

The role of Gaelic Education 3-18 in “Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach”⁽¹⁾

1. Introduction

1.1 The report, “Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach” tasks local authorities and schools with ensuring that all children and young people learn two languages in addition to their mother tongue. The report states,

“Although Gaelic Medium Education (GME) is an important part of wider language provision in Scotland, the Working Group does not attempt to cover in this Report and its recommendations all the development needs associated with GME. These have been dealt with elsewhere in documents such as the *National Gaelic Language Plan* and the report, *Gaelic Education: Building on the successes, addressing the barriers.*”

The purpose of this advice is to bring together some of the recommendations of the report with other advice such as, “Gaelic Education: Building on the successes, addressing the barriers” (2) to assist with planning for Gaelic Education in a 1+2 Approach. Further advice is also available on the Education Scotland website and that of **SCILT**, Scotland's National Centre for Languages.

1.2 Education Scotland publications define Gaelic Education as having three inter-related components. These are

- Gaelic Medium Education (GME)
- Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) and
- the promotion of Learning about Gaelic Language and Culture (LAGC) as part of Scotland's identity.

All of those components of Gaelic Education have a pivotal role to play in “Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach”. Many education authorities already offer Gaelic in one of its forms as part of the statutory planning for the National Gaelic Language Plan. As part of the 1+2 Approach, education authorities should continue and extend planning for Gaelic as part of a 1+2 Approach. In doing so, they will be contributing to an aim of the National Gaelic Language Plan to secure a sustainable future for the language.

1.3 In “Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach” the report states,

“In accordance with European practice the report uses the following terms: L1 when referring to mother tongue, L2 for second language or first additional language, L3 for third language or second additional language”.

The terminology in a 1+2 Approach needs to work clearly with GME to assist with its continuing development. For some children in GME, Gaelic is their mother tongue, L1. For others, English is their mother tongue, L1. In GME, it is vitally important that a focus is retained on developing fluency in Gaelic through immersion. In a 1+2 Approach, there are three languages to initially plan in the 3-12 Gaelic Medium curriculum while being cognisant of the principles of immersion. For children in GME, the first language to be planned in the curriculum is Gaelic which for most children is their first additional language or L2. The second language to be planned is English which for most is their mother tongue or L1. Children will then learn a third language, or second additional language, L3 for example, French. “Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach” uses the following terminology for languages:

“In places the report refers to ‘Modern Languages’ which is the terminology used in Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) for foreign languages. In other places, it uses ‘languages’ in a more general way, for example, when referring to Scotland’s own languages (eg Gaelic), ‘community’ languages and British Sign Language (BSL)”.

In the past, a lack of shared understanding of terminology in GME resulted in inconsistencies in practice with the result that too much English was being used in the immersion experience. The 1+2 Approach to language learning and approaches to GME endorse learning through immersion and the resultant sequencing of the learning of languages in the curriculum.

1.4 In English medium education (EME), almost all children have English as their mother tongue or L1. Children in EME will begin a second language or first additional language, L2 in P1. In P5, they will begin a second additional language, L3. Children in EME can learn Gaelic as their entitlement to a language as L2 or L3.

2. Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in a 1+2 Approach

2.1 The report, “Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach” states,

“The Working Group is aware that Scotland has a very good example of language immersion education through Gaelic Medium Education (GME). GME is currently available in about 60 primary schools throughout Scotland. The aim of GME is the attainment of a high level of language skills in two languages while also allowing for the learning of a third language”.

2.2 Parents choose GME for their children when they want them to become fluent speakers of Gaelic as an outcome of 3-18 education. Some children develop their fluency in the home. Many children, although not exclusively so, will begin their experience of GME in early learning and childcare centres. This is commendable and should be continued and extended even though the 1+2 Approach suggests that the learning of languages begins in P1. In a 1+2 Approach, there are three languages to plan for in the curriculum while being cognisant of the principles of immersion. On entering P1, GME will continue to be developed as part of a 1+2 Approach and build on children’s prior learning. **Children will not learn another language at this point.** In GME, children will be totally immersed in Gaelic as the first language that is planned in the curriculum. The expectations for total immersion are set out in the report, *“Gaelic Education: Building on the successes, addressing the barriers”*. A summary is undernoted.

2.3 The early stage of learning through the medium of Gaelic is referred to as **total immersion**. Gaelic is the language used. The exceptions to the total use of Gaelic includes in comforting a child who is distressed and for an emergency situation. For some children, their learning in GME is alongside English medium provision. For others, the context is a free-standing Gaelic Medium nursery and school. In the former, total immersion is more challenging to achieve out with the classroom although this should not prevent schools in striving for this. Children need to experience high-quality total immersion in GME until late in P3 or P4 by which time the learner will have achieved the early and for some, first curricular levels of Literacy and Gàidhlig(3). The exact timing of total immersion will be evidenced by teachers’ monitoring and tracking of children’s progress and achievement.

2.4 During total immersion, learning will firstly have a very strong focus on listening and talking in Gaelic. Adults in the playroom and classroom use high-quality Gaelic to create an

environment in which Gaelic is used all of the time. The planning for learning involves grouping experiences and outcomes together to give opportunities firstly to listen to, understand and then talk in Gaelic. As learners master these skills, they will then be introduced to reading and writing in Gaelic. Over time, as learners become secure in their fluency of Gaelic, all skills will be developed together in an integrated way. This will include a range of approaches to learning and teaching, for example, play, projects, learning outdoors and role-play. The Information for parents and carers, “Curriculum for Excellence: learning at the early level”(4) gives further advice on children’s experiences.

2.5 The aforementioned HMI report refers to the next stage of learning in GME as being the **immersion phase**. In this, the curriculum in its entirety continues to be taught through the medium of Gaelic across all four contexts as part of a 3-18 continuum of learning. Teachers’ monitoring and tracking of progress and achievement should confirm that children now have a secure base in Gaelic language to transfer to developing reading and writing skills in English language. English is the second language to be planned in the curriculum using the aims and goals of Curriculum for Excellence. In continuing to develop Gaelic, English is taught through medium of Gaelic as are the other curricular areas. Gaelic continues to be developed as the first language across the four contexts of the curriculum alongside English. Learners may apply further and extend their knowledge and language skills through partnerships with fluent speakers, other schools, colleges, community learning and development and groups for Gaelic. Accessing fluent, authentic and idiomatic Gaelic adds a rich dimension to learners’ experiences which in turn provides them with challenge. This affords an opportunity for learners to apply their learning of Gaelic in more complex contexts which also develops their skills for life and work, such as working with others, solving problems and presenting information. The Education Scotland publication, “Professional learning resource: Assessing progress and achievement in Literacy and Gàidhlig” and the associated progression framework(5) give advice on maintaining well-paced and challenging learning. This includes for children who are developing their fluency in Gaelic by using it outside school.

2.6 By P5, children learning in GME will be introduced to a second additional language, L3. This will be taught through the medium of Gaelic. In doing so, the advice on learning and teaching in the primary language learning overarching framework(6) applies. However, it should be recognised that children who learn in GME accrue the benefits of bilingualism. As such they have skills, knowledge and an understanding of how languages work to transfer to this second additional language, L3. For them, the pace of learning and progress should be monitored and tracked carefully to ensure learning that is challenging, sets high expectations and meets their needs. During S1 to S3, young people should have opportunities to continue learning this second additional language, L3 along with English and Gàidhlig, as part of a progressive experience going beyond the learning of vocabulary. Schools may deliver L3 as a regular feature of the curriculum, through interdisciplinary work, a short course or an elective, for example. In planning motivating learning experiences, staff should be mindful of the opportunity to recognise young people’s achievements through the use of awards such as The Scottish Studies Awards(7). The Pupil Profile(8) also has a key role in capturing learners’ experiences of GME and to help ensure effective transition and progression.

2.7 At the secondary stages, learning Gaelic (Gàidhlig) remains an entitlement as part of GME to the end of the broad general education with the option of studying awards and qualifications for Gaelic and through Gaelic in the senior phase. Young people will also study English. “Language Learning in Scotland: a 1+2 Approach: Further guidance on continuity of learning from P7 into S1”(9) has advice on L3. Where authorities are able to deliver continuity of L3 from P5-P7 and into S1, this is an ideal scenario which is to be supported and encouraged. Across stages, schools should not assume that children and young people who need support in their learning are not required to study a language at all. A young person’s learning and development of fluency of Gaelic in GME will take place in other subjects as well as in all the contexts of the curriculum.

While there are challenges around shortages of specialist staff, secondary schools need to continue to aim for the continuum of learning through immersion described in paragraph 2.5. Secondary schools still need to aim to have a sufficient proportion of the four context curriculum being delivered through the medium of Gaelic to enable young people to achieve **equal fluency and literacy** in both Gaelic and English. For this, the following **two outcomes** give a useful **focus for improvement**. These are that young people:

- feel equally confident in the use of Gaelic and English; and
- are able to use both Gaelic and English in a full range of situations within and outwith school.

2.8 Effective transition links between the stages are key to building on language learning which has taken place. This is particularly important for giving children and young people continuity in learning through Gaelic as they move from early learning and childcare centres to primary and from primary to secondary. Children and young people should continue learning Gaelic and learning through Gaelic. Where continuity of the second additional language, L3 is possible at the secondary stages, it offers additional progression in language learning. Ideally, therefore, the secondary school would be able to provide progressive opportunities for further study of the same second additional language, L3.

2.9 It would be useful if education authorities would ascertain the number of 3-18 staff who are able to deliver GME to inform future planning, resourcing and training needs. They should also ensure that staff delivering GME, and those wishing to do so in the future, have access to career-long professional learning.

3. Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) in a 1+2 Approach

3.1 In English medium education, Gaelic language learning is part of children's and young people's entitlement to learning a language. In this case, education authorities may decide that Gaelic Learner Education is the first or second additional language, L2 or L3. Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) is an overarching term which spans across 3-18 provision. Opportunities currently exist for learning the Gaelic language and are referred to as Gaelic Learners in the Primary School (GLPS). At the secondary stages, this is referred to as Gaelic (Learners).

3.2 Curriculum for Excellence and a 1+2 Approach promote learning a language in the broad general education as a continuum of learning. Currently, there are challenges around the effective planning of GLE as a continuum of learning. Delivery can be driven by whether suitably qualified staff are available and sometimes by the interests of the primary or secondary headteacher. Sometimes, continuity is provided for learners in the primary by the associated secondary school, and although this is not always the case, it is desirable and needs to be supported and encouraged. In other situations, GLE is taught in a secondary school but not in its associated primaries. Education authorities need to support their schools in delivering a coherent programme for GLE which leads to awards and qualifications. Young people should not be precluded from commencing GLE in secondary as a first experience of language learning. In doing so, they are supporting national planning for Gaelic. This may need to make use of the creative approaches to designing the curriculum with the use of a planned interdisciplinary approach, or through an elective or enrichment activity which runs for all or part of the session.

3.3 The advice in the Education Scotland guidance on primary language learning overarching framework⁽¹⁰⁾ applies to GLE too. However, the programme for Gaelic (Learners) has experiences and outcomes⁽¹¹⁾ at the early and first levels while the other languages do not.

Experiences and outcomes should be used to guide learning, teaching and assessment. GLE also has its own advice for monitoring, tracking and assessment. The Education Scotland publication, “Professional learning resource: Assessing progress and achievement for Gaelic (Learners)” and the associated progression framework⁽¹²⁾ give advice on maintaining well-paced and challenging learning.

3.4 All children should have an opportunity to learn an additional language from P1 by 2020. In schools where English and Gaelic Medium provision are within the same school, it is helpful if all children in EME have an opportunity to learn Gaelic as L2 or L3. If staffing does not make this possible, it would be helpful for children to learn about Gaelic language and culture as part of Scotland’s identity. In current best practice, this helps develop a shared understanding, and positive and inclusive attitudes to Gaelic. This also helps meet the principles of immersion as part of GME in developing an ethos which is conducive to Gaelic.

3.5 GLE is an entitlement for all as part of the broad general education up to the end of S3, within the languages curriculum area. The study of English does not fully cover this curriculum area. All young people may not undertake a full course in a language, S1 to S3, if this is not appropriate to their needs. Language study should still be part of their curriculum however. Schools should not assume that young people who need support in their learning are not required to study a language at all.

3.6 During S1 to S3, young people should be introduced to another language in addition to L2. This does not have to be the same language as was studied for L3 at primary school, although it may be. It may not be possible to study this language in the same depth as L2 but it needs to be a progressive experience going beyond the learning of vocabulary. Schools may choose to deliver this through interdisciplinary work, a short course or an elective, for example. In planning motivating learning experiences for GLE, staff should be mindful of the opportunity to recognise young people’s achievements through the use of awards such as

- Languages for Life and Work Award⁽¹³⁾ which entails the study of one or more languages and also employability skills.
- The Scottish Studies Award which provides opportunities for young people to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of Scotland - in terms of its people, languages (for example Scots and Gaelic), society, culture, natural environment and heritage - and to make connections across the curriculum.

In the senior phase, young people need to have learning pathways that enable them to study awards and qualifications for Gaelic (Learners).

3.7 The Pupil Profile has a key role in capturing learners’ experiences and achievements in GLE and in helping to ensure effective transition and progression. Effective transition links between the primary and secondary sectors are key to building on language learning which has taken place at the primary stages.

3.8 It would be useful if education authorities would ascertain the number of primary school teachers who are GLPS/PLL trained to inform future planning, resourcing and training needs. They should also ensure that teachers wishing to deliver GLE are invited to take part in all training associated with the implementation of the 1+2 Approach. Teachers with an interest and aptitude for languages should be supported in developing the range of languages in which they are qualified or trained to teach.

4. Learning about Gaelic Language and Culture (LAGC) in a 1+2 Approach

4.1 Learning about the language and culture of Scotland frequently motivates children to learn Gaelic. This may be achieved with the use of a planned interdisciplinary approach, or through an elective or enrichment activity which runs for all or part of the session. The resource, *Studying Scotland*⁽¹⁴⁾ opens up access to learning about Scotland's language, culture, heritage, music, history, geography and literature. Partners, the community and Gaelic organisations also have a role in helping children to learn about Gaelic language and culture. Qualifications and awards such as Scottish Studies Award should be encouraged to ensure continuity in learning about Gaelic language and culture. Such approaches help provide continuity in learning, especially if schools are facing challenges around the effective planning of GLE as a continuum of learning.

4.2 The P7 and S3 Pupil Profiles have a key role in capturing learners' experiences and achievements in Gaelic Education and in helping ensure effective transition and progression.

4.3 Reference should also be made to the publication, "Curriculum for Excellence Briefing, Learning about Scotland"⁽¹⁵⁾.

5. References

- (1) Language Learning in Scotland A 1+2 Approach. Scottish Government Languages Working Group: Report and Recommendations Scottish Government, May 2012.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00393435.pdf>
- (2) Gaelic Education: Building on the successes, addressing the barriers, Education Scotland. June 2011.
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/gebse_tcm4-712947.pdf
- (3) Literacy and Gàidhlig Experiences and Outcomes, Education Scotland.
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/curriculumareas/languages/litandgaidhlig/eandos/index.asp>
- (4) Information for parents and carers. Curriculum for Excellence: learning at the early level, Education Scotland.
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/InformationforParentsandCarers_tcm4-598459.pdf
- (5) Literacy and Gàidhlig: Assessing progress and achievement professional learning resource, Education Scotland.
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/LiteracyandG%C3%A0idhligupdate150114_tcm4-746190.pdf
- (6) Taking a 1+2 approach to language learning, Education Scotland.
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/0to9/a1plus2approachtolanguagelearning/introduction.asp>
- (7) Scottish Studies Award, SQA.
<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/64329.html>
- (8) P7 profiles, Education Scotland.
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/assessment/achievement/profiling/p7profiles/developingpractice.asp>
- S3 profiles, Education Scotland.
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningteachingandassessment/assessment/achievement/profiling/s3profiles/developingpractice.asp>
- (9) Language Learning in Scotland: a 1+2 Approach: Further guidance on continuity of learning from P7 into S1
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/LanguageLearninginScotlandContinuityAdvice_tcm4-836556.pdf
- (10) Primary language learning overarching framework
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/PrimaryLanguageLearningOverarchingFramework_tcm4-833685.pdf
- (11) Gaelic (Learners) Experiences and Outcomes
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/languages/gaelic/index.asp>
- (12) Gaelic (Learners): Assessing progress and achievement professional learning resource, Education Scotland.
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/GaelicLearnersV3_tcm4-744693.pdf

(13) SQA Languages for Life and Work Award.

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/57034.html>

(14) Studying Scotland, Education Scotland.

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/studyingScotland/>

(15) Curriculum for Excellence Briefing 9: Learning about Scotland, Education Scotland.

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/CfEBriefing9_tcm4-754388.pdf

6. Definition of terms related to Gaelic

Gaelic (Learners)

At the secondary stages, the programme for young people to learn Gaelic is referred to as **Gaelic (Learners)**.

Gaelic Learner Education (GLE)

Children may learn Gaelic as a first or second additional language in English medium schools, often alongside another language. In primary, this is referred to as **Gaelic Learners in the Primary School (GLPS)**. The equivalent at the secondary stages is referred to as **Gaelic (Learners)**. When referring to provision across 3-18 **Gaelic Learner Education (GLE)** is used.

Gaelic Learners in the Primary School (GLPS).

The programme used in English medium primary schools to learn Gaelic.

Gaelic Medium Education (GME)

All education takes place through the medium of Gaelic. This begins with a **total Gaelic immersion** phase and is followed by an **immersion** phase. The aim of Gaelic Medium Education is to enable children and young people to be **bilingual** and to have equal fluency in both Gaelic and English.

Gàidhlig

The Gaelic course that young people who are fluent in Gaelic study as part of GME in secondary schools is known as **Gàidhlig**.

National Gaelic Language Plan

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 requires an action plan detailing strategies for increasing the numbers of Gaelic speakers.

Principles of Immersion and total Immersion

The method of learning Gaelic in Gaelic Medium provision (GME) is referred to as **immersion**. Children in Gaelic medium provision learn Gaelic by being immersed in the language. From early learning and childcare centres to late P3 or P4, children are **totally immersed** in the language. Teachers' monitoring and tracking of children's progress and achievement will determine the exact timing. **Immersion** still continues beyond P3 /P4, with the entire curriculum delivered through the medium of Gaelic. By the end of P7, children's attainment in English language will be broadly similar to that of children in English medium education. Immersion should continue into secondary with schools providing progression from primary by delivering subjects through the medium of Gaelic.

7. Useful websites

Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig

The organisation charged with co-ordinating the production and distribution of Gaelic educational resources throughout Scotland

<http://www.storlann.co.uk/ceumannan/index.html>

Am Faclair Beag

<http://www.faclair.com/>

BBC Alba – Education pages

www.bbc.co.uk/foghlam

BBC Foghlam – various free ‘Learn Gaelic’ resources

http://www.bbc.co.uk/alba/foghlam/learn_gaelic/index.shtml

Beag air Bheag

Welcome to Beag air Bheag, a taste of Scottish Gaelic for absolute beginners

http://www.bbc.co.uk/alba/foghlam/beag_air_bheag/

Beag air Bheag – beginners’ course

http://www.bbc.co.uk/alba/foghlam/beag_air_bheag/

Beag air Bheag grammar

http://www.bbc.co.uk/alba/foghlam/beag_air_bheag/grammar/

E-stòras - Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Resources for Gaelic Education 3-18

www.e-storas.com

Fèisean nan Gàidheal

Gaelic Festivals

www.feisean.org

Guthan Beaga - Parents wishing to learn Gaelic phrases at home

<http://www.guthanbeaga.co.uk>

Language teaching made fun and easy

Languagenut is the award-winning primary language resource tool designed by school teachers to engage and motivate students learning a language

<http://www.languagenut.com>

Learn Gaelic dictionary

<http://learngaelic.net/dictionary/>

One-minute Gaelic

<http://radiolingua.com/category/shows/oml-gaelic/>

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Scotland's Gaelic College

www.smo.uhi.ac.uk

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig dictionary list

<http://www2.smo.uhi.ac.uk/gaidhlig/faclair/>

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig – Distance Learning Courses:

http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/Foghlam/Tagh-Cursa/Air-Astar/Cursa_Inntrigidh/index_en.html

http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/Foghlam/Tagh-Cursa/Air-Astar/Cursa-Adhartais/index_en.html

http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/Foghlam/Tagh-Cursa/Air-Astar/Sgilean_Sgriobhaidh/index_en.html

<http://www.streap.smo.uhi.ac.uk/>

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig - Short Courses:

<http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/en/cursaichean/cursaichean-goirid/>

Scholar

Learning materials and activities provided for teachers and students across Scotland

www.scholar.hw.ac.uk

SCILT Scottish Centre of Languages and Training which is based at Strathclyde University

<http://www.scilt.org.uk/>

Stòr-Data Briathrachais Gàidhlig

<http://www2.smo.uhi.ac.uk/gaidhlig/faclair/sbg/lorg.php>