Agenda Item	**6**
Report No	**G/16/26**

The Highland Council

Committee: **Gaelic**

Date: **18 November 2026**

Report Title: **Gaelic Education Update**

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

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

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

The report shares an update with Members on key priorities and outcomes of the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) achieved towards Gaelic Learner Education in primary schools.

The report provides information and an overview on current Gaelic pupil numbers across Highland for 2025/26 and shares information on actions contributing to the strategic priorities to progress outcomes within the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan (GLP).

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

i. Agree to welcome the continued expansion with attainment in Gaelic Education across Highland
ii. Agree to recognise the increase in the number of schools delivering Gaelic as an L2 or L3, towards the target of 70% set by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.
iii. Note the next phase of the Blasad project, to deliver in-class lessons to primary schools in the Mid and South areas, through our partnership with Fèisgoil.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource
For the 2026/27 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.

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)
None

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

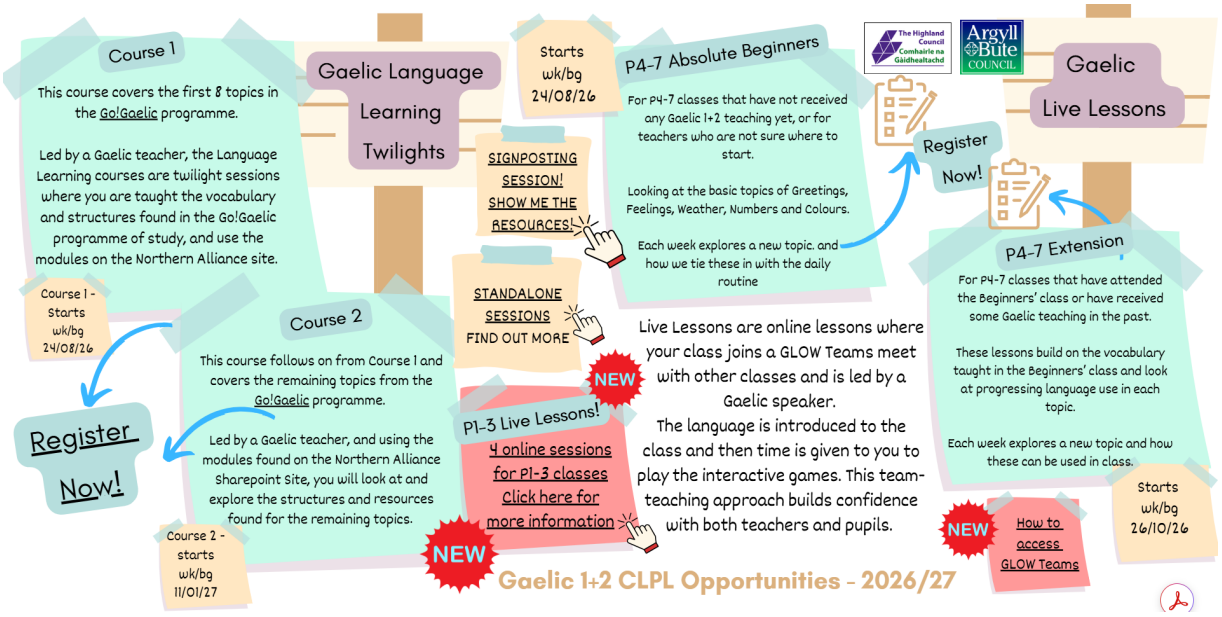
4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies, or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full 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. 1+2 Gaelic Update

This session, in collaboration with the Gaelic 1+2 Officer from Argyll & Bute, we have prepared a comprehensive programme of L2 and L3 offerings, to support teachers and classes of all ages.



5.1 The Primary Gaelic 1+2 CLPL programme offers a blend of in-class lessons, live online sessions, and twilight language-learning opportunities for schools across Highland.

Building on the success of last year's pilot project in Sutherland, Fèisgoil is continuing its partnership with us by delivering in-class lessons to primary schools in the Mid area. These schools do not currently offer Gaelic as an additional language option, and it is hoped that participation in these lessons will help establish Gaelic as part of their 1+2 language provision and encourage future engagement with our live online lessons.

Teachers from across Highland have continued to engage positively with both the live online lesson programme and the twilight CLPL sessions.

It is particularly encouraging to see teachers returning to participate in the live lessons, alongside new participants from Gaelic L3 schools. We have also welcomed teachers from schools that have not previously delivered Gaelic as part of their 1+2 language offer, having recognised the benefits these sessions provide for language learning and the opportunity to develop their own understanding of effective language-teaching pedagogy.

All twilight language-learning sessions are recorded and made available afterwards, providing a valuable self-study resource for teachers who are unable to attend live.

The live sessions also offer participants the opportunity to ask questions and receive support as they arise.

In addition, the 1+2 Gaelic Officer is currently supporting pupils in the Gaelic Medium Education unit at Broadford Primary through targeted online conversation sessions designed to further develop their spoken Gaelic skills.

5.2 To date in session 2026/27, engagement with the Gaelic 1+2 CLPL programme has remained strong across Highland.

Fèisgoil Blasad Lessons Project
Twenty-eight classes across 15 primary schools in the Mid and South areas will receive eight weeks of Gaelic lessons. Delivered by local Gaelic-speaking tutors, these sessions provide valuable cultural learning opportunities while supporting schools to explore Gaelic as a structured and progressive L3 language option.

Live Online Lessons
Twenty teachers from Highland L3 schools, along with their classes, have participated in weekly beginner-level live lessons. These engaging sessions continue to attract both new and returning teachers. Building on this progression, a further 10 teachers have registered for the Extension-level programme, which begins in October 2026.

Twilight Language Learning Sessions
Sixteen teachers from Highland L2 and L3 schools attended the six-week Gaelic language learning twilight programme during Term 1. Many are further reinforcing their learning by participating in the live lessons with their classes. The second phase of the programme will run for a further six weeks in Term 3.

New P1-P3 Gaelic Pilot Programme
A new online Gaelic course has been developed for L2 schools, targeting P1-P3 pupils. This four-week pilot, scheduled for Term 2, will be delivered by Gwen McCrossan, supported by the Highland Gaelic 1+2 Officer. Through games, songs and interactive activities, pupils will learn key language themes including greetings, feelings, numbers, and colours.

To date, 16 teachers have signed up for this new programme. Given the level of interest, it is anticipated that the course will continue in future years, with opportunities for expansion subject to capacity. Several schools have expressed interest in extending Gaelic learning opportunities to younger pupils after seeing the positive engagement of older classes in the live lesson programme. This has the potential to support increased uptake of Gaelic as an L2 language in schools, particularly in rural areas.

Standalone Live Lessons
In addition to the core programme, a series of standalone live lessons will be delivered throughout the year, including sessions on Classroom Objects, Christmas, and Place Names, with a further lesson planned later in the session. These lessons provide opportunities to explore Gaelic language and culture through topics that sit outwith the existing 1+2 Gaelic programme of work.

Gaelic 1+2 Data

Area	L2	L3	Other	Total PS	Provision as %
Mid	4	9	20	33	39%
North	4	21	5	30	83%
South	0	25	25	50	50%
West	27	22	5	54	91%

There has been a significant increase in the number of schools delivering Gaelic as an L3 language within the North area. This has been driven largely by our partnership with Fèisgoil through the Blasad project in Sutherland, which has increased the proportion of primary schools offering Gaelic as either an L2 or L3 from 43% to 83%.

As a result, the overall percentage of primary schools across Highland delivering Gaelic as an L2 or L3 increased from 57% to 67% during session 2025/26. This compares with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, which has 100% of primary schools with EME, learning Gaelic as L2 or L3 and with Argyll & Bute Council, who has 70% of primary schools learning Gaelic as L2 or L3.

This represents continued progress towards Strategic Priority 4.1 within the Gaelic Language Plan, which aims for 70% of primary schools to provide Gaelic as either an L2 or L3 by the end of the plan period.

Sustaining this progress will be dependent on schools continuing to deliver Gaelic as an additional language on an annual basis, either through direct classroom teaching by school staff or through participation in our programme of live online lessons and other support opportunities.

6. Gaelic Education - Secondary

6.1 The Highland Council Secondary School Survey Return

This annual survey was sent out to Secondary schools in term 1 and we are very grateful that all schools have returned them. This allows us to monitor pupil numbers for both GME and GLE, but also to provide an opportunity for schools to feedback any challenges in delivery that they are facing. This is collated and looked at for strategic insight.

GAELIC LEARNERS	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	2025/26	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	2026/27
Glenurquhart High School	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Ardnamurchan High School	10	14	11	2	2	1	**40**	11	9	8	3	1	2	**34**
Dingwall Academy	51	26	8	8	4	1	**98**	29	19	1	8	0	3	**60**
Gairloch High School	17	18	6	2	1	0	**44**	10	18	8	1	3	5	**45**
Inverness Royal Academy	30	29	21	8	1	8	**97**	30	30	12	10	3	0	**85**
Kingussie High School	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Alness Academy	81	99	8	8	0	0	**196**	59	62	0	0	0	0	**121**
Lochaber High School	115	127	87	59	0	0	**388**	118	121	100	41	4	7	**391**
Charleston Academy	118	128	28	11	2	2	**289**	141	116	42	19	0	1	**319**
Mallaig High School	17	15	0	0	2	0	**34**	14	12	16	0	0	0	**42**
Nairn Academy	106	124	1	0	0	0	**231**	140	96	2	2	0	0	**240**
Plockton High School	29	21	11	4	2	0	**67**	31	35	7	4	1	0	**78**
Portree High School	38	56	28	6	1	2	**131**	54	41	30	3			**128**
Tain Royal Academy	87	86	4	0	0	0	**177**	88	96	0	0	0	0	**184**
Thurso High School	0	0	0	0	1	1	**2**	0	0	1	0	0	1	**2**
Ullapool High School	9	10	2	0	0	1	**22**	18	10	7	0	0	0	**35**
Millburn Academy	17	13	9	27	11	3	**80**	21	22	11	14	12	4	**84**
Farr High School	16	15	0	0	0	0	**31**	17	15	15	0	0	0	**47**
Dornoch Academy	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**	48	0	0	0	0	0	**48**
Kinlochleven High School	8	17	0	0	0	0	**25**	16	9	0	0	0	0	**25**
	749	798	224	135	27	19	**1952**	845	711	260	105	24	23	**1968**

DOWN
SAME
UP

These results show that, while there has been a slight increase, the numbers remain stable, but it has been encouraging to see growth across so many schools, with Dornoch Academy.

6.2 **Qualification Scotland Results - Highland**

Across Gaelic Medium Education and Gaelic Learner Education, there has been an increase of 20 pupils achieving Qualification Scotland exams at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher level in 2026.

	2026	**2025**	**2024**	**2023**
Gàidhlig Nat5	69	49	57	56
Gàidhlig H	32	40	28	30
Gàidhlig AH	10	11	13	8
Gaelic Nat5	74	74	55	46
Gaelic H	29	20	15	15
Gaelic AH	3	3	5	3

Entries for Gàidhlig National 5 increased significantly from 49 in 2025 to 69 in 2026 (+41%), indicating growing uptake of Gaelic-medium qualifications at this level.

Gaelic National 5 entries remained stable at 74, while Gaelic Higher increased from 20 to 29 (+45%), suggesting continued strength and progression in Gaelic learner pathways.

While Higher-level participation grew in the learner pathway (Gaelic H), entries in Gàidhlig Higher fell from 40 to 32, and Advanced Higher numbers remained small across both pathways. This highlights the need to sustain progression into the senior phase, particularly in Gaelic-medium qualifications.

6.3 **National Picture for Secondary Gaelic Education – QS Results**

	Gàidhlig N5	Gàidhlig H	Gàidhlig AH	Gaelic N5	Gaelic H	Gaelic AH
Highland	70	30	10	75	30	
CNES	40	10	5	20	15	
Argyll & Bute	15	10		20	5	
Glasgow City	55	45	5			
N Lanarkshire	10					
S Lanarkshire	5					
Stirling	5					
Edinburgh	35	20				

(Number of pupils who gained national qualifications, for Gaelic and Gàidhlig in 2025/26 – rounded to the nearest 5 – Attainment Statistics 2026 – Qualifications Scotland)

Highland records the highest combined total across the qualifications shown (215 entries), ahead of Glasgow City (105), CNES (90), and Argyll & Bute (50). This demonstrates Highland's significant contribution to Gaelic qualifications nationally.

Highland has the highest number of entries in both Gàidhlig National 5 (70) and Gaelic National 5 (75), indicating a particularly strong pipeline of young people studying Gaelic in the senior phase.

While Glasgow City has the highest Gàidhlig Higher entry figure (45), Highland is the only authority showing consistently high participation across National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher in both Gaelic-medium and learner qualifications. This suggests a broad and well-established Gaelic learning offer with strong progression opportunities.

Highland continues to be the leading local authority for Gaelic qualifications among those shown, with the highest overall number of entries and the strongest National 5 participation. Although some authorities demonstrate particular strengths at individual qualification levels, Highland's performance is characterised by both scale and breadth, with substantial participation across the full range of Gaelic qualifications.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 26 October 2026

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Background Papers: