

Agenda Item	11.
Report No	EDU/8/26

The Highland Council

Committee: **Gaelic**

Date: **25 February 2026**

Report Title: **Gaelic Education**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive - People**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on recent developments and impact of Gaelic Education in Highland.

The report provides information on current Gaelic pupil numbers across Highland and shares information on actions contributing to the strategic priorities to progress outcomes within the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan (GLP).

- 1.2 The report also updates Members on key priorities of the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) in Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL), improving attainment, achievements, and capital support towards improvements in curriculum development for our children and young people.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Note the commitment to Gaelic specific Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) focused workstreams alongside partnership working with Education Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and other national bodies to strengthen professional learning pathways, develop high-quality learning resources, and align work with national Gaelic education priorities;
 - ii. Note the positive impact of recent school improvement attainment and achievement focused actions to encourage continued monitoring and evaluation of Gaelic initiatives in schools and their impact and effectiveness; and
 - iii. Note the Scottish Government Gaelic Capital awards and their contribution to improving Gaelic curriculum outcomes for pupils.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource

For the 2025/26 financial year, the Council submitted a Gaelic Specific Grant (GSG) application of £1.3M and received an award of £940,000.

Funding from the Scottish Government through the GSG continues to play a vital role in enabling projects that help the Council deliver its commitments under the Gaelic Language Plan. A significant proportion of this support contributes directly to the ongoing development and delivery of Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Learner Education.

Alongside core Council funding and the GSG, the Gaelic budget is further strengthened through successful project specific bids to Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Strategic Gaelic Plan Fund (GPF), helping to enhance and expand Gaelic-related opportunities across the Council area.

Section 8 provides information about the investment of £68,311.72 Gaelic Capital, received from the Scottish Government in the current financial year, split across three projects.

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 as a result of this report.

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

There are no specific H&S implications arising as a result of this report.

3.5 Gaelic

The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) 2024-29 has 2 key priorities for Gaelic Education;

- 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.
- Expand the delivery of GME with increased secondary subject delivery creation of new standalone schools and new early years, primary and secondary provision.

Our GLP also includes interdependent communities and home, economy, culture, and heritage outcomes to support these priorities for Gaelic Education.

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 an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. Gaelic Pupil Numbers

5.1

Setting	Total Highland	GME	%GME
ELC	3038	314	10.3%
Primary	15639	1088	6.96%
Secondary	13578	546	4.02%

The data shows that Gaelic Medium Education (GME) pupil number percentages vary across Early Learning & Childcare Sgoil-àraich, Primary, and Secondary settings in Highland.

ELC Sgoil-àraich has the highest proportion of children in GME, with 314 out of 3,038 learners, representing 10.3% participation. Primary has the largest total number of GME pupils (1,088 out of 15,639), but the proportion is lower at 6.96%. Secondary has the lowest proportion of GME pupils, with 546 out of 13,578, equating to 4.02%.

Whilst the number of pupils in ELC, Primary and Secondary GME are increasing year on year, overall the data illustrates that GME engagement is strongest in the early years and gradually decreases through the learner journey into secondary education.

6. Career Long Professional Learning – Gaelic Education

- 6.1 The Highland Council has worked towards improving the Gaelic support available to our Gaelic Medium (GM) pupils through our Highland Literacy Programme. This has supported the raising attainment agenda involving an approach that combines effective teaching practices, targeted interventions, and a supportive learning environment.

Following the statutory consultation for the 2025-2029 Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan (GLP), feedback from teachers evidenced that there was a direct need for targeted and specific Gaelic Medium curriculum support as part of this program in Highland.

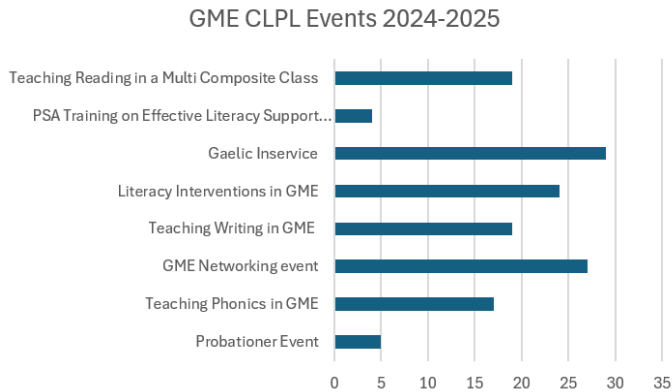
This project contributes significantly to the following GLP outcome 4.1: Develop a complementary GME strand to Highland Literacy. Provide advice on Gaelic education via a Gaelic Lead Officer to ensure total immersion pedagogy approaches are embedded.

The Highland Gaelic Medium Literacy program provides tailored and progressive professional learning for all teachers in both primary and secondary, Additional

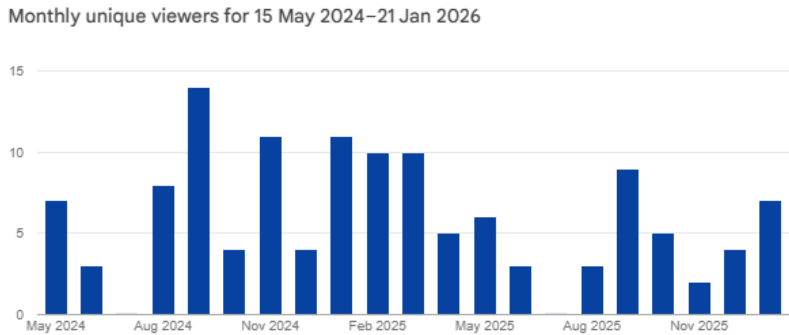
Support Needs (ASN) teachers, Pupil Support Assistants (PSA), and Early Years Practitioners (EYP) in our early years (ELC) settings. As part of the CLPL offer for staff there is now availability for all GME teachers to access training in Literacy for All in a World of Diversity through Gaelic. The CLPL program offer focusses on literacy resources and interventions aligned with Gaelic medium pedagogy and research to provide professional learning pathways for ‘Literacy Leaders’ in schools to lead on early intervention strategies and improved attainment outcomes for all learners.

In addition to providing training and resources, the Gaelic Literacy Development Officer collaborates with settings to identify specific learner requirements and implement targeted support to improve Gaelic attainment levels.

6.2 Highland Literacy data:



The chart shows the number of GME staff that have attended Career Long Professional Development events throughout session 2024-2025. These events were attended by GME Primary and Secondary teachers, ASN teachers, EYPs and PSAs.



The data above shows the monthly unique viewers on our platform for Gaelic support resources available through the Highland Literacy Road Map. This shows that there has been a continuous uptake for the resources and that their presence is being shared across the authority within GME settings.

6.3 Feedback on Gaelic Highland Literacy Courses:

- “It was VERY useful! I have learned about so many new resources and have been given lots of ideas”
- “Really good to reinforce my own good practice”
- “It gives us the opportunity to speak to other teachers and get ideas and support from others”

“I feel more confident carrying out ideas after having them backed by evidence led approaches”

“The availability online was excellent, and it has given lots of practical real-life advice to use in the classroom

6.4 1 plus 2 Gaelic offer

GLP Action 3 - Develop a strategic and responsive digital offer for online curriculum delivery to strengthen and expand GME and GLE in schools at primary and secondary levels to support the commitments made in the National Gaelic Language Plan.

The Strategic Priorities in the Highland Council GLP are to:

- 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, which offer Gaelic as an L2 or an L3 additional language.

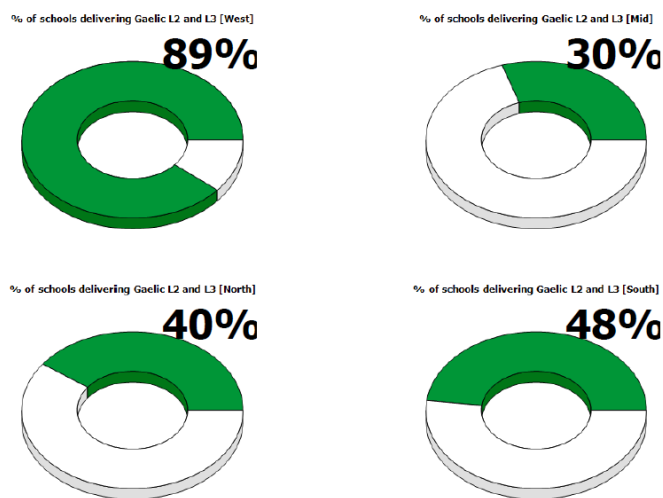
To help support the delivery of Gaelic as a 1+2 additional language and to ensure that we continue to increase the number of teachers and the number of schools teaching Gaelic as either an L2 or an L3 language, we offer a robust training package of language learning and progressive live lesson support in-class.

Live Lessons are on offer to all schools who are teaching or wishing to teach Gaelic as an L3 language. These online interactive sessions, that classes join through Teams, are set at either Beginner (level 1) or Extension (level 2) levels, which allow progression from levels 1 to 2 over the course of the year. Both Beginner and Extension courses run twice per year and take place twice per week to allow for timetable clashes.

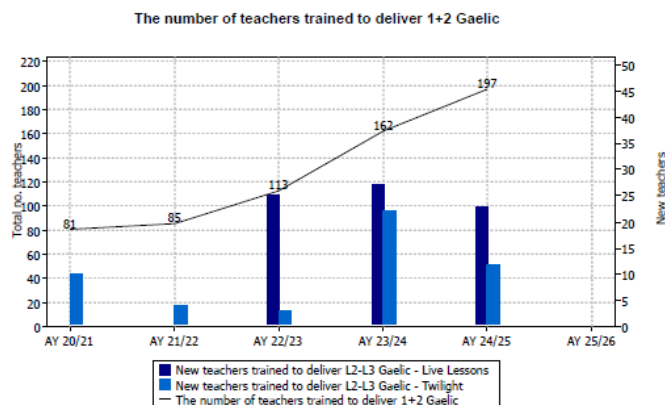
The Gaelic Language Learning Twilight course is for teachers who want to familiarise themselves with the Go!Gaelic resource and pedagogy behind 1+2. This 12-week course takes teachers through the vocabulary and structures needed for the Gaelic topics. Sessions 1-6 take place in term 1 and sessions 7-12 take place in term 3. Teachers can take part in both offers if they wish and those who have consolidated what has been learned at the twilight sessions with the live lessons have found this to be a very beneficial approach.

In addition, we offer 3 standalone online live lessons on “In the Classroom”, “Christmas” and “Gaelic Placenames”. These can be accessed by classes with some Gaelic, or with no Gaelic.

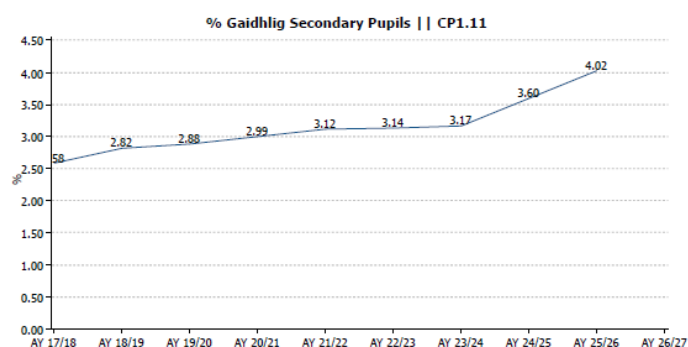
6.5 Percentages of primary schools delivering L2 and L3 Gaelic Learners:



These charts show the current percentages of schools delivering Gaelic as an L2 or L3 language choice across the 4 areas. As expected, most schools delivering Gaelic are in the West, but there is also growth within the other areas too.



Ensuring teachers have access to support through language learning classes and live lessons allows us to increase the numbers of teachers able to deliver Gaelic as an L2 or L3 subject.



Our aim is that through supporting and driving growth within primary education for Gaelic as a 1+2 language, the numbers of pupils continuing with Gaelic will also increase in Secondary.

6.6 Twilight Language Learning Courses

Examples from teacher's impact evidence:

"Useful to hear the pronunciations, variety of games, powerpoints we can use"

"The opportunities to interact online, making use of new and developing language skills directly over the 'live' sessions were great and the patient, attentive and thoughtful approach from the trainer were highly encouraging and helped to build the participants' confidence levels as well as their skill levels."

"Keep up the delivery in the excellent style it has, offering participants 'live' opportunities to grow their confidence and skills in a friendly, valuable, and informative lesson, as I found it to be."

"Many thanks for the excellent Gaelic Sessions! It was a bit of a crash course in Gaelic but the activities and resources highlighted to were excellent."

"I learned a lot from the sessions! They have improved my Gaelic but more importantly, when teaching Gaelic in the classroom I will be much more confident in the future."

Online Live Lessons

"Thank you! The pupils have really enjoyed the games and have been more comfortable speaking in Gaelic to the whole class."

"It was a fantastic way to support/enhance the GLPS training that some of my colleagues have undertaken/are undertaking. The online games were motivating to the children and helped to encourage the engagement of some of the more reluctant learners, whilst simultaneously providing an excellent resource for myself/colleagues to use."

"The lessons made it easy to introduce Gaelic to a class of beginners, being a total beginner myself!"

"You can take part no matter what your level of the language is."

"I liked the way the games began to help put the vocabulary into conversational/sentence structure. The children are often familiar with individual topic words, but aren't as confident when structuring these into conversational sentences."

- 6.7** A shared-resource agreement between Highland Council and Argyll and Bute Council enables the provision of 0.4 Development Officer support focused on supporting teachers to improve Gaelic literacy outcomes, with the officer working across both local authorities to strengthen consistency and impact. This collaborative model also extends to the 1+2 Languages offer, where Highland's and Argyll and Bute's Development Officers jointly plan and deliver CLPL opportunities. By coordinating their programmes, they can provide a unified, high-quality professional learning offer

and resources for teachers and ensuring greater alignment in Gaelic language development across local authorities.

7. School Improvement Priorities – Improving Achievement and Attainment in Gaelic

7.1 From 2025, School Improvement frameworks establishment priorities are designed to ensure schools include and prioritise self-evaluation discussion towards improving Gaelic outcomes.

7.2 (i) illustrates the key priorities the Highland Council has detailed that schools must consider across their Gaelic offer.

Gaelic attainment is also included in the Standards and Quality reporting. In Attainment in Gaelic Literacy, schools must record the proportion of pupils achieving Curriculum for Excellence Levels by the end of S3. 7.2 (ii)

7.2

(i)

Gaelic Education	
☐	<u>Education Scotland Advice on Gaelic Education</u> focus: - high quality GME immersion experiences - improving fluency - whole school Gaelic ethos
☐	Secondary – Increasing immersion curriculum opportunities in BGE and Senior Phase
☐	<u>Gaelic Learner Education Experiences</u>
☐	Initiatives and projects that promote and support Gaelic extra-curricular experiences
☐	<u>Local Authority Gaelic Language Plan</u> priorities, initiatives, and activities to promote Gaelic across the 4 themes of - Communities and Home - Media, Arts, Culture and Heritage - Business and the Economy - Education

(ii)

Gaelic Medium 2023/2024 Proportion of pupils achieving expected Curriculum for Excellence Levels by the end of S3

Level 3

Gaelic reading	Gaelic writing	Gaelic listening and talking
All	All	All

Level 4

Gaelic reading	Gaelic writing	Gaelic listening and talking
c	c	c

7.3 Tracking and evidencing Gaelic attainment at S3 has challenges within secondary schools, due to the structure of the curriculum design and can also be linked to the timing of pupil subject choices.

Going forward, school improvement planning should ensure that their curriculum offer for Gàidhlig is promoted and reviewed annually to ensure progressive high-quality

learning. As advised by HMle, schools must ensure strong continuity in learning Gàidhlig across stages leading to qualifications and awards in each year of the senior phase with high attainment that exhibits the benefits of bilingualism. Schools must also ensure that personal and wider achievements are accredited using the Scottish Certification of Qualifications Framework.

We can confidently track attainment for pupils who continue into certificated Gaelic pathways (National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher).

- 7.4 Pupils can continue to develop important Gaelic language skills and cultural engagement even if they do not choose Gaelic as a senior-phase subject. This highlights the importance and opportunity to recognise a broader range of Gaelic experiences and achievements, including:

- confidence when using Gaelic
- participation in Gaelic cultural activities
- contribution to the school's Gaelic ethos
- sense of belonging within the Gaelic community

Taking a wider view of these aspects ensures that all learners' achievements in Gaelic are valued in addition to a focus on achievements for pupil's following certificated routes.

- 7.5 Scotland's education inspectorate has published a new report on Gàidhlig education. The report, [Evaluating the Quality of Gàidhlig Education: actions to raise standards, quality and equity](#), draws on inspections of Gàidhlig Medium Education and Gaelic (Learners) settings across Scotland.

Nationally, HMle found evidence of high-quality learning in many primary schools, with examples of strong immersion and highly committed teachers of Gàidhlig. However, the report also highlighted that staffing, curriculum continuity, and resources remain fragile in many areas, with secondary education uptake being of particular concern.

8. Scottish Government Gaelic Capital Awards 2025/26

- 8.1 Gaelic Capital Projects Delivered/Supported by Scottish Government in 2025/26

Plockton Recording Studio (£20,550.40).

School digital literacy and curriculum resources (£12,411.69 and £27,451.38).

Newtonmore Sgoil-àraich upgrades (£7,898.25).

Total: £68,311.72

- 8.2 Improving Gaelic Literacy Outcomes – Highland Literacy Gaelic Case Study

During session 24/25, as part of the raising attainment agenda, the Gaelic Highland Literacy Development Officer piloted a programme to develop talking and listening skills and in return raise attainment across all levels of learning in literacy. Improved attainment in talking and listening is fundamental to predicting future success in fluency and ensuring a stronger start in Gaelic language acquisition.

The pilot Gaelic Medium School purchased Yoto Players to be used as a digital reading tool to help raise attainment in Gaelic literacy. The school collated a large bank of playlists of Gaelic stories recorded by parents and grandparents, as part of an intergenerational project.

Digital reading tools help raise attainment in Gaelic Medium Education by making learning more accessible, personalised, engaging, and integrated with listening and speaking skills. They bridge gaps in readily available and reactive resources available to our teachers and learners and support continuity of language exposure, which is vital in Gaelic Medium.

The Yoto players were used to support the raising of attainment through promoting immersive listening, reinforcing oral and written connections when used alongside a printed text, encouraged independent choice for all pupils and it supports inclusive and differentiated learning.

Sample Teacher Survey:

How effective do you find the Yoto Player in enhancing pupils' Gaelic listening and comprehension skills?

“Very effective - they are engaging, kids listen well and no screen/difficulties logging on as in Chromebooks, broadening oral language and making vocabulary stronger as hearing it from a variety of sources and accents.

The Yoto Players have been a great tool to use to increase the exposure to Gaelic literature. The players mean that all children have access to Gaelic texts regardless of reading ability skills.

They have been great for developing pupils' interest in Gaelic stories who might not usually pick up a book in Gaelic or who don't yet have the skills to read independently.”



8.3 Secondary Curriculum Development Capital Project

This project proposes investment in podcasting equipment to strengthen Gaelic digital literacy and enrich the refreshed Gaelic curriculum. Music, outdoor equipment and digital media equipment was also purchased at the request of the schools for curriculum development,

Feedback from secondary Gaelic leaders and teachers highlights a need for creative, modern approaches that support language development, cultural identity, and community connection.

Podcasting offers a current, engaging medium through which pupils can develop all areas of Gaelic literacy, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, while building digital skills that reflect how young people increasingly access and use Gaelic content.

By enabling learners to create and share their own stories, interviews, and cultural experiences, the project supports a more dynamic, relevant Gaelic curriculum and helps young people feel part of a wider Gaelic community.

MG Alba's 2024/25 report highlights the importance of developing "Community Content Creators", who play a vital role in supporting and strengthening local Gaelic initiatives. Highland pupils are key stakeholders in this national workstream, with strong potential to contribute meaningful Gaelic digital content.

Pupils will be able to take part in partner competitions such as those offered by Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, further expanding their digital and linguistic skills. Improved digital tools will support increased participation in FilmG, where Highland schools already perform strongly.

Access to high-quality equipment enables teachers to plan more progressive and sustained digital learning experiences, beyond preparation for annual competitions.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 11 February 2026

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Background Papers:

Appendices: