

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	6.
Report No	EDU/17/24

Committee: Education

Date: 12 September 2024

Report Title: Gaelic Education

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides background to the development and impact of Gaelic Education in Highland since the first provision opened in Highland in 1985. The report highlights the impact on pupil numbers during the lifespan of the second and third iteration of the Gaelic Language Plan.
- 1.2 The report also updates Members on developments and challenges in the key areas of current and future development which will support the growth of Gaelic Education in Highland encompassing the key priorities of the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan (GLP).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. Note the growth in Gaelic education pupil numbers across Highland.
 - ii. Consider the challenges that increased demand for Gaelic education has created in some areas for the lifespan of the fourth iteration of the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan
 - iii. Discuss the 2 strategic priorities agreed with Bòrd na Gàidhlig for Gaelic Education in the approved statutory Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan (GLP4).

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource
The funding provided by the Scottish Government through the Gaelic Specific Grant (GSG) provides invaluable support for a wide range of projects that assist the Council in delivering its commitments under the Gaelic Language Plan with the majority dedicated to the delivery of Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Learner Education.

For the financial year 2024/25 the Council submitted a GSG application for £1.3M against total projected expenditure of £8M and was awarded £915,000.

In addition to core Council funding and the Gaelic Specific Grant, the Gaelic budget also secures additional funding through project-specific bids to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and the Strategic Gaelic Plan Fund (GPF).

3.2 Legal

The Highland Council has a statutory duty to implement its Gaelic Language Plan in terms of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005. Section 15 Education (Scotland) Act 2016 imposes a statutory duty on The Highland Council as Education Authority to promote and support Gaelic Education.

3.3 Risk

There are no specific risk implications arising from the report.

3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)

There are no specific health and safety implications arising from the report.

3.5 Gaelic

The report enhances Gaelic Education development within The Highland Council area and supports the implementation of The Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan and the National Plan.

The Highland Council's fourth iteration of the Gaelic Language Plan was approved in May 2024. This builds on the progress made in the previous 3 plans. The Council and Bòrd na Gàidhlig have worked together to agree strategic actions across the 4 themes of;

- Communities and Home
- Media, Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Business and the Economy
- Education

In addition to the 4 themes, the Council has Gaelic Corporate Service Aims. These are utilised with the aim of standardising and normalising key Gaelic services across all Council services during the lifetime of the plan.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies, or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is a monitoring and update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. Gaelic Medium Education in Highland 1985 to 2024

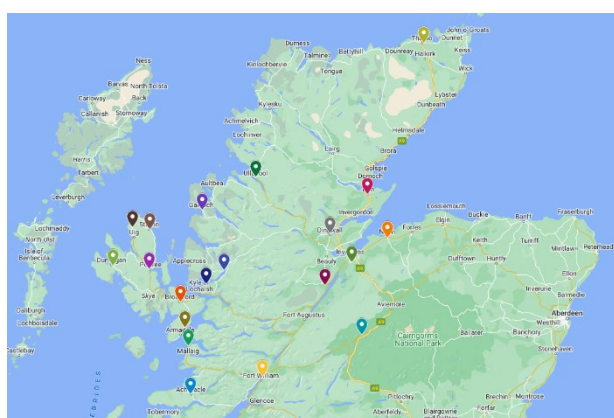
- 5.1 Over a period of almost 40 years, the number of pupils attending Gaelic Medium in Highland schools has increased from 7 at the first Gaelic Medium provision in Central Primary, Inverness in 1985/86 to 1100 in 20 Primary provisions across Highland in 2023/24.

Gaelic Medium Education (GME) was formally launched in the 1980s. Central Primary school in Inverness became the Highland Council's first GME provision in 1985. Children were provided with a fully immersive education. The growth of GME has been rapid and successful and The Highland Council is currently the largest provider of GME in Scotland. All Gaelic education is important, both Gaelic learner and Gaelic immersion through Gaelic Medium. GME is seen as the best hope for the survival of Gaelic and consequently is a Scottish Government priority.

More recently, The Highland Council has also undertaken statutory assessments following 2 Gaelic Medium Primary Education requests from parent communities in both Applecross and Lochaline. Recruitment for a GME teacher in Applecross has not been successful and this continues to be advertised. Following consultation with parents, the agreed Lochaline opening date is session 2025/26. For session 2024/25, Gaelic immersion experiences are accessible to children in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) following a request from parents for Gaelic education in ELC.

- 5.2 Highland Council is the largest provider of Gaelic Medium Education in Scotland. Our education service has 29 secondary schools and 170 primary schools. The total number of operational schools is 199 with 66% of our secondary schools offering Gaelic Education. 12% of our primary schools offer GME. The area is a mix of urban, semi urban, and rural and remote areas and we have ambition to provide opportunities for Gaelic across the whole region.

Gaelic medium primary education is currently available in the following 20 locations across Highland.



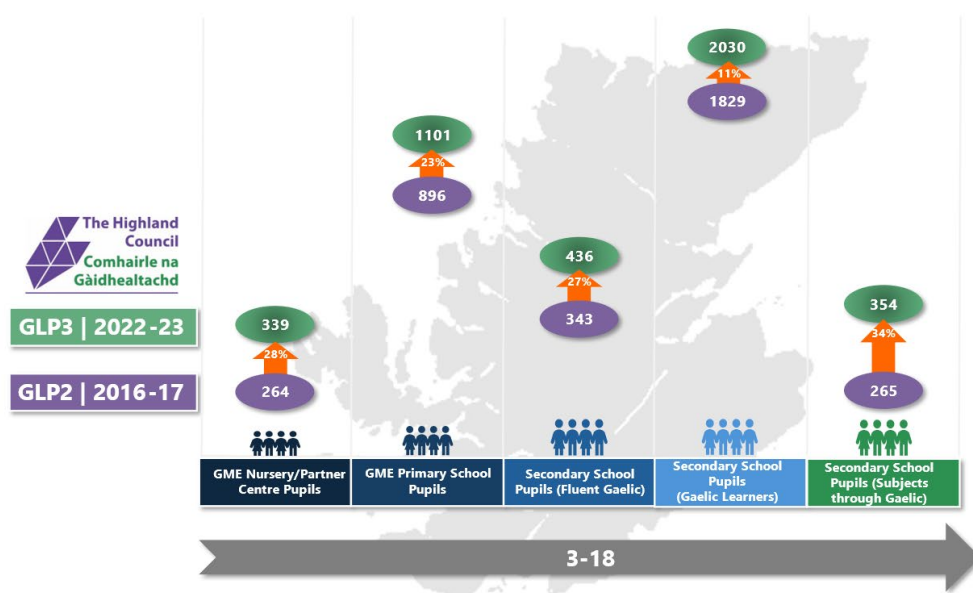
The following table provides detail on associated secondary education provision for Gaelic medium:

School Name	Associated Secondary Gaelic Provision
Glenurquhart Primary School	Glenurquhart High School
Acharacle Primary School	Ardnamurchan High School
Dingwall Primary School	Dingwall Academy

Gairloch Primary School	Gairloch High School
Bun-Sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis	Inverness Royal Academy
Newtonmore Primary School	Kingussie High School
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar	Lochaber High School
Mallaig Primary School	Mallaig High School
Millbank Primary School	Nairn Academy
Lohcarron Primary School	Plockton High School
Plockton Primary School	
Broadford Primary School	Portree High School
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh	
Bun-Sgoil Shlèite	
Bun-Sgoil Stafainn	
Dunvegan Primary School	
Kilmuir Primary School	
Craighill Primary School	Tain Royal Academy
Mount Pleasant Primary School	Thurso High School
Ullapool Primary School	Ullapool High School
Applecross Primary School GMPE Request ongoing. Lochaline Primary School opening August 2025	Plockton High School Ardnamurchan High School

5.3 The Highland Council's statutory Gaelic Language Plan made a commitment to grow the number of pupils in Gaelic Medium Education.

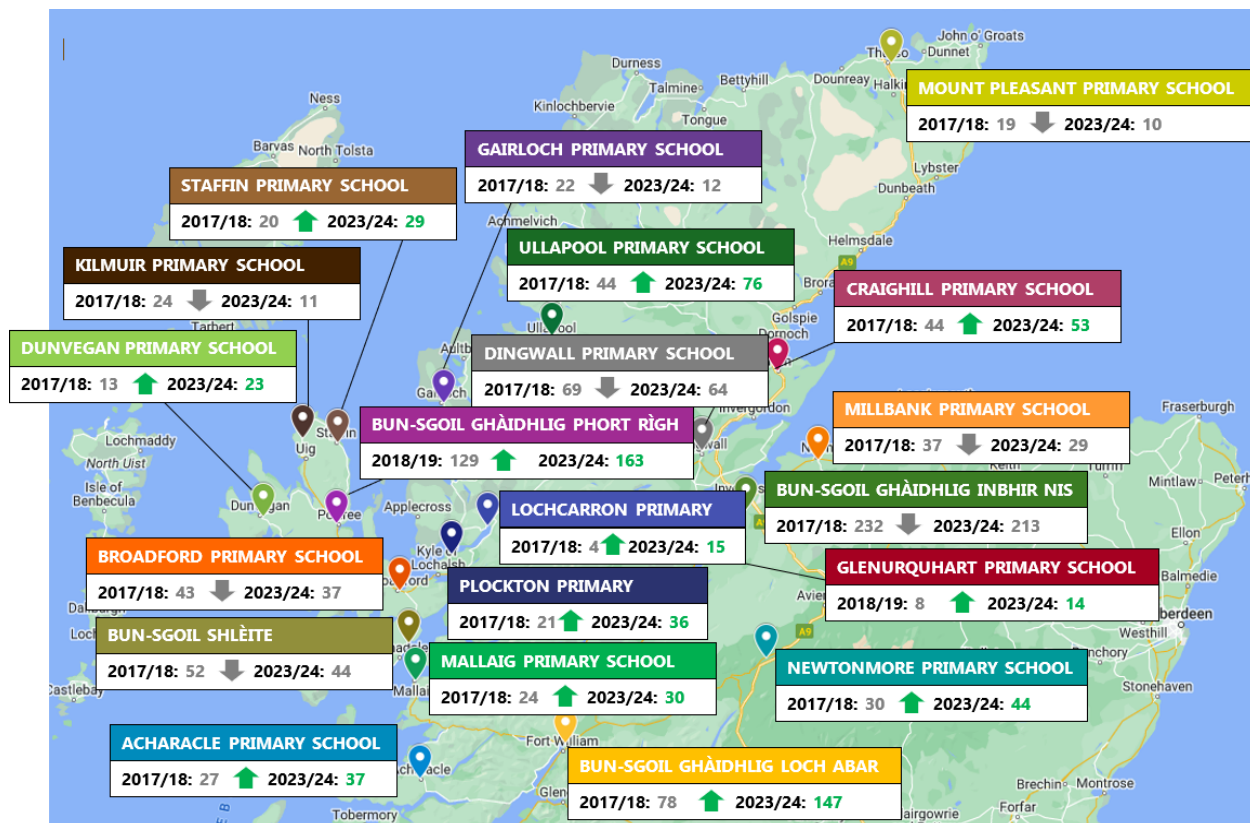
The infographic shows the increase in pupil numbers across each sector of 3-18 between 2016 and 2023.



The increase in pupil numbers across the lifespan of the Council's second and third iteration GLPs are testament of the commitment made by The Highland Council to grow the provision of Gaelic Education in accordance with the Scotland Act 2005.

Pupil numbers for comparison are for session 2016-17 and 2022-23.

5.4 A more detailed infographic illustrates the pupil numbers across each of the GME provisions.



Where stand-alone Gaelic schools have been established in Inverness (2007), Lochaber (2015), and Portree (2018) the pupil numbers at the end point the lifespan of the second and third GLP indicate there is increased demand for GME in these areas.

In rural schools the decrease in pupil numbers is reflective of a decreasing pupil role. In these instances, it is more accurate to provide a percentage of the total school role when reporting on pupil numbers to Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Scottish Government.

The following table is the most recent percentage report on Gaelic pupil numbers in relation to total school role based on ingathering data from schools for 2023/24.

SCHOOL	TOTAL GME	TOTAL EME	TOTAL SCHOOL	% GME
Acharacle Primary	37	11	48	77%
Broadford Primary	37	34	71	52%
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis	213	0	213	100%
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar	147	0	147	100%
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh	163	0	163	100%
Bun-Sgoil Shlèite	44	10	54	81%
Craighill Primary	53	164	217	24%
Dingwall Primary	64	358	422	15%

Dunvegan Primary	23	23	46	50%
Gairloch Primary	12	43	55	22%
Glenurquhart Primary	14	135	149	9%
Kilmuir Primary	11	5	16	67%
Lochcarron Primary	15	38	53	28%
Mallaig Primary	30	40	70	43%
Millbank Primary	29	209	238	12%
Mount Pleasant Primary	10	180	190	5%
Newtonmore Primary	44	73	117	38%
Plockton Primary	36	13	49	73%
Staffin Primary	29	8	37	78%
Ullapool Primary	76	53	129	59%

5.5 Challenges:

The growth in Gaelic medium education nationally has implications by increasing the demand for Gaelic teachers. The Council's workforce planning team and Gaelic Team have worked closely with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig over the past 2 years to secure and sustain provision in our schools. However, Secondary Gaelic vacancies continue to be a challenge. We are seeking solutions to this through partnership working with Strathclyde University. This is underway following an initial meeting with the University in May 2024 with further work planned across this session to encourage probationers to choose Highland for their induction year.

In Inverness, the increasing pupil role and demand for early years GME will have significant impact on the school within the duration of the current GLP. A feasibility study for 3-18 Gaelic Education for Inverness was completed in February 2024. A [Gaelic Education report](#) with recommendations from the study was shared with the Gaelic Committee in March 2024. A meeting of senior officers will take place in September 2024 to look at the outcomes of the feasibility study before reporting back through the Asset Reconfiguration Portfolio Board and on to Committee.

5.6 Census Data – Gaelic skills in Highland **2011 vs 2022** (Understands, speaks, reads, or writes Gaelic)

Scotland's census reported that nationally "2.5% of people aged 3 and over had some skills in Gaelic in 2022. This is an increase of 43,100 people since 2011 when 1.7% had some skills in Gaelic. In 2001 1.9% had some Gaelic skills, similar to 2011."

Highland region data is provided in the table below.

A further analysis on the census data is planned for a future Gaelic Committee.

Age	2011	2022	% change
All people aged 3 and over	16596	18552	11.79% increase
3 - 15	2475	3339	34.9% increase

16 - 24	1602	1627	1.56% increase
25 - 34	1436	2010	39.97% increase
35 - 49	3266	2941	9.95% decrease
50 - 64	3769	3923	4.09% increase
65 and over	4048	4713	16.43% increase

While Gaelic remains fragile, the census numbers suggest some optimism and insight on the impact of the increase of Gaelic education provision. The increased trajectory of Gaelic skills is across the 3-34 demographic.

6. The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan - Strategic Priorities for Gaelic Education.

6.1 The Highland Council GLP4 2024–29 was approved on 7 May 2024.

The fourth iteration Gaelic Language Plan for The Highland Council 2024 to 2029 continues to promote Gaelic education in line with the statutory duty from the Scotland Act 2005.

The plan covers priorities across the themes of Business and Economy, Communities and Home, Media, Arts, Culture and Heritage as well as Education. The Council has key corporate service aims for Gaelic prescribed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

There are 2 Strategic priorities agreed with Bòrd na Gàidhlig for Gaelic Education in the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan;

- Deliver continued promotion and growth in GME and GLE at all levels including delivery of Gaelic as a modern language, with 70%* of primary schools providing Gaelic as an L2 and L3 to increase the provision of Gaelic across the authority. *This percentage relates to English Medium Primary Schools (including English Medium within a GME school) that offer Gaelic as an L2 or an L3 additional language.
- Expand the delivery of Gaelic Medium Education with increased secondary subject delivery, creation of new standalone schools and new early years, primary and secondary provision.

A full monitoring report of GLP outcomes is available at each meeting of the Gaelic Committee.

6.2 Most of the actions for Education in Gaelic are subject to, and supported by, the following:

- available resources
- Scottish Government
- support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig.
- positive key stakeholder engagement and partnership working including with Highlife Highland
- engagement and collaboration with schools and community groups

The ongoing monitoring of Education actions in the approved GLP is a requirement of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act and annual monitoring reports are submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig. The Council also uses the internal process of the Performance Review Monitoring System (PRMS) to monitor the implementation and delivery of the education outcomes of the GLP. These are presented in a standing report and available for scrutiny at Gaelic Committee on a quarterly basis.

Designation: Kate Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 30 August 2024

Author: Lena Walker