

# Education Scotland Conference.

## Joan Esson HMI

### Ppt 1

On behalf of Education Scotland, I am delighted to have this opportunity to relay some of the key messages from the Advice on Gaelic Education which Education Scotland published at the beginning of the year. I would also like to recognise the support that your attendance, and collectively such a large attendance at this conference symbolises for the advancement of Gaelic. On behalf of Education, I would also like to acknowledge your positive correspondence at the time of the publication of our Advice. My aim today is to share with you some of the vision that the Advice contains to help improve outcomes for our young people. The Briefing for Gaelic Education within your delegate pack has the web address at which you will find the advice. You will also find paper copies of my presentation on your tables.

### Ppt 2

We will begin by looking at the methodology that we used in producing the Advice on Gaelic Education. It is based in our evidence from inspection, reviews and validated self-evaluation. In this we have a particular focus on how well children and young people learn from 3-18. This gives a national context for our Advice and evidence of effective practice where children experience high standards and attainment and are well-prepared for being in positive destinations. In writing the Advice, we consulted extensively and we would like to acknowledge the contributions of a range of people and organisations that supported us with this project. We are delighted to evidence that schools, local authorities and universities are already using our Advice as part of their self-evaluation and professional learning. The Advice on Gaelic also presents an agenda for partnership working for the good of Gaelic.

### PPT 3

This slide shows the range of themes included in the Advice. Its aim is to build capacity in such areas as Gaelic Medium and Learner Education and give an account of policy, guidance and legislation from which Gaelic needs to be benefitting.

### PPT 4

As already referenced by the Minister, we evidenced the many successes of Gaelic Medium Education on which we have based our Advice for Gaelic Education. It is my privilege in my role as an inspector to be evidencing these in our schools. I think the most wonderful experience in Gaelic Medium Education is to see effective immersion through play at the early level as children progress naturally and with ease from absorbing the language to speaking the language. These successes inspire us all in our responsibilities for the improvement of Gaelic Education but as would be expected of us all we need to continue to strive for more impact. Gaelic sits within a bigger picture of planning for minority languages. It is useful for us to have an outward and international perspective on our work. We look forward to Professor Matthew Maclver's keynote address on this later in the programme.

## PPT 5 Teachers as a valuable resource

I am now going to select four themes from the Advice to add to the theme that Graeme spoke to on the importance of strong leadership and vision for Gaelic which is based on a thorough understanding of Gaelic Education. The style used in my presentation links each theme to the focus groups which are part of this afternoon's agenda. In these focus groups, you will have an opportunity to discuss further each theme, share effective practice and suggest the partnership working and support that is required to support implementation.

Our first theme is that teachers are the most valuable resource that we have in securing a future for the language. In this role, they need to be valued and supported with professional learning.

## PPT 6

In our consultation for the Advice, we elicited people's views on what improvement would have the biggest impact in improving Gaelic Education. The responses were unanimous in suggesting that the greatest hindrance to the advancement of Gaelic is teacher shortages. In saying this, Education Scotland recognises the efforts that are being made in this area. This demonstrates the value we should place on teachers' impact on Gaelic.

## PPT 7

We are still to realise the full impact of the Donaldson report in teaching for Gaelic Medium Education, especially in training teachers. We appreciate the positive changes being made in some aspects of training and we should continue to articulate training to the specific specialisms that are unique to Gaelic Medium Education.

## PPT 8

We have good opportunities at this time to articulate professional learning to the needs of those in Gaelic Medium Education to help them to continue to achieve positive outcomes. Key is to have professional learning delivered through Gaelic and synchronised to the needs of Gaelic. In the focus group on professional learning, this will be enlarged on by the Universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in respect of masters-level learning. The General Teaching Council for Scotland will describe the role of professional standards as part of professional update and the Framework for Leadership led by the Scottish College for Educational Leadership.

## PPT 9

The next theme that I would like to address from the Advice on Gaelic Education relates to Gaelic Medium Education being based on the principles of immersion. We still evidence through inspection too many inconsistencies around the role of immersion in Gaelic Medium Education. The outcome of learning through immersion is bilingualism, fluency and rich experiences for our learners.

## PPT 10

Our Advice on Gaelic Education strongly promotes Gaelic Medium Education as a continuum of learning from 3-18 and into positive destinations. We recommend in the Advice that we begin Gaelic Medium Education in early learning and child care centres with transition into P1. Curriculum for Excellence begins at age 3 and that is an age that children benefit greatly from

being immersed in the language. This also helps us achieve equity with English medium education and has an impact on closing the gap in attainment. As we work towards achieving this, we need to still be enrolling children for Gaelic Medium Education in P1.

#### PPT 11

We have detailed in the Advice on Gaelic Education our expectations for learning through play in total immersion and the key responsibilities that adults have. Adults in the playroom must use high-quality fluent Gaelic. This is the quality of Gaelic that the children in turn will use. The children will also learn language errors, if that is what they will hear. These errors can be challenging to reverse. We advise on what high-quality play in immersion looks like as adults skilfully ensure that children are constantly exposed to Gaelic as they play, learn songs and rhymes and take part in activities. Children's learning is planned using the experiences and outcomes in different contexts and across the curriculum areas. You will have an opportunity to discuss further in the focus group led by HMI Associate Assessors.

#### PPT 12

Let's now look at the primary stages. This is where we have most evidence of the success of Gaelic Medium Education as children acquire fluency through immersion. HM Inspectors in an earlier report defined that up to the end of P3 children's learning was through total immersion. Commendably we see good primary schools applying this very well. They recognise the correlation between total immersion and attainment, quality fluency and the ability to learn across the curricular areas through the medium of Gaelic. Teachers need to be monitoring and tracking children's progress and achievement in Gaelic to ensure that they have a robust foundation in Gaelic before they begin to access the experiences and outcomes for literacy and English. They also need to monitor and track that children are learning at an appropriate pace with continuity and progression in their learning.

#### PPT 13

Following a period of total immersion, children now move to an immersion phase where learning, teaching and assessment continues to be through the medium of Gaelic across all aspects of learning. This is the stage at which the formal teaching of English language is introduced. Children learn at a quicker pace in the curricular areas as well as other contexts through the medium of Gaelic. As a Gaelic Medium teacher, you are a teacher of an additional language. As such, planning learning entails the development of grammar and language in collaborative and co-operative approaches in which children enjoy learning. Children will also develop language through songs and rhymes in which they memorise set phrases. Children should also learn about Scotland and the culture of Gaelic as a context for learning. You will have an opportunity to discuss this theme in a focus group led by HMI Associate Assessors.

#### PPT 14

The next theme I would like to highlight is the curriculum for Gaelic Medium at the secondary stages. I would like to invite you to be evaluative here and reflect as to whether we are where we should be following over a decade of Curriculum for Excellence and 30 years of Gaelic Medium Education. Are we having sufficient impact? Reflect also on the opportunities within Curriculum for Excellence. If we do not capitalise these for Gaelic Medium Education, when will we have a curriculum for Gaelic? When we inspect the curriculum for Gaelic Medium, we often evidence that there is capacity for more of the four context curriculum to be through Gaelic within our current resources. That is, however not to underestimate the importance of supporting schools with more staffing and resources.

#### PPT 15

Education Scotland's Advice recommends that we need to re-focus on providing more continuity in young people's learning through Gaelic from primary school. We suggest that schools' planning uses the following two outcomes: that is that young people are equally confident in the use of both Gaelic and English. The second outcome being that young people have regular opportunities to be using Gaelic both within and out with the classroom and school in a wide range of situations. It would be useful if curriculum planners in schools aimed for a proportion of the totality of the curriculum to be through Gaelic so that young people have opportunities to develop their language skills in Gaelic. This is an opportunity to be creative in curriculum design.

#### PPT 16

Gaelic needs to be part of the curriculum rationale which is taken forward in partnership with all stakeholders. The rationale is what schools use as a basis of planning the curriculum. Including Gaelic in the rationale should result in the language being part of the development of the curriculum. Schools have autonomy of their curriculum. They need to be cognisant of local and national advice while building on what is important and relevant to their local context. The curriculum is planned for individuals and groups of young people. Young people in Gaelic Medium Education are one of the groups for whom a four context curriculum is planned. As HM inspectors we do not see this way of thinking often enough when schools are planning their curricula. We need to be planning for our young people in Gaelic Medium Education using teachers who are fluent in Gaelic and fluent speakers in the community. There are useful reflective questions on page 27 of the Advice on Gaelic Education to promote an improved approach.

#### PPT 17

When we are planning the curriculum for young people in Gaelic Medium Education, we must remember that the curriculum for them also has four contexts. In inspections we evidence that schools are still thinking of the curriculum for Gaelic Medium Education as having one context, that of subjects. Subjects are vitally important but we need also to extend to the other three contexts. We need to use fluent speaking teachers and our resources in the community to think of increasing the proportion of the curriculum available through Gaelic. There should be a specifically designed interdisciplinary learning through Gaelic, specifically designed opportunities through Gaelic for personal achievements, specifically designed opportunities for the use of Gaelic in the life of the school, for example pupil groups, special events such as Languages Day and other special focus days. In all of these, Gaelic is the language of communication. The curriculum promotes the development of skills for learning, life and work. Young people in Gaelic Medium Education need opportunities too to develop these through the medium of Gaelic. Our expectations for a four-context curriculum that provides continuity and progression is contained in our Inspection Advice Note. We also need to be maximising short courses, electives and master classes to create opportunities for learning through Gaelic.

#### PPT 18

Partners working closely with schools are important for delivering a curriculum through Gaelic. That is partners who work closely with teachers to plan learning, teaching and assessment. It would be useful for schools to have a map of the partners that can help them deliver some of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic. Equally useful would be accessible information on how Gaelic groups and organisations can support curriculum partnerships. The senior

phase, through the medium of Gaelic or English, can not be delivered without curriculum partners. Developing the Young Workforce presents new opportunities for Curriculum for Excellence. It would be good if schools would ensure that work experience was available through the medium of Gaelic.

## Digital technologies

It's good that we are starting to look nationally again at digital learning for Gaelic Medium Education. That is learning at anytime, any place as well as live learning being available to support young people in Gaelic Medium Education. To win parents' and young people's confidence in learning through digital technologies we must ensure high standards. We must retain and maintain those benefits that are to be had from Gaelic Medium Education and bilingualism. It is vitally important that we have high-quality experiences and outcomes in Gaelic Medium Education the promotion of which is one of the purposes of the Advice on Gaelic Education.

### PPT 19

We need to ensure that we are preparing young people in Gaelic Medium Education for the careers to which they aspire. For this, we need to be developing a curriculum based on skills, developing their knowledge and understanding as well as to continue to develop their fluency. For this, we need to be working closely with schools so we know what pathways the young people wish to follow and design the curriculum to meet their needs.

### PPT 20

This slide summarises some important points from our Advice on Gaelic Education. Young people have an entitlement to study Gaelic and Gaelic Medium Education up to the end of the broad general education. Thereafter there should be pathways for them to follow in the senior phase through Gaelic that lead to qualifications, as well as the development of skills and opportunities for personal achievement. Gaelic needs to be more than a subject studied in a classroom. Young people need opportunities to apply their learning of Gaelic and experience breadth and challenge in learning. Young people have an entitlement to personal support. This conversation, with an adult who knows, them needs to monitor and track their development of fluency in Gaelic and advise them of the ways that they can continue to increase their fluency. This conversation should include young people who may have stopped learning Gaelic at transition points.

### PPT 21

We would like you to be clear that Gaelic Medium Education has a clear role in a 1+2 Approach to languages. In the curriculum for Gaelic Medium Education, there are three languages to be planned. In the case of Gaelic Medium Education, the first of those remains Gaelic. Children will then formally study English language at the end of P3. By P5, children should have an opportunity to learn a second additional language such as French, German or Spanish, for example. This second additional language needs to afford children an opportunity to learn in depth and to be challenged in their learning. In all of these languages, there should be continuity into secondary with pathways to the senior phase. Where English medium and Gaelic Medium operate in the same school it is good for children in EM to have opportunities to learn Gaelic to help them make connections in their learning. It also helps foster a better

understanding and attitude to Gaelic. The focus group on the curriculum at the secondary stages will share practice from Greenfaulds Academy and advise on qualifications and awards.

#### PPT 22

The final theme that I would like to explore with you is that Gaelic Learner Education has much to offer in meeting the National Gaelic Language Plan aim to increase the number of speakers of Gaelic. For this, we must maximise the potential of a 1+2 Approach.

#### PPT 23

Gaelic Learner Education has a pivotal role to play in a 1+2 Approach to Language Learning. Gaelic (Learners) can be the first additional language which is commenced at P1 or the second additional language which is commenced at P5. Young people should continue to learn a language, which includes Gaelic, up to the end of S3.

#### PPT 24

We would recommend that all opportunities be used to promote Gaelic Learner Education in the curriculum. In Education Scotland's latest 1+2 guidance on the second additional language we give several examples of how Gaelic (Learners) can be part of different curriculum models. We suggest ways that Gaelic can be part of long-term and short-term courses in the broad general education and we also fully endorse Gaelic (Learners) in the senior phase. We have a lot of detail on our website – 1+2 The Role of Gaelic Education in a 1+2 Approach. The address for this is in the briefing paper in your delegate pack. The Focus Group on 1+2 led by our Coordinator for Gaelic will share emerging practice in 1+2 from The Highland Council, East Ayrshire and the Western Isles.

#### PPT 25

In conclusion, I would like to leave a statistic with you. 1.1%. That's our challenge in education of increasing the number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland. We have recognised all of your contributions for the success of Gaelic Medium Education. Today is about helping develop further a vision for Gaelic Education. For that we need to be working together for the good of Gaelic. In the focus groups this afternoon, you have an opportunity to suggest the support required to make a difference. Along with our Advice on Gaelic Education we will use that with our partners to support and challenge. The promotion of Gaelic is a responsibility of all of us. Together we can make a difference. Thank you for listening.

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