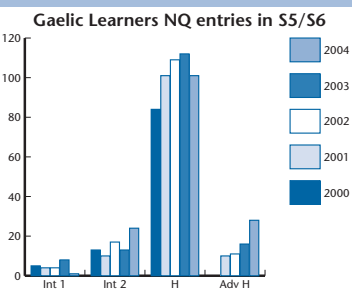
- continued development of all pupils' accurate pronunciation of the Gaelic sound system; and
- extending pupils' understanding of grammatical concepts.

Features of pupils' attainment at the S3/S4 and S5/S6 stages were as follows:

- In Standard Grade Gaelic (Learners), presentations in S4 varied between 300 and 400 between 1999 and 2004. After peaking at around 370 in 2001 they declined to 310 in 2004. Over the period 2000-2004 an average of 60% achieved Credit awards but an average of 13% did not get any award. Overall, pupils did substantially better in Standard Grade Gaelic (Learners) than in their other Standard Grade subjects.
- There were less than 10 presentations for Intermediate 1 Gaelic (Learners) in S5/S6 between 2000 and 2004. The number of presentations in S5/S6 for Intermediate 2 Gaelic (Learners) had increased from 13 in 2000 to 24 in 2004. Most achieved A-C grades.
- In Higher Gaelic (Learners), presentations in S5/S6 increased from 84 in 2000 to 112 in 2003 but fell back to 101 in 2004. Almost all pupils achieved A-C grades with an average of 45% achieving A grades.
- There had been an increase in the small numbers presented for Advanced Higher Gaelic (Learners) from 10 in 2001 to 28 in 2004. Almost all achieved A-C grades.



*How do your pupils attain in Standard Grade Gaelic (Learners) compared with their other Standard Grade subjects?*



# 1

## ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

### **Pupils' broader achievements**

Schools and authorities have increasingly developed a range of opportunities for pupils to use and enhance their understanding of the Gaelic language within and beyond school. This includes opportunities for pupils from different schools and communities to meet together in a range of cultural and sporting events. In the best cases, where schools and education authorities worked well together, they built on effective links with local communities and local and national agencies to continue and support well-established traditional cultural events such as Mòdan and Fèisean. They created new opportunities for pupils to use the language in a variety of contexts outwith the formal school curriculum.

#### *Competitions*

Pupils in Gaelic classes at all levels participated widely in a range of competitions. Gaelic language related competitions, such as those provided by the Gaelic Society of London, drew entries from a wide range of secondary Gaelic classes, many of whom achieved high rates of success over several years. Sixteen secondary schools participated in the National Gaelic Schools debate. The final debate was held in the Scottish Parliament Debating Chamber and in 2004 the competition won a major European award.

Each year both Gaelic learners and Gàidhlig pupils keenly contested the singing and literary competitions at the Royal National Mòd. In addition to an enjoyable excursion the Mòd provided schools and their pupils with an opportunity to showcase their talents outwith the formal Gaelic language courses. The Gaelic Choir from one school won the choral section of the International Pan-Celtic Festival in Eire. The competition run by The Highland Council heritage project *Am Baile* drew a wide range of high quality entries from pupils relating to their own communities and neighbourhoods.

*How do you ensure that pupils' successes are celebrated and publicly acknowledged?*

Individual pupils who have been educated through Gaelic-medium have had some notable successes. One P7 pupil became Scotland's first Junior Provost. Another secondary pupil was school dux, sports champion and school captain. Individual achievements have included the Pushkin Prize for Poetry, The Queen's Golden Jubilee Silver medal for poetry and the William Ross Memorial prize for prose and poetry.

#### *Arts and culture*

Other opportunities for broader achievement arose through activities involving the expressive arts, often enhanced by use of technology. 'Sgleog' the Gaelic website for younger children attracted cartoons, humorous articles and personal narratives from pupils of all ages. A collaboration between a visual artist and a writer supported one group of Gaelic-medium pupils to create and publish a book of their poems and pictures called *Leabhar Beag na Gàidhlig*.

Many schools noted an increased confidence and growth in esteem for Gaelic when classes were visited by professional writers, animators, musicians and dramatists. These visits often led to high quality performances in Gaelic of Nativity plays or a Saint Andrew's Night cèilidh, for example. One school celebrated the life of the eminent Gaelic folklorist, Margaret Fay Shaw, by a public performance of an innovative Gaelic-medium children's musical *Taigh Màiri Anndra*. Other visits led to the creation and broadcasting of animated films. A number of schools effectively celebrated their pupils' achievements by publishing their prose and poetry on their websites.

#### *Community*

Many schools provided opportunities for pupils to broaden their achievements whilst also fostering the local and national community of Gaelic speakers. In one instance, a group of young people participated in a range of after-school activities which involved both island and mainland speakers of Gaelic and enabled them to form friendships and appreciate different aspects of Scotland.

# 1

## ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

Gaelic-speaking pupils who had difficulties in their learning in one secondary school developed skills in an oral history project, through using video recording techniques to record the memories of an older generation. A group of secondary schools cooperated to take their S1-S3 Gàidhlig pupils on a Gaelic-medium historical excursion to Donegal and joined Irish-medium pupils at a summer camp.

A number of schools combined outdoor education trips with intensive language weekends for Gaelic learners. Others visited the Western Isles to let pupils experience Gaelic in daily use. One secondary school provided those learning Gaelic in their second year with a weekend activity course which focused on language and culture in a fun-filled approach.

Some schools had focused on strengthening partnerships with parents. For example, one had children from the primary and nursery classes speaking in Gaelic and providing links for parents or carers to other Gaelic websites. A P2 class had created a game to help non-Gaelic-speaking parents learn Gaelic. A number of schools enabled pupils to create their own newsletters thus improving pupils' writing and promoting greater parental involvement.

### *National and international links*

A wide range of schools had developed innovative ways of broadening their pupils' achievements and perspectives on the wider world through national and international links. Gaelic-medium pupils regularly raised money for a range of charities operating in Britain and in the developing world. Both primary and secondary Gaelic-medium pupils presented and contributed to the young peoples' Gaelic radio programme *Aileag* and the equivalent television programme *Dè a nis*. One P7 class group compiled and broadcast a weekly radio programme for their school.

Other schools had established links and partnerships with schools in France, Ireland and Spain and with NASA, generating activities in which Gaelic-medium pupils at the school played a full part. The Gaelic-medium classes in one primary school built very strong links to Nova Scotia through an enterprise project and its website.

#### *Enterprise activities*

Enterprise activities were used effectively by some schools to kindle pupils' imagination and energy. In one school, Gaelic-medium pupils had successfully run a wide range of enterprise activities from Christmas cards at P1 to a home area telephone book in P7. Pupils in a secondary school raised the profile of Gaelic very effectively through enterprise projects which focused on the production and sale of Gaelic-related materials. In the process the enterprise teams won major Scottish and United Kingdom awards.

#### **Main areas for improvement**

While attainment in Gaelic language in primary and secondary schools was generally good overall, there were some key areas in which improvement is required. Across both the primary and secondary sectors, there was a need to increase the range and amount of pupils' writing. A stronger focus was also needed at all stages to improve pupils' knowledge and use of Gaelic grammar and idiom and extending the range of their reading in Gaelic.

*Do your pupils' broader achievements match the outcomes expressed in the National Priorities for Education?*

# 2



## COURSES AND PROGRAMMES

### Resources

As Gaelic education has expanded, primary schools and pre-school centres have worked hard to build up resources and programmes in Gaelic language. A key feature of Gaelic-medium education in primary and pre-school classes was the delivery of the whole curriculum through Gaelic during the immersion phase of the first few years. Teachers had therefore needed to create and develop resources to support programmes in all curricular areas, often creating their own resources.

While teachers continued to create original materials the pressure had been alleviated to a great extent by the establishment of Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig (The National Gaelic Resource Centre). Teachers did continue to adapt and translate some existing resources for specific purposes. For example, where a school had adopted a common approach to the teaching of mental mathematics or to using formative assessment techniques, the Gaelic-medium teacher adapted the materials provided for use with their pupils.

The completion of a staged mathematics programme presented new challenges to teachers, school managers and education authority staff to move from an English-predominant bilingual approach to a more coherent Gaelic-medium approach while teaching mathematics from P1 to P7. The use of Gaelic as the medium for teaching mathematics at the upper stages was, in many schools, too variable. The main reasons arose from a lack of teacher confidence with terminology, the need to make sure that pupils who moved into S1, and therefore into English-medium mathematics, were secure with English terminology, and the lack of a comprehensive resource. Whilst the resource issue had now been resolved, the need to address issues relating to teacher skill and confidence in teaching mathematics through the medium of Gaelic had emerged more strongly.

Significant shortages of resources, in both print and electronic media, still remained in a number of other areas of the Gaelic-medium curriculum. Materials for primary schools relating to science, religious and moral education, social subjects, personal and social education and drama were very scarce. A lack of materials for pupils with additional support needs was an important area of weakness. For Gàidhlig in secondary schools, although language development materials were becoming available and the range of fiction was slowly increasing, there was still an insufficient range to permit real choice and enable pupils' needs to be fully met, particularly in S1/S2.

Teachers recognised the need to connect pupils and teachers to create a more viable Gaelic-speaking community across Scotland and recognised the potential of ICT, including the use of videoconferencing, to do this. Some were wary of the attendant difficulties that often came with making this happen. Most were very hopeful about the potential of recent developments such as the launch of Gàidhlig air-loidhne (Gaelic On-line) and the future development of the BBC's digital curriculum due to start in 2006. The innovative pilot project in teaching geography online to S1 pupils was seen as holding much promise. In the meantime, teachers saw the need for more software and high quality interactive Gaelic-medium websites as a main resource priority.

In GLPS classes resources and materials were available nationally, with Argyll and Bute Council acting as the main provider. In Gaelic (learners) courses in secondary schools, teachers generally built on a nationally available course to support learning in S1 to S4 and on NQ units in S5/S6.



# 2

## COURSES AND PROGRAMMES

### Pre-school programmes

Overall, most pre-school practitioners took good account of children's needs and were successful in providing a range of programmes which balanced the children's learning of a second language with their need to communicate and be supported in their emotional, personal and social development. In the best examples pre-school centres provided a language-rich environment and introduced children to the Gaelic language whilst also widening their knowledge and understanding of the world. They ensured that children had appropriate experience of expressive and aesthetic development and physical development and movement.

### Primary courses and programmes

In Gaelic-medium classes learning and teaching was initially wholly in Gaelic during the immersion phase from P1 to P3. During this phase, staff needed to be especially careful to respond to pupils' personal and social needs sensitively and supportively, to ensure they did not become frustrated or distressed by difficulties with communication. Thereafter Gaelic continued to be the predominant teaching medium, although some teaching was also conducted in English. Effective courses helped pupils make appropriate progress in each of the main learning outcomes of listening, talking, reading and writing. Teachers gave equal importance to developing pupils' language skills and their knowledge and understanding across the curriculum.

Pupils' experiences of Gaelic in GLPS classes were intended to introduce them to the fundamental aspects of the Gaelic language and give a sound basis for continued study as Gaelic learners in S1.

In both Gaelic-medium and GLPS classes, teachers made good use of ICT, the local environment and visits to places of interest, participation in enterprise and citizenship activities, museum visits and science-related projects such as weather and bird surveys to develop vocabulary and provide real life contexts. These approaches helped pupils to see Gaelic as relevant to their lives, and to develop positive attitudes towards learning.

*What steps are taken to build on learning from pre-school?*

*In your school how well do courses help pupils to develop their skills in listening, talking, reading and writing, and build evenly on their prior learning?*

## Secondary Courses

### *S1/S2 Courses*

Teachers designing S1/S2 Gàidhlig courses faced a number of challenges. In the past, prior to the development of Gaelic-medium education, pupils who were fluent Gaelic speakers often had no formal Gaelic education in primary school, and secondary Gaelic courses were designed with that fact in mind. However, with the advent of pupils who had completed seven years of Gaelic-medium education, improved levels of attainment entailed extensive amendments to existing Gàidhlig courses. In those schools with well-established Gaelic departments, almost all courses were appropriately adapted. A few, however, failed to provide sufficient differentiation or make enough use of pupils' prior knowledge. In almost all secondary schools where Gàidhlig courses had not previously existed, courses were of good quality.

Effective S1/S2 Gàidhlig language courses aimed to enable pupils to communicate confidently in a range of real life situations. In the best practice teachers enriched pupils' learning experiences by using a range of modern methods and media for developing communication skills in Gaelic.

The best courses for Gaelic learners took account of pupils' prior experience of Gaelic, including through GLPS. This helped teachers to set realistic expectations of individual pupils from the start of S1. This was most effective where associated primary schools had met with the secondary school and agreed programmes of study in order to ensure greater consistency of pupils' experiences. In some instances secondary staff visited primary schools to provide tuition in Gaelic. Such collaborative planning enabled secondary schools to build on pupils' previous knowledge thus avoiding a 'fresh start' approach in S1.

*How effectively do courses in your school link with those in primary schools?*

*Is the quality of pupils' experiences in Gaelic language consistent and challenging from S1 onwards?*

# 2

## COURSES AND PROGRAMMES

Some education authorities had coherent programmes of study from P1 to S2, which were being implemented across primary and secondary schools for Gaelic-medium and GLPS. In some schools which housed both secondary and primary departments very good opportunities were taken to ensure that pupils' learning in Gaelic language progressed smoothly from stage to stage. However, many schools did not offer Gaelic-medium subject specialist courses to incoming Gaelic-medium S1 pupils in order to build upon their primary experience and fully meet their need to use Gaelic in a range of contexts.

The peak and subsequent decline and the relatively flat level of current uptake of Gaelic learners' courses, after reaching higher levels in the 1990s, is a matter for concern. An increased uptake has been established in a number of schools who have liaised closely with their associated primary schools with an encouraging increase in overall numbers in 2004-05. Education authorities should monitor and encourage the uptake of secondary learners' courses, in particular, where pupils have had an experience of GLPS in primary school, with a view to increasing uptake.

The best courses included the following features:

- agreed content coverage amongst schools;
- an active reinforcement of pupils' interest in Gaelic literature, culture and music at a level consistent with their language levels;
- effective strategies to meet the needs of different groups of pupils, including the highest attaining and those with additional support needs; and
- suitably challenging, varied and purposeful forms of homework.

The 5-14 guidelines published in 1993 were based on a necessarily limited experience of Gaelic-medium education in primary schools and they pre-date the development of GLPS. These guidelines have now become outmoded in some respects as the programmes of work which have developed in schools in the interim have begun to raise their expectations of pupils' prior knowledge and rate of progress. The review announced by Learning and Teaching Scotland (February 2005) of the 5-14 Gaelic guidelines is therefore timely and necessary.

#### *S3/S4 Courses*

Effective Gaelic departments designed their courses to prepare pupils well for the requirements of external examinations set by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Gaelic departments developed guidelines on course objectives, time-lines, resources, learning and teaching approaches and assessment. Teachers in single-teacher departments often relied on their own initiative and consultation with other colleagues in larger Gaelic departments. To establish consistency of practice, one education authority provided an annual opportunity for all Gaelic teachers to come together to discuss common issues and invited sole teachers from neighbouring authorities to the meeting.

In Gaelic-speaking areas, departments frequently drew deeply on local history and tradition to enrich courses. In schools in other parts of Scotland, the use of e-mail and videoconferencing gave added breadth and provided additional opportunities for pupils to practise and develop oral skills. In the best practice pupils were given clear course outlines and effective guidance on how to achieve the appropriate learning outcomes. This allowed them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Homework tasks were given regularly to consolidate learning and improve pupils' motivation.

*To what extent does the S3/S4 course build on prior learning in all four outcomes and extend pupils' knowledge of Gaelic culture and history by engaging with other schools in Gaelic-speaking areas?*

# 2

## COURSES AND PROGRAMMES

At S3/S4, a few schools had replaced Standard Grade Gàidhlig or Gaelic with Intermediate 1 or Intermediate 2 courses. These courses were proving successful in meeting pupils' needs, mainly because they took better account of pupils' prior language experience and related closely to Higher courses. Teachers reported that pupils responded positively to them and showed improved motivation and progress. Teachers were well supported in developing these courses by the provision of good quality national exemplar materials and their involvement in preparing such materials. Other schools had taken advantage of curriculum flexibility and proposed to offer early certification.

### *S5/S6 Courses*

At S5/S6, schools had implemented National Qualification courses. This had enabled them to meet a wider range of pupils' needs and aspirations than was previously the case. In some instances higher-attaining pupils who had taken up Gaelic in S5 at Intermediate 2 progressed directly to Advanced Higher. One encouraging feature was the small but significant increase in the uptake of the Advanced Higher for Gaelic learners.

*To what extent does your S5/S6 course build on prior learning in all four outcomes and go beyond minimum SQA assessment requirements in order to prepare for the demands of future employment or education?*

# 3



## LEARNING AND TEACHING, ASSESSMENT AND MEETING PUPILS' NEEDS

### Supporting Gaelic language learning in the home

The majority of pupils in Gaelic-medium primary classes did not come from homes where Gaelic was spoken. Some had access to Gaelic-speaking relatives who assisted them with homework. In the best examples, schools provided support for both pupils and parents to assist with homework and to support and extend opportunities for pupils to use the language. Examples included a telephone network where parents who were confident with the language offered their help to children in homes where there was no direct language support. Other schools offered direct teaching to parents wishing to learn Gaelic for themselves, sometimes using the materials their children were using, or helped them access this through other sources such as community learning.

Approaches varied across authorities and schools. At times, there was a risk of complacency in areas traditionally seen as 'the Gaelic heartland' as staff could make unwarranted assumptions that there was little need to provide additional support of this kind.

### Learning and development in pre-school

In the best situations, pre-school staff predominantly used Gaelic as the medium of communication and provided good models for the children. They used every opportunity to develop children's skills in listening and talking. They made very good use of the local community to develop young children's curiosity and extend their exposure to the language where possible. In a few instances, where staff's Gaelic language competence was weak, children's experience was not sufficiently rich in Gaelic.

# 3

## LEARNING AND TEACHING, ASSESSMENT AND MEETING PUPILS' NEEDS

During the early stages of second language learning most children used English as their means of communicating with each other during play and in response to adults. In good practice, staff were sensitive to individual children's need to communicate through both English and Gaelic and, whilst they encouraged pupils to move towards increasing use of Gaelic, they did so at a pace that the pupils could cope with, and in ways that promoted the growth of self-confidence. By the end of their pre-school experience many had acquired a good understanding of basic phrases and vocabulary and could respond appropriately in either Gaelic or English.

### **Learning and teaching in primary**

The picture that emerged from school inspection reports on learning and teaching in Gaelic-medium classes in primary schools was positive. The overall quality of learning and teaching was as good as in English-medium classes. This included learning and teaching in Gaelic-medium primary classes in a range of contexts across the curriculum beyond Gaelic language classes. As a result of the newness of GLPS there was as yet insufficient inspection evidence to comment on learning and teaching.

In the best examples, Gaelic-medium primary classrooms were attractive and stimulating learning environments. Most teachers were highly motivated to promote Gaelic as the medium for teaching and learning and were very effective role models for pupils in their use of the language. They encouraged pupils to use Gaelic at whatever stage of development they were at and placed a strong emphasis on the development of skills in spoken Gaelic. They accepted the use of English vocabulary as part of the dialogue in the early stages but also took the opportunity to make sure that pupils knew the appropriate Gaelic terminology. This often resulted in high levels of oral interaction between teachers and pupils about a range of topics across the curriculum.

*How effectively do teachers explain new vocabulary and rules of grammar?*

*How well do learning and teaching approaches in your school help prepare pupils to be fluent, confident Gaelic speakers?*



The most effective teachers in Gaelic-medium primary classes made good use of a wide variety of approaches. There were examples of imaginative and innovative approaches, in part, motivated by the need to overtake the lack of Gaelic-medium resources in a particular curriculum area. The most effective teachers provided good opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs or groups and to work independently. They set clear expectations for work and behaviour. They planned for a good range of interactive and practical activities for pupils in order to develop the confident use of Gaelic with their peers. They used questioning to check understanding, giving pupils time to respond, and asked for reasoned answers. At times, primary teachers found it difficult to achieve the right balance in terms of pupils' ability and concentration to take in both the new language and the new knowledge or skill in a curricular area during a teaching session. In general, however the pace of learning was good and pupils made steady progress.

Almost all pupils' learning through the medium of Gaelic was characterised by high levels of motivation, enthusiasm and confidence. This reflected both their teachers' enthusiasm and, in most situations, smaller class sizes. From a very early stage of learning most were keen to try out the language using a mixture of both Gaelic and English until they had mastered a good level of fluency in Gaelic. They engaged in discussions and conversations using their second language with very few inhibitions. During the process of learning pupils often had to grapple with both the new language needed and the new concepts presented in the subject area being studied. In the best situations, teachers took time to make sure that this happened for pupils and supported them in the process. Pupils usually had very good relationships with their teachers and, in the best circumstances, were able to discuss their work with confidence and were clear about the purposes of activities and tasks. Most were able to work very well independently or collaboratively to overtake tasks in different areas of the curriculum. For example, small groups collaborated effectively on a piece of Gaelic writing about a historical event or worked in a group to set up and report back to class on a science experiment. Often, older pupils were matched up with younger pupils to act as 'buddies'. For example, one school used a 'buddy' approach where the teacher taught older pupils how to talk with younger pupils about their Gaelic reading. Others helped their younger partners to learn the Gaelic terms in mathematics.

*How much opportunity do your pupils have to use ICT and a range of media to support their learning?*

*Are your pupils encouraged to work independently and take responsibility for their learning?*

*To what extent are your pupils encouraged and enabled to produce work of a high standard?*

# 3

## LEARNING AND TEACHING, ASSESSMENT AND MEETING PUPILS' NEEDS

### Learning and teaching in secondary

In secondary schools, evaluations of teaching and learning relate to Gaelic language classes only. As a result of the very limited nature of secondary Gaelic-medium subject provision, there was insufficient inspection evidence available to draw firm conclusions.

In most secondary schools the teacher of Gaelic was the sole teacher of the subject. In almost all departments, pupils were highly motivated, worked well on their own and made good progress. The teachers often made very good use of pupils' cultural interests and real-life situations. In one secondary school S3 Gàidhlig pupils had worked as a team and along with their teacher had created a good quality digital recording about local castles and legends. Some Gaelic departments provided pupils and parents with informative newsletters about course content and the department's targets for learning.

The most effective departments, whether large or small, monitored their own work and made adjustments to learning and teaching as needed. In these departments, teachers:

- used reading of texts to support writing;
- ensured good quality dialogue with pupils;
- provided effective support for pupils experiencing difficulties and a high level of challenge for more able pupils;
- taught effective approaches to planning writing assignments, proof-reading skills and error correction;
- demonstrated particular texts and styles of oral and written communication;
- focused on accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation and developing Gaelic idiom; and
- drew widely on Gaelic history and culture.

In the best schools and Gaelic departments, all staff worked very effectively as a team. Single teacher departments, in best practice, were outward looking and took care to maintain contact with other Gaelic departments. This allowed them to establish an effective working environment which motivated, supported and encouraged pupils to work to the best of their abilities.

### **The use of assessment to support learning**

At P1/P2, most schools frequently made effective use of information provided by pre-school centres and parents as a starting point for planning development in Gaelic language in the primary stages.

From P3 to P7 and at S1/S2, most teachers made appropriate use of tests, including National Assessments. Increasingly, class teachers made use of formative assessment approaches. In the best practice, the criteria for achieving 5-14 levels were widely shared with pupils.

At S3/S6, in the best situations, teachers consistently provided pupils with the criteria for success and encouraged their use in improving competence in reading, writing, talking and listening. Similarly at S3/S6, in collaboration with SQA, systematic arrangements for moderating pupils' standards in reading, writing, listening and talking had been well used. CLAS (The Association of Secondary Gaelic Teachers) had also issued guidance to Gaelic departments on raising attainment. These supportive approaches helped teachers, particularly sole teachers, confirm their professional judgements, share good practice, and apply consistent standards.

### **Meeting pupils' needs**

On arrival in P1, some pupils were already skilled and confident in using Gaelic and required challenging tasks to build on their Gaelic language skills. Throughout the primary stages, teachers often used the good practice of varying the organisation of learning groups so that work could be pitched at appropriate levels to consolidate and extend learning. To achieve this, they frequently made good use of the support provided by classroom assistants.

*How effectively are different tasks and groups used to meet your pupils' different needs?*

# 3

## LEARNING AND TEACHING, ASSESSMENT AND MEETING PUPILS' NEEDS

Overall, pupils with additional support needs were well supported. There was, however, a lack of suitable resources to assess and diagnose the difficulties of pupils whose general and Gaelic learning needs were more challenging. Most typically, teachers felt unable to ascertain whether any difficulties that arose were related to the fact that the child was learning a second language or whether the difficulties were more fundamental and would have emerged in the context of their first language. In many instances, teachers reported that external support professionals had little or no expertise in Gaelic-medium education or the issues pertaining to it. Some authorities had taken a clearer lead in addressing this area. For example, one authority had adapted nationally-available English-medium materials to assess pupils' learning difficulties and cognitive development for Gaelic-medium purposes. Others needed to do more.

In the larger secondary Gaelic departments, flexible groupings of pupils based on ability or aptitude were well used in most cases to cater for the range of needs within S1 to S4 classes. In the best practice, teachers clearly identified pupils' levels of Gaelic language competence and adapted approaches and resources to meet their needs. Where there were sufficient numbers, departments used broad attainment groupings, in both Gàidhlig and Gaelic classes, and enabled pupils to move between groups as appropriate. These departments ensured that work was well matched to pupils' prior learning.

The most effective Gaelic-medium classes and secondary Gaelic departments went well beyond class and group organisation as a means of meeting pupils' learning needs. They identified clear expectations and arrangements for challenging all pupils to develop fluency and confidence in Gaelic language and culture. In both Gaelic and Gàidhlig classes teachers introduced pupils to the riches of folklore, music and visual art to provide additional stimulus and challenge. At S3/S4, in Gaelic classes, there was good use of NQ advice to support specialist studies of personal reading and individual presentation. At S5, some of the able Higher candidates tackled writing tasks initially designed for Advanced Higher courses. Many were challenged by participating in national speaking and writing competitions.

*Are your arrangements for class organisation effectively meeting pupils' learning needs?*

**Key features of effective learning and teaching, assessment and meeting needs at all stages**

In those lessons in which pupils made good progress, enjoyed learning and were suitably challenged, the following were evident.

- Pupils who were highly motivated and enthusiastic, willing to grapple with language and ideas and were confident communicators whether in Gàidhlig or Gaelic courses.
- Strong and productive interactions between pupils and with staff and the involvement of members of the community.
- A clear focus on building on prior learning and meeting pupils' Gaelic language and learning needs.
- The use of Gaelic as the main medium of communication with pupils, whilst also taking account of the need for understanding and sensitivity to individual pupil needs as a priority, especially in classes where pupils were new to the language.
- The teacher modelling good use of the Gaelic language.
- The teacher ensuring that pupils knew the purposes of lessons and were helped to make links with other areas of learning.
- The teacher ensuring that pupils knew what language was required and were helped to learn and use new vocabulary as it pertained to the topic being taught.
- Teachers who were learners – willing and able to adapt and change their own approaches to meet the needs of pupils and to make best use of available resources and research evidence.
- The involvement of parents through advice and guidance on the courses available and on how they could help their children's learning.

*To what extent do you use pupils' performance in class to set appropriate future work for them?*

# 3

## LEARNING AND TEACHING, ASSESSMENT AND MEETING PUPILS' NEEDS

### **Main areas for improvement in learning, teaching, assessment and meeting needs at all stages**

At all stages, there was a need to ensure that all pupils had sufficient challenge and pace of work to make appropriate progress both in acquiring Gaelic and developing knowledge and skills across the curriculum. There were common factors associated with weak teaching in Gaelic-medium classes. The teacher usually lacked motivation and skill and was not suitably supported or challenged by leadership within the school or the authority. Typically the teacher did not take good account of pupils' attainment, prior learning or their Gaelic language skills, the pace was variable and activities were not engaging or stimulating. Other examples of more general weaknesses in teaching included:

- lack of confidence with ascertaining levels of attainment, where teachers were unable to compare and moderate with other colleagues because of geographical isolation;
- Gaelic-medium primary teachers lacking confidence in curricular areas such as science, technology and ICT; and
- too little time using Gaelic as the language of learning and teaching, sometimes due to lack of teacher skill with the language.

*Can you identify areas for improvement in your school?*

*What initiatives has your school undertaken to promote further improvement?*

# 4

## LEADERSHIP



### Leadership in primary schools

In almost all primary schools, Gaelic-medium classes had been established alongside English-medium classes within the same school under a single headteacher. Many of these headteachers faced particular challenges in ensuring quality in a teaching environment which used a language of which they often had very limited understanding. Almost all rose effectively to the challenge and saw their Gaelic-medium or GLPS provision as an asset and an added richness to their school.

Gaelic-medium provision in primary schools had, in almost all cases, been established as a response to parental demand. In the best practice, schools drew extensively on that support. In almost all cases, although headteachers had the challenge of managing English and Gaelic-medium streams together, they ensured that both sets of pupils were fully included in joint activities at school, through enterprise projects for example. In the best practice, headteachers engaged with and ensured support for parents of Gaelic-medium pupils and in particular encouraged those with no Gaelic to engage with their children's learning.

In those primary schools where very good leadership was evident those in positions of responsibility placed a very high emphasis on best quality. Their work was characterised by:

- a clear vision for promoting Gaelic language and culture through the school;
- high levels of effective self-evaluation;
- the continuing scrutiny of pupil progress and attainment; and
- an insistence on high quality learning and teaching linked to a strong sense of teamwork.



# 4

## LEADERSHIP

### Leadership in secondary schools

In secondary schools almost all headteachers saw provision for Gaelic-speaking pupils as providing a valuable extra dimension to their curriculum. Many took advantage of the presence of Gaelic teachers to offer classes to learners of Gaelic, often with an enthusiastic response from pupils. This was often particularly the case where schools had no previous experience of Gaelic provision. There were some examples, however, even in those secondary schools with well-established Gaelic departments, of schools in which senior management had not paid sufficient attention to maximising the potential of Gaelic provision in their school.

In those schools which successfully promoted and supported Gaelic language initiatives, staff felt that their efforts to develop and extend Gaelic provision were appreciated. Effective leaders created strong teamwork and set high standards for pupils' progress in learning Gaelic and for their attainment more widely. Such leaders demonstrated up-to-date knowledge of national developments in Gaelic and education more generally. Many, including sole teachers, had established systematic approaches to monitor and evaluate the quality of classroom practice and pupils' attainment at all stages.

In both primary and secondary schools, both non-Gaelic speaking and Gaelic-speaking headteachers faced additional challenges in monitoring and evaluating Gaelic classes. They required to develop a set of competencies which included an awareness of:

- attainment targets and where Gaelic-medium pupils should be in relation to them;
- how and at what pace children learn through the medium of Gaelic at different stages in the school;
- where difficulties might be content based as distinct from language related;
- pupils' attainment and competence in Gaelic;
- immersion techniques and second language strategies;

*Can you identify areas for improvement in your school?*

- bilingualism and biculturalism;
- parental and community expectations; and
- the culture and heritage associated with Gaelic.

### **Main areas for improvement in leadership in schools**

In the relatively few instances of weak leadership seen, headteachers had not engaged with or promoted Gaelic-medium or GLPS classes. They provided little support to teachers and took too little interest in developing and promoting Gaelic-related initiatives. Class teachers in these situations found it difficult to sustain morale, give of their best and assure parents that their children were receiving a good quality of education.

In a minority of secondary departments heads of department gave too little attention to monitoring the quality of classroom practice. Their visits to classrooms were too infrequent and in consequence they were unable to target advice and support when necessary. On occasion, pupils were badly prepared for external assessments through ill-advised choices of Gaelic texts or a misunderstanding of examination arrangements.

### **Leadership at local authority level**

Fourteen local authorities made provision for Gaelic-medium education. Seven others had a lesser involvement through, for example, community learning and development projects. The management review group for specific grants for Gaelic (MRG) was comprised of representatives of local authorities in receipt of Specific Grant for Gaelic funding, 21 in total. MRG met at regular intervals and provided participating authorities with an effective forum to discuss common concerns. Not all authorities participated actively in MRG or sent representatives at a sufficiently senior level. Within local authorities quality improvement officers included the support and development of Gaelic education in their remits. Some authorities employed either full- or part-time Gaelic quality improvement or development officers.

*To what extent has your headteacher or head of department created a culture of self-evaluation in which staff feel valued and are willing to support and learn from each other's best practices?*

*If you are a sole teacher where can you find support on specialist Gaelic matters?*

# 4

## LEADERSHIP

Local authorities which demonstrated effective leadership did so in the context of a clear policy commitment to develop and improve Gaelic provision. They were pro-active in their support and encouragement to schools to develop their Gaelic provision. Many had developed partnerships with other authorities, institutes of higher education and other organisations to try to solve practical difficulties such as staffing shortages.

A number of authorities had developed their own distinctive approaches to supporting Gaelic. Examples of effective initiatives taken by specific authorities included:

- Highland Council's comprehensive Gaelic development strategy and its links with Aberdeen University to provide initial teacher education remotely;
- Argyll and Bute's development of the GLPS programme;
- the integrated approach developed by North Lanarkshire and the City of Glasgow which linked together the pre-school, primary, secondary and community learning sectors; and
- Aberdeen City's Gaelic Arts Festival.

Additionally those who had been successful in increasing the numbers entering Gaelic education showed:

- a close engagement with parents to promote Gaelic-medium education or GLPS;
- an emphasis on providing high quality experiences for pupils;
- encouraging schools to develop imaginative and innovative projects and initiatives;
- providing continuity and progression in Gaelic education from pre-school to secondary classes;
- good relationships with external organisations promoting Gaelic;

*How effectively is your education authority ensuring a coherent strategy for supporting Gaelic education in your area?*

- joint working across a range of council services to promote Gaelic;
- skilful adaptation of national initiatives such as Early Intervention to improve learning and teaching in Gaelic;
- involvement in the creation of high quality resources and the promotion of new ways of learning in and through Gaelic; and
- the effective use of Specific Grant funds to increase pupil numbers in Gaelic classes.

#### **Main areas for improvement in leadership in local authorities**

In those authorities which placed less emphasis on improving their Gaelic provision, there was a lack of a strategic planned approach to developing Gaelic-medium education. They demonstrated a need for more active promotion of Gaelic-medium education in secondary schools. They required to:

- ensure opportunities for progression and continuity in Gaelic-medium education from pre-school to secondary school;
- participate more fully in collaborative development with other authorities, for example through the work of MRG;
- engage with parents to encourage a greater uptake of Gaelic-medium education in pre-school, primary and secondary; and
- liaise closely with schools to ensure they are proactive in developing all aspects of Gaelic education and accord it the same value as other aspects of education.

# 5



## TEACHER RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

### Teacher education and supply

Recruiting and training a sufficient number of teachers has been one of the key issues constraining the development of Gaelic education throughout recent times, and it continues to do so.

Education authorities have estimated medium- and long-term staff needs and undertaken a number of initiatives in collaboration with institutions involved in Gaelic and teacher education. These have included the development of off-campus training provision to provide training in teachers' own localities. With Government support, teacher education institutions have ring-fenced student places for appropriately qualified potential Gaelic-medium students in both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Current arrangements for accurately forecasting demand for Gaelic teachers and Gaelic-medium teachers are not sufficiently systematic. Further work is required through MRG, working with SEED and the General Teaching Council, to establish patterns of growth and forecast demand more accurately particularly as increasing numbers complete Gaelic-medium primary education.

Initiatives aimed at producing courses tailored to Gaelic-medium education at pre-school and primary level and improving access to teacher training include recently-established training courses between the Highland Council and Aberdeen University and between Strathclyde University and the University of the Highlands and Islands Millennium Institute for Gaelic-medium pre-school and primary teachers. Aberdeen University has recently improved its pre-service opportunities for prospective Gaelic-medium primary and secondary Gaelic teachers by offering

distance learning. Both Aberdeen and Strathclyde Universities make provision for the post-graduate training of secondary teachers of Gaelic. There is no provision for pre-service training for Gaelic-medium subject specialist teachers in secondary schools.

In addition to recruiting new teachers into the education system, steps have been taken to maximise the potential contribution of those Gaelic-speaking teachers who are currently teaching in schools but not actively involved in Gaelic teaching. Such teachers may be interested in becoming involved in Gaelic-medium education but may lack confidence in their fluency in the language. In an attempt to tap this source of staff more effectively, the Executive has funded the development of a part-time conversion course which was offered by Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO) but the uptake has been very low. This course is being redesigned to enable potential Gaelic-medium teachers to access it remotely through web-based learning.

At present, however, even the budgeted number of places available is not being filled and the minimum number of new entrants required in Gaelic-medium teaching is not being met.

Problems around teacher recruitment and supply are widely recognised as being a key obstacle to progress in expanding Gaelic-medium education. In an effort to identify a clear way forward in tackling these issues, the Minister for Education and Young People set up the Gaelic-medium Education Teacher Recruitment and Supply Action Group in early 2005. The group is charged to produce a national action plan by May 2005.

### Continuing professional development

The continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers in Gaelic education is also an issue that requires some co-ordination at national level as well as action at school and authority level. Because of the small number of Gaelic-medium teachers overall and the continuous need to develop policy, practice and resources, a relatively high proportion of staff has been engaged in some form of national development work. This has served to give classroom teachers a wider perspective on the work they were engaged in and has gone some way towards reducing the geographical or professional isolation within which many worked. In the best situations in schools, Gaelic-medium teachers took part in the school's own approaches to monitoring and self-evaluation. They made use of school and authority-based CPD opportunities and adapted the outcomes for their own needs. However, not all schools and authorities had yet addressed in CPD programmes the more specific needs of Gaelic-medium teachers such as teachers' skills and confidence in improving their own language or in assessing and addressing the needs of pupils requiring additional support.

In response to the need to enable Gaelic-medium teachers to come together to share practice and

identify priorities for improvement, HMIE held a seminar (A' Chuisle) for all Gaelic-medium primary teachers across Scotland in November 2002. A subsequent seminar was held by Learning and Teaching Scotland in March 2004 with a focus on the expressive arts. A further seminar, A' Chuisle 3 is planned for June 2005 which will consider social subjects and ICT in learning and teaching. Teachers' evaluations showed that they regard the A' Chuisle seminars very positively. HMIE have subsequently noted many of the ideas and techniques suggested in the seminars being used in classrooms. Learning and Teaching Scotland have also been instrumental in taking forward many of the outcomes of A' Chuisle including the creation of the Gàidhlig air-loidhne project.

Other bodies have also played a role in fostering networking and support for teachers in Gaelic education. Comunn na Gàidhlig had been instrumental in establishing CLAS (the Professional Association for Secondary Gaelic Teachers) and in organising Gaelic-related careers conventions and sixth year conferences. There would be benefit in developing further networking opportunities for staff involved in teaching other subjects at the secondary stages through the medium of Gaelic.

# 6



## CONCLUSIONS, MAIN STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Overall, it is clear that progress has been made in many areas of Gaelic education in recent years, although development in some key areas remains problematic. Gaelic-medium education has only formally been in place since 1986 but has grown steadily since then and continues to do so. The quality of provision in Gaelic-medium primary is generally good and it is now complemented by good quality Gaelic-medium pre-school provision in many areas. Pupils have been supported and encouraged to achieve highly and many have done so. Many of those pupils who started in Gaelic-medium education at P1 in the late 1980s are now entering the educational and other systems as trained professionals and beginning to make a dynamic input.

The evidence indicates that pupils in Gaelic-medium primary schools are generally attaining well. There are particular strengths in attainment in some aspects, although areas for improvement, particularly in writing, are also clear. The pattern of progress and attainment in Gaelic-medium units differs in some respects from that typically found in English-medium schools. As a result, it will be important that all parties involved continue to monitor closely how well pupils are attaining in Gaelic-medium provision, throughout the stages. As new arrangements are put in place nationally to monitor attainment in relation to 5-14 levels built around the *Scottish Survey of Achievement*, the requirement to gather attainment data on Gaelic-medium pupils needs to be taken into account. Such data will ensure that a clear view can be obtained nationally on how pupils in Gaelic-medium are attaining in relation to their English-medium peers, whilst also providing valuable benchmarks against which individual local authorities and schools can evaluate their performance.

In secondary schools provision in Gàidhlig courses is generally strong, where it exists, and the growing number of pupils who are progressing to take Standard Grade, Higher and other qualifications are mostly attaining well. Young people are also being encouraged to use the Gaelic language in a range of situations outwith formal school classes and to appreciate that Gaelic is an integral part of daily life, not just confined to school.

The development of provision for Gaelic learners is also encouraging. The development of GLPS courses in primary schools has given a new impetus to this aspect of provision and it now introduces substantial numbers of new pupils to the language annually. There is now a need to review secondary provision for Gaelic learners in many areas to capitalise more effectively on the earlier start being offered to pupils, and to expand the number of pupils taking Gaelic through to certificate level. In comparison to Gaelic-medium, GLPS and Gaelic learners' courses are potentially applicable to a far wider audience of pupils across the whole of Scotland who are interested to learn about the language and culture. Increasing the numbers involved can only be good for the development of Gaelic more generally and may also, in time, lead to more fluent speakers emerging as pupils pursue their interest to advanced levels.

However, there continue to be key weaknesses in the extent to which Gaelic-medium provision is systematically followed through from primary to the secondary stages. The needs of all pupils who successfully complete seven years of Gaelic-medium education in primary school and achieve fluency in Gaelic are not being met fully. A single Gàidhlig course with minimal daily exposure to the language or less, if the timetable so dictates, is insufficient to maintain and develop fluency in a range of domains. In 2004 only 55% of P7 pupils from Gaelic-medium

primary classes enrolled in Gaelic-medium education in S1. These figures bode ill for a self-sustaining language. Gaelic-medium secondary education requires extensive development to ensure that pupils' needs and aspirations are met. Too many secondary schools in areas traditionally seen as 'the Gaelic heartland' have not yet embraced the concept of providing Gaelic-medium education in a range of subjects, with the potential advantages that could bring.

Recognition of the lack of progress being made in developing Gaelic-medium secondary provision in non-language subjects led the Minister for Education and Young People to establish a short-life working group to review the issues and make recommendations on how better progress can be achieved. The time is ripe for such an initiative, exploring fully how the growing potential of ICT-based approaches may provide a platform for collaboration between schools and authorities in this area. The simultaneous Ministerial initiative in providing funding to support the expansion of the Glasgow Gaelic school into the secondary stages, should also provide a resource that can play an important role in taking a major step forward in this area.

Whilst some progress has been made, teacher commitment, recruitment, training and supply problems also continue to present intractable challenges within any national strategy for the development of Gaelic education. Lack of sufficient staff remains a key constraint on expansion, especially in secondary provision. Again the Minister has recognised the need for new impetus and action in this area, and has established a short-life working group to review current arrangements for recruitment and training of teachers and recommend action. It will be important that the work of this group leads to a practical strategy for increasing

teacher supply, and that effective action and responses from Gaelic-speaking teachers follows as a result.

In the past the development of Gaelic education has sometimes suffered from the need to develop policy in a complex environment in which there were many stakeholder groups with different perspectives and no body with a clear, over-arching strategic role. The recent establishment of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, with responsibility for developing a national strategy for the development of Gaelic has changed this context and offers the potential to bring a greater degree of coherence and clearer leadership to Gaelic policy as a whole.

A national strategy which incorporates a coherent approach to Gaelic education in schools is necessary if a sustainable way of reversing the decline in Gaelic speakers is to be found. This report focuses on a key element that needs to be part of that strategy, namely Gaelic provision for children and young people at the pre-school and school stages. It is a very important element without doubt, but it is by no means the only area that should be considered. Areas such as promoting Gaelic language and culture through the media and arts, and increasing participation in learning the language beyond the school stages, in formal and informal settings will be equally important. School provision seems likely to be able to increase on a scale that would, on its own, produce sufficient numbers of new Gaelic speakers in the foreseeable future. It needs to be complemented by increasing opportunities for adults to learn, maintain and develop skills in the Gaelic language.



# 6

## CONCLUSIONS, MAIN STRENGTHS AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

By building on the outcomes of the present Government initiatives, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, SEED and MRG need to organise support to those authorities providing Gaelic education for the first time and give a new strategic lead to those already participating. Local authorities and schools need to respond to this lead by playing their part fully in promoting the growth and development of Gaelic in their areas. Working together, they should ensure that new generations of young Gaelic speakers are developed through our school system to secure a vibrant language and culture for future generations.

### Main strengths

The main strengths in the provision of Gaelic language education were as follows.

- Successful strategies for ensuring early literacy and the acquisition and reinforcement of Gaelic language skills through immersion techniques.
- Overall good attainment at all stages.
- Good working relationships between teachers and pupils in almost all primary schools and secondary Gaelic departments, with pupils being treated fairly and praised effectively.
- Some very good practice in learning and teaching in individual schools and classes, particularly in regard to the use of interactive approaches and ICT.
- Many instances of effective leadership.
- Many successful partnerships with parents in improving pupils' achievements.
- Wider access to SQA awards due to the use of NQ courses at S3/S6.

- Many examples of high levels of achievement by Gaelic-medium pupils across a broad range of activities beyond standard courses and programmes.

### Main areas for improvement

#### Schools and education authorities should:

- build more effectively on successful early intervention and immersion strategies to ensure that appropriately high expectations are set for all pupils;
- continue to improve pupils' writing and their ability to read and analyse prose and poetry;
- ensure that courses in Gàidhlig or Gaelic language build evenly within and across stages and sectors in *listening, talking, reading* and *writing* and take appropriate account of pupils' prior learning;
- ensure that primary pupils are given every opportunity to learn through Gaelic in each area of the curriculum;
- ensure that courses go beyond minimum requirements to extend and challenge pupils by drawing on Gaelic culture and heritage;
- use assessment more consistently to support learning in all four key learning outcomes of Gaelic language and to involve pupils in using constructive feedback to improve their communication skills;
- promote a culture of self-evaluation where staff reflect on their practices and those of others and, as necessary, improve aspects of learning and teaching;

- ensure that managers monitor and evaluate classroom practice in order to identify and spread best practice, and ensure that sole teachers in both primary and secondary schools are appropriately supported;
- ensure that secondary Gaelic-speaking teachers respond positively to staff development opportunities which would enable them to teach through the medium of Gaelic;
- provide greater opportunities for pupils from Gaelic-medium primary classes to maintain and improve their Gaelic language skills by making better use of existing materials and providing a greater range of Gaelic-medium courses or units of study from S1; and
- extend provision for Gaelic learners in primary (GLPS) and secondary schools.

**Appropriate national bodies (including SEED, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, SQA and LT Scotland), working as necessary with higher education institutions and education authorities, should:**

- take forward a national strategy for developing Gaelic-medium secondary curriculum across a range of subjects, informed by the forthcoming findings of the short-life working-group established by the Minister to review the issues;
- take forward the outcomes of the review of Gaelic 5-14, integrating them, as appropriate, into the broader context of the work being undertaken nationally to implement the review of the curriculum 3 to 18;
- develop arrangements for regularly gathering and analysing data on the attainment of Gaelic-medium pupils at the 5-14 stages, in the context of the Executive's implementation of the *Scottish Survey of Attainment*;
- continue to support the development of more attractive, challenging and relevant courses and resources for all pupils, to encourage more pupils to enter Gaelic-medium education;
- promote the advantages of bilingualism so that enough people study Gaelic to a standard which will ensure the future sustainability of Gaelic as a living language;
- take forward a national strategy to ensure that there are sufficient well-qualified Gaelic and Gaelic-medium teachers to meet future demands, informed by the forthcoming outcomes of the short-life working group established by the Minister to report to him on these issues;
- continue to support the development of A' Chuisle and *Gàidhlig air-loidhne* as national mechanisms to deliver high quality professional updating to all Gaelic and Gaelic-medium teachers to allow them to keep up-to-date with developments in their subjects;
- closely monitor the extent to which monies from the scheme of specific grants for Gaelic education contribute to an increase in those who are literate and fluent in the Gaelic language; and
- explore means by which schools and authorities in collaboration with other education and health professionals can work towards meeting the needs of pupils with additional support needs.



## APPENDIX ONE: SOME SIGNIFICANT DATES IN THE RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF GAELIC EDUCATION

- 1985 First Gaelic-medium provision opened. Slow but steady increase in numbers of pupils in primary classes to over 2000 pupils in 2004-2005.
- 1992 Council of Europe: Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Signed by UK government in 2000 and ratified in 2001 re Gaelic in Scotland.
- 1992 Gaelic 5-14: National Guidelines (Curriculum and Assessment). Similar form and content to English Language Guidelines.
- 1994 Provision for Gaelic Education in Scotland: Report by HMIE. Task set up in 2003/04 to revisit this report.
- 1995-97 SCCC 5-14 Exemplification materials issued.
- 1997 Pre-school Curriculum Guidelines and exemplification materials.
- 1999 Storlann established.  
SEED Research Unit with SCILT Report: published on *The Attainments of pupils receiving Gaelic-medium primary education in Scotland*.
- 2000 Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act – expectation/obligation placed on education authorities to include provision and development of Gaelic-medium education in their improvement plans.
- 2002 Ministerial Action Group on Gaelic reports: *A Fresh Start for Gaelic*.  
The new National Priorities for School Education specifically highlight Gaelic.  
Bòrd na Gàidhlig established.  
A' Chuisle: conference for Gaelic-medium primary teachers organised by HMIE.
- 2003-04 Draft Gaelic Language Bill consultation phase attracted 3000 responses.
- 2004 A' Chuisle 2: conference for Gaelic-medium primary and secondary teachers organised by LTS with commitment to further annual events.  
GLPS Conference in Stirling University. Presentation of evaluation and findings from five education authorities.  
Gàidhlig air-loidhne (Gaelic online) established.  
Plans for dedicated Gaelic secondary school in Glasgow supported by SEED.  
Guidance issued to education authorities about their obligations for Gaelic education under the 2000 Act.  
Virtual Gaelic-medium Secondary project established.
- 2005 Gaelic-medium Teacher Recruitment and Supply Action Group established.  
The Gaelic Language Bill completed its Parliamentary stages.



## APPENDIX TWO: LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN RECEIPT OF SPECIFIC GRANTS FOR GAELIC EDUCATION

Authority	Summary of provision
Aberdeen City Council	Gaelic-medium education (GME) in primary, secondary.
Angus Council	GME in pre-school, primary, secondary.
Argyll & Bute Council	GME in pre-school and primaries. GME and Gaelic language in secondary, GLPS.
Clackmannanshire Council	Adult education.
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	GME in pre-school and primaries. Gaelic language in all secondaries. GLPS, Gaelic expressive arts and resources support.
East Ayrshire Council	GME in pre-school, primary and secondary, GLPS in 5 primaries.
East Dunbartonshire Council	GME in pre-school and primaries. Gaelic language in secondary.
East Lothian Council	Transport costs only.
East Renfrewshire Council	Transport costs only.
Edinburgh City Council	GME in pre-school and primary. Gaelic language in secondary.
Falkirk Council	Community learning and development (CLD), transport costs.
Glasgow City Council	GME in pre-school, primary, secondary and CLD.
Highland Council	GME in pre-school, primaries and Gaelic language and GME in secondary plus CLD.
Inverclyde Council	GME in pre-school and primary school.
North Ayrshire Council	CLD.
North Lanarkshire Council	GME in pre-school, primary and secondary.
Perth & Kinross Council	GME in primary and secondary, CLD.
Scottish Borders Council	Transport costs only.
South Lanarkshire Council	GME in pre-school, primary and secondary.
Stirling Council	GME in pre-school, primary and secondary.
West Dunbartonshire Council	CLD.