

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

GAELIC COMMITTEE - 13th November 2008

Agenda Item	6.
Report No	G/30/08

GAELIC TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND SUPPORT

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Summary

This report outlines the current position in terms of recruitment to Gaelic Medium posts in primary and secondary schools, providing information on the number of vacant posts and efforts made to fill these.

It also highlights initial draft proposals to incentivise new recruits to enter Gaelic Medium Education whether as newly-qualified graduates or as 'cross-over' teachers – those with a teaching qualification and experience who are sufficiently fluent in Gaelic to work within GME.

1. Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware of the difficulties which exist in recruiting teachers into Gaelic Medium Education posts. Some of these difficulties are national in nature. Others will be more Gaelic-specific for example, low language-confidence levels among those who might be able to teach through the medium of Gaelic, or perceptions about increased workloads inherent in teaching through Gaelic.
- 1.2 These issues present difficulties in sustaining existing Gaelic Medium Education provision as well as expanding provision whether this is into new locations; additional classes; new subject courses in Secondary schools; or the provision of pre-school education.
- 1.3 This report details the current position across the Highland Council area in terms of Gaelic teacher recruitment and vacancies. It also outlines early proposals which are subject to ongoing discussion with Bord na Gaidhlig, Scottish Government, Aberdeen University and Sabhal Mor in order to aid recruitment and retention of Gaelic Medium teachers.

2. Gaelic Medium Staffing

- 2.1 The table in Appendix 1 outlines the Gaelic Teaching complement within Highland schools, showing the numbers of GME teachers by school, for primary and secondary provision. It also shows the number of Gaelic language teachers in secondary schools.
- 2.2 It is difficult to estimate the number of teachers required to sustain or expand provision. As Gaelic Medium primary provision continues to expand both in current and future provision in the Highland area there is a continuing need to recruit primary GM staff. In addition the priority within the Gaelic Language Plan to expand the number of secondary subjects taught through the medium of Gaelic requires a significant increase in secondary GM staffing to deliver this priority. Despite some progress in

primary GM recruitment in recent years recruitment to all these posts is continuing to prove difficult. It is also noted that similar posts, especially those in primary Gaelic Medium provision, in other authorities are being re-advertised.

- 2.3 In common with wider Gaelic recruitment, advertisements for Gaelic speaking teaching staff frequently fail to secure suitable applicants, re-advertising is common. At the time of writing five Gaelic Education teachers posts are being advertised, three of which are re-advertisements. Where teachers are secured for one post, this can sometimes be at the expense of provision elsewhere in the Council area.
- 2.4 The number of new recruits to Gaelic-Medium Education is low. During the current academic year there is only one under-graduate student expected to complete a Secondary teaching qualification and 15 for Primary teaching. The comparable figures in 2006/07 are 20 primary and 8 secondary and in 2007/08 only 6 primary and 3 secondary.
- 2.5 This current low number for new GM teachers is a significant issue for Highland Council. Parental demand for Gaelic Medium Education continues to grow and with it a need for new provisions. Ultimately the availability of Gaelic teachers will constrain such developments. Within Highland it has not been possible to start Gaelic Medium provision at Pennyland in Thurso this year. This is an issue causing similar difficulties in other parts of Scotland.
- 2.6 Efforts have been made to encourage already qualified teachers with sufficient Gaelic language skills to transfer to GM education. A specific course "Streap" has been prepared and has run for a number of years. Again, from an initial peak of some 18/19 participants, this course most recently has provided some 8 GM teachers.
- 2.7 Following discussions with relevant parties a publicity campaign to highlight the crossover opportunities presented by the "Streap" course is planned in Highland schools for late November and early December. Two events will be held in 'East' and 'West' Highland focussed on engaging with those teachers most likely to be able or interested in participating in the course and transferring in due course to GM education.

3. Gaelic Teacher Recruitment Incentivisation

- 3.1 As outlined above there may be a number of reasons why recruitment into Gaelic Medium teaching is so low, including possible perceptions of increased workload and challenge.
- 3.2 One means of addressing these would be to provide financial incentives to attract new and 'conversion' GM teachers. Consideration has been given to directly rewarding GM teachers through enhanced salaries. Similar issues arise in English Medium teaching in certain shortage subject such as Technology, Home Economics etc. Any moves to address teacher shortages in this way have been rejected by the national negotiating bodies.

- 3.3 A similar issue in Scotland's schools, attracting probationer teachers into 'difficult to recruit' locations, is being addressed through a 'preference waiver'. Under this scheme, funded directly by the Scottish Government, newly-qualified teachers prepared to undertake their probationary year anywhere in Scotland are paid the additional sum of £6,000 in three instalments. This has recently been increased to £8,000. Similarly there are Distant Islands Allowances and Remote Schools Allowances. The principle being applied here is one of 'market failure', where it is difficult to recruit teachers for geographical reasons an additional payment is made by way of incentive.
- 3.4 A similar principle could be applied nationally to Gaelic Medium Education. Newly-qualified GM teachers could be offered a similar financial incentive in two instalments i) on completion of their probationary year, and ii) on completion of their first year's Gaelic Medium tuition.
- 3.5 There are also proposals being considered to provide enhanced professional development opportunities for GM teachers. On completion these could possibly facilitate progression onto the Charter Teacher Scale. It is estimated that it would take some two years for newly qualified teachers to realise financial benefits from this process. This issue is currently under discussion with course leaders at the University of Aberdeen.
- 3.6 The measures identified in this report require further consideration in more detail and would require further consultation with relevant bodies, including Bord na Gaidhlig, the Scottish Government and the Universities. They may however, provide options to address the current difficulties in Gaelic teacher recruitment.

4. Recommendation

Members are asked to :

- note the issues in relation to Gaelic Medium teacher recruitment
- comment on the measures outlined within the paper
- agree that officers progress further discussion with Bord na Gaidhlig, the Scottish Government, the University faculties and Sabhal Mor on these matters
- agree that a further report is taken to committee on this matter

Signature:

Designation: Director, Education, Culture and Sport Service

Date: 5 November 2008

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Appendix 1

Gaelic Medium Primary Teacher Numbers 08-09

Primary School	No of Teachers - Primary Classes	Full-time	Part-time
Acharacle	2	X	
Bonar Bridge	1	X	
Broadford	3	X	
BSGI	6	X	
	3		X
Craighill	3	X	
Dingwall	4	X	
Dunvegan	2	X	
	(Maternity cover - currently being advertised)		
Ft William RC	3	X	
	2		X
Gairloch	1	X	
	2		X
Kilmuir	1	X	
Lochcarron	1	X	
Mallaig	2	X	
Millbank	1	X	
Newtonmore	1	X	
	2		X
Plockton	1	X	
	(This post currently being advertised)		
Portree	5	X	
Sleat	3	X	
Staffin	2	X	
Tongue	1	X	
Ullapool	3 (2 in post)	X	
	(One post currently being advertised)		

Appendix 1 (cont.)

Secondary Gaelic Teacher Numbers 08-09

School	No of teachers	Gaelic Learners	Gàidhlig - fluent	GM Subject
Alness	1	X		
Ardnamurchan	1	X	X	History/Geography
	1	X	X	
Charleston	1	X		
Culloden	1	X		
Dingwall	1	X	X	History
	1		X	Geography
	1	X		
Farr	1	X	X	
	1			Geography - no pupils at present
Gairloch	1	X	X	
	1			Geography (mentor of on-line course)
Inverness Royal	1	X	X	
	1			History, Geography, PSE, Maths, Modern Studies
	1			Art
	1 (FTE 0.1)			Development time only
Kingussie	1		X	
Lochaber	2	X	X	
Mallaig	1		X	
Millburn	1 (FTE 0.9)		X	History
	1	X	X	
Plockton	3	X	X	
	1		X	Geography & History
Portree	2	X	X	
	1	X	X	Geography
	1	X		
	1			History
	1			Modern Studies
	1			Home Economics
	1			Science
	1			Mathematics & RE
	1			Mathematics
	1	X		RE
(Principal Teacher Post and 0.7 FTE Post currently being advertised)				
Tain	1	X	X	Geography & Art
	1			Home Economics
Ullapool	1	X	X	