Bun-sgoil Innis an Uillt

GAELIC TEACHING AND IMMERSION POLICY

Updated February 2026

Principles

- We have equal respect for Gaelic and English throughout the school
- We understand that Gaelic Medium Education (GME) is a system which is based on immersion in Gaelic
- We believe that Gaelic education provides pupils with significant educational, cognitive, cultural, economic, and social benefits
- We believe that immersion leads to fluency which contributes to raising attainment
- Pupils and staff who speak Gaelic will be encouraged to use Gaelic in all aspects of school life where available.
- We believe that the Gaelic language and culture is important, and every pupil and member of staff will have opportunities to engage with the Gaelic language and culture
- We believe that Gaelic education needs to grow and develop
- We believe in encouraging the children's respect for our minority language and culture as stated in Article 30 of the UNCRC

Whole School Ethos

- School Improvement plans prioritise development and ethos of Gaelic throughout the school
- Gaelic signage is visible throughout the school including school vision and values
- All English Medium Education classes (EME) will receive a weekly Gaelic lesson
- Whole school events will always include Gaelic input where possible, demonstrating equal respect to both Gaelic and English
- Appropriate training and support will be put in place to ensure all members of staff can fulfill the requirements of the school's Gaelic policy e.g. Ionad airson Sàr-mhathais
- All pupils in EME and GME will have regular opportunities to participate in a range of Gaelic activities and events, for example the local and national Mòd

Creating a Gaelic environment

For most pupils in GME, their main exposure to Gaelic language is within the school day. Every opportunity must be taken to create and maintain an environment where Gaelic is heard and seen so that all learners have good opportunities to reach fluency. At all stages, exposure to the language is paramount as gradually the progression from listening, to understanding, to engaging, to talking and to conversing in Gaelic occurs. At all stages there is a continuous focus on extending Gaelic language skills through both planned and unplanned opportunities. Care must be taken to avoid translation to English, except when absolutely necessary. Each class should have a Gaelic reward system in place to promote and encourage the use of Gaelic. This will be celebrated at fortnightly Gaelic assemblies.

This total immersion environment is achieved through:

- All staff taking responsibility for the development of all pupils' Gaelic. This involves getting to know

learners on a conversational basis and taking every opportunity to speak to them in the passing
- Being in the habit of creating and using opportunities for meaningful oral engagement throughout the school day where learners are encouraged and challenged to express themselves in Gaelic
- Praising and encouraging all learners for using their Gaelic, even if it is just one word
- Greeting parents in Gaelic and supporting parent learners in trying out their Gaelic.
- Creating an environment where staff converse in Gaelic as a matter of course, for example at breaks, lunch, in corridors, in the playground; holding staff meetings in Gaelic.
- Delivering every curriculum area through the medium of Gaelic
- Working closely in partnership with local Gaelic groups such as Comunn nam Pàrant and building strong links with the wider Gaelic community - both locally and throughout Scotland and beyond
- Providing pupils with opportunities to speak to other Gaelic speakers beyond peers and staff
- Giving Gaelic music and culture high status; maximising the opportunities that local and national events such as the Mòd offers and incorporating the preparation for these in whole class planning - e.g. all children working on learning the poem.
- Making effective use of technology to engage and encourage pupils
- Making full use of media to provide and create authentic texts. e.g. Gaelic websites, radio, television programmes, Scottish Book Trust Authors Live

Achieving and Sustaining Total immersion

"Every content lesson must be a language lesson as well, with particular attention to expanding students' repertoire of word knowledge, word families and word use" (Met, 2008, pp 56).

Early Level

The Sgoil-Àraich

As in other settings, the sgoil-àraich is a very child-centered environment, with opportunities for all kinds of play provided. A Gaelic language environment is layered on top of this with staff skillfully managing planned and unplanned opportunities for developing Gaelic language.
This approach involves all sgoil-àraich staff:

- Ensuring that Gaelic is heard in use around the playroom; staff with staff and staff with learners
- Using props, signs and gestures to assist with understanding, rather than using English
- Creating many opportunities to converse with learners about everyday life, as often as possible
- Using routines to practise key phrases and simple discussions daily for example at snack and lunchtime
- Making use of games, songs and stories to teach vocabulary and language patterns; repeating, revisiting, re-emphasising
- Planning and delivering daily small-group sessions for concentrated language input, where all learners have an opportunity to speak
- Making effective use of visuals to support new language
- Ensuring use of digital literacy in Gaelic only e.g. Dèan Dealbh, Gaelic apps
- Annotating displays, large and small, with Gaelic-only text.
- Taking time to introduce vocabulary that supports current individual interests
- Taking part in the Gaelic community e.g. attending Gaelic assemblies, Leugh is Seinn le Linda etc
- Making use of staff You Tube channels to support parents and children with Gaelic

Clas 1

At this stage there will most likely be a wide range of levels of linguistic competence in class. When planning lessons, there will be learning intentions for language as well as the one(s) for the curriculum area. Through regularly talking about their learning, learners will become increasingly aware of this.

This approach includes:

- All approaches listed for sgoil-àraich
- Taking time in Term 1 to prioritise the development of oral language skills , according to programme and policy
- Spending a lot of time on routines where all pupils have an opportunity to use their Gaelic e.g. morning routine of register and lunches, day and weather
- Making effective use of stories, songs and poems to develop vocabulary; retelling with gaps
- Challenging fluent speakers through differentiated questioning and effective use of resources
- Creating opportunities for Gaelic speakers, including other students and support staff to spend time with the learners in order to develop their linguistic competence
- Providing early support for pupils who are struggling

First Level

Clas 2 and Clas 3

For the rest of the total immersion stage, until around the end of Clas 3, approaches used at Early Level will continue to be employed. As learners become more confident and fluent in their spoken Gaelic, the learning targets will become increasingly complex, in line with our school programme - Frèam Cànan.

Clas 4

The new focus on English literacy skills and the goal of achieving fluency in English reading results in a significant change in the GME classroom. In this immersion phase, Gaelic continues to be the language of the classroom, with all subject areas, including English, being delivered in Gaelic. Gaelic resources continue to be used across the curriculum. From this stage, there will be less time spent on Gaelic literacy so there must be effective planning and delivery in place to ensure that pupils continue to consolidate and develop skills and extend their vocabulary.

Throughout the First Level:

- Talking and listening activities are the starting point for all literacy tasks.
- There is constant modelling of correct structure; every opportunity is used to develop competence in Gaelic language
- Texts of all kinds, written and spoken, are used increasingly as a core resource for extending vocabulary, teaching and illustrating grammatical structure including tenses and cases
- As well as within the core programme - grammar points are taught as required, in response to assessment information collected
- Teaching points are reinforced and embedded through conversation and games, both formally and informally e.g. in planned activities, when lining up etc
- Writing lessons will provide good contexts for focusing on grammar
- Walls will continue to be used as a learning resource; displaying target language and reinforcing learning

Second Level

At this level many pupils will have achieved a reasonable level of spoken fluency and most likely a good level of understanding. The challenge is to continue to engage the learners in the Gaelic language so that there is continued development of skills and vocabulary. Teachers will be more explicit with learners about the language learning that they are involved in.

Second Level Approaches will Include:

- Scaffolded listening and talking activities in order to encourage and support talking in Gaelic e.g. "think, pair, think, pair with another pair, think (and write) then share"
- appropriate praise of language use
- increasing awareness of the role of body language and paralanguage
- planning explicitly to maximise cultural opportunities such as the National Mod and Fèis Dràma

Progression

Talking and Listening

Talking and listening should continue to be assessed along the Curriculum for Excellence guidelines in Gaelic only. Discussions arising from English texts will be discussed in Gaelic. To extend the children's vocabulary every opportunity should be taken to hear as much Gaelic from as wide a range as possible. All classes should have 45 minutes of standalone grammar lessons a week based on the school programme. They should also have 15-20 minutes daily working on grammar points arising from the daily life of the class e.g. next steps from the Gaelic assemblies /common errors. It is recognised that within any class there will be a range of abilities. However, the following is a description of what is typically expected.

Early Level

Oral competence:

By the end of Clas 1 the aim is for pupils to be comfortable in the Gaelic language environment. The goal is for pupils to use their Gaelic, at a simple level, in classroom operations. This is primarily classroom and personal language. Support staff will be used to develop immersion and fluency in Clas 1/2. By this stage we aim for pupils to know all single sounds and most digraphs, and to be able to read the first set of common words. Pupils are making progress with managing correct responses to questions, and staff are sensitive to the difficulties this presents (responding with the verb, tenses, irregularities). Most learners will follow this progression:
I - Child responds in English (this demonstrates understanding of question) - teacher models the Gaelic response in a positive, enthusiastic way. 2 - Child begins to give the Gaelic response, perhaps with support. 3 - Child responds in Gaelic, with minimum support required.

Reading

The role of rhyme is important to all young learners of Gaelic and opportunities for the regular practice of rhyme should be provided. Children will begin Gaelic reading books once they have covered sets 1 to 10 in the Gaelic phonics scheme Facal agus Fuaim and are able to blend most words from these sets. This will typically be in Term 2 of primary 1. More able readers who require challenge should start reading books in Term 1. *(*To review when the new Reading Resource arrives in August 2026)*
Writing

Writing skills will initially be developed through class talking and listening activities with a great deal of teacher support. Opportunities will arise to develop sentence structure at news time, active learning and in conveying and carrying out instructions. Teachers will begin to scribe the children's stories until their oral competence, reading skills and phonics development are secure enough to enable them to write independently. Writing will then be taught and assessed following the guidelines and criteria from the CFE early and first level writing along with the school's own success criteria for writing.

First Level

Clas 2

By the end of Clas 2 the aim is for learners to use their Gaelic with increased confidence and with less of a need to resort to English words and phrases.

By end of Clas 2 most learners will be able to read all the common words in seata 2 and spell all words in seata 1 and 2 of Facal is Fuaim and most of common words 1. Most children will be able to write in a coherent manner; using simple logical sentences that make sense to the reader. They will be making progress in spelling common words accurately and will be beginning to add more detail to their texts by using adjectives.

Clas 3

By the end of Clas 3, the aim is for learners to be reasonably fluent, confident and relaxed in their Gaelic usage. There will be evidence of further development of writing and spelling skills and most will be able to read simple texts fluently. Talk 4 Writing approaches start at this stage through Gaelic only.

Clas 4

In Clas 4 most pupils will be working towards fluency in English reading. This means that a habit of two languages developing together is established. Learners will now be engaging in extended conversations with peers and adults through Gaelic while taking part in the day-to-day life of the class. All curriculum areas continue to be delivered in Gaelic. This is planned and implemented in line with policy. This change in role aims to help keep learners motivated towards continuous improvement and gives them good reasons to use their Gaelic.

Second Level

Clas 5

In Clas 5, the Clas 4 approach is consolidated and developed. Gaelic texts will be used as much as possible, across the curriculum but learners will at times work with English texts as sources for Gaelic language tasks, for example in project work. This can be complex and so skills and approaches will be demonstrated and taught for example with project / PEBL tasks. There will be some understanding that literal translations are not always appropriate and that each language is unique in the way words are structured to convey meaning.

Clas 6 and Clas 7

In the senior phase, most learners will be able to engage in extended conversations with peers and adults while taking part in active learning and cooperative learning tasks that involve discussion, debate, questioning etc.

Literacy lessons will focus on developing Gaelic language skills to as high a level as possible. Literacy lessons

will typically be delivered as whole class lessons with a focus on comprehension and language structure and patterns. A wide range of texts will be used, the focus often on short sections. Across the curriculum, learners will continue to work with texts in both languages, further developing the skills and approaches used in Clas 4 and Clas 5. All curriculum areas continue to be delivered in Gaelic.

Target Setting

Termly targets for each pupil should be clearly linked to the grammar / listening and talking progression.

Additional Support for Learning

Regular and early assessments in Gaelic literacy will be key in identifying pupils with difficulties and in putting appropriate support in place (Appendix 2). Gaelic language assistants, if available, are timetabled to support learners with language difficulties and to provide extension opportunities for fluent speakers. Other fluent speakers, including volunteers, may be used to provide extension opportunities for fluent speakers. Assessments in Gaelic reading will be undertaken by the Gaelic PT where there is a question over ability.

Additional Support

If a child has received support throughout the total immersion stage and continues to require support at the beginning of the immersion phase, a decision should be made about the way forward in consultation with the child's parents and in the best interests of the child.

Switching from Gaelic medium to English medium education, as is practice in some schools is not a solution to meeting the learning needs of some pupils. All staff need to be responsible for planning suitable programmes of learning for all children and young people regardless of individual abilities, to enable all learners to receive their entitlement to an education that meets their needs. Across stages, schools should not assume that children and young people who need support in their learning are not required to learn through the medium of Gaelic (Education Scotland, 2022).

The Teaching of English Literacy

In term 1 of Clas 4, pupils will become familiarised with English blends and phonics, paying particular attention to letters and sounds they did not encounter in Gaelic. English is introduced at the beginning of Clas 4 in the form of a structured phonics programme. This is delivered to all pupils, even though a significant number will be fluent English readers already. This avoids gaps in knowledge and aids competence in spelling. They will begin to follow an English reading scheme initially and writing should be phased in towards the end of term 1. Care must be taken in a composite Clas 3/4 situation that English is not introduced or taught in the class situation to protect the oral development of Clas 3 who are still at the total immersion phase of Gaelic language development.

When children begin reading in English in Clas 4, there is typically a wide range of ability and so there is a need for appropriately differentiated approaches and resources from early level reading schemes to complex novels. At the beginning of Clas 4, all children should be assessed on their reading in English to gain an appropriate starting point. Prompt support for those presenting with phonological difficulties should then be provided.

In the case of English language, the performance of children in Gaelic Medium Education should not be compared with that of their counter parts in English medium education before the end of P7. By this stage in Gaelic Medium Education children will have studied enough English language for comparisons to be drawn (Education Scotland, 2022).

Gaelic – English Reading and Writing Ratio – Clas 4 – 30:70, Clas 5 and 6 – 40:60, Clas 7 – 50:50

T4W – Clas 3/4 – Gaelic, Clas 4/5 – 2 Gaelic t- 1 English, Clas 6/7 - 1 Gaelic - 1 English – with extra time to embed Gaelic terminology and vocabulary

Managing homework

Homework can be a source of anxiety for non-Gaelic speaking parents. Recommended approaches are:

- Uploading audio reading books via the Gaelic4parents website onto Seesaw
- Use of Seesaw for audio recordings to support where necessary
- Providing phonics support e.g. websites, workshops
- After school homework clubs offered to all stages

The Role of Gaelic Culture

Each year group should experience a link to Gaelic culture/heritage/ history through IDL at least once a year It is recognised that Gaelic songs and poetry can provide excellent contexts for language development, from sgoil-àraich to Clas 7. They can be used for a range of purposes. These include:

- teaching simple phrases
- teaching lists of days, numbers etc
- developing concept of rhyme
- extending vocabulary
- teaching grammatical patterns
- Key resources for exploring culture are - local and national mod songs, poetry, Tobar an Dualchais, Am Baile, BBC Alba, Gaelic speaking visitors

GME Experiences and Opportunities

- From Clas 3, pupils can join the Gaelic choir and will take part in various concerts and competitions
- Clas 6/7 can join the Gaelic Dràma Club and take part at the annual Fèis Dràma
- Clas 6/7 will attend an annual GME educational outing to Edinburgh organised by Comunn na Gàidhlig
- Clas 5-7 will take part in activities with other Gaelic classes such as Mt Cameron and Condorrat PS each year
- From Clas 5, children can learn the chanter or tin whistle and will have the opportunity to join the folk group and take part at the Mòd
- All pupils from sgoil-àraich to Clas 7 will take part in the annual Cèilidh Mhòr concert for parents and the local Gaelic community at the end of Seachdain na Gàidhlig
- Clas 5-7 pupils can take part in the annual Gaelic shinty tournament (Cupa Iomain na h-Òige)
- Clas 5-7 pupils can take part in the annual Gaelic football tournament (Cuach na Cloinne)
- Pupils from Clas 1-7 can attend the after-school Mòd Club to support Mòd preparations

Building Vocabularv

This is an integral part of everyday life in GME and immersion education (Tedick and Lyster, 2022). An essential part of any lesson is to teach the relevant new vocabulary, while avoiding translation to English. This happens across the whole curriculum. Key approaches to building vocabulary include:

- Displaying specialist vocabulary in class to support pupils and staff (e.g. maths)
- Translating all key vocabulary to Gaelic, using other staff members' expertise, dictionaries, databases, Storlann etc as required
- Being conscious of the need for variety in vocabulary; exposing pupils to alternatives/more specific terminology
- Using bites of written texts as a focus for work on vocabulary
- Reading to the class on a daily basis; careful selection of novels, abridging as necessary to create texts at appropriate level of difficulty
- identifying novels for use as class novels at each stage; these will be slightly more challenging than what they could read independently, but still accessible
- exposing learners to a wide range of idiom, including from different dialects

Drama and Storytelling

Storytelling is an excellent context for introducing and reinforcing oral language. This can be linked in to many curricular areas. Having a storytelling chair or a magic carpet that takes children to imaginary places is always popular with younger classes.

Stories modelled by the teacher gives learners a language structure they can use to retell their own stories. The stories can be factual texts that relate events or experiences.eg. news time, circle time, they can be retelling familiar traditional stories or new imaginative story can be created using props to make the various threads of the tale visible. Predictable texts with lots of repetition or actions e.g. fingerplay stories, encourage children to participate in telling the story. Resources such as pictures, cartoon strips and animations help to support meaning and help children follow the sequence of the story.

Sharing stories with peers and other classes provides an audience so that children gain competence and confidence in their own abilities. Clas 7 will read to Clas 2 and Clas 6 to Clas 1 weekly as a planned and structured paired reading activity. Clas 6/7 will choose a book and devise questions to ask the younger children. Digital storytelling is popular and should also be used with older children to create a story to share with peers or with younger children.

Drama and role play also gives children the opportunity to try out language that they may not have used previously and to recycle language they have learnt in other contexts. Props, puppets and a dressing up box will encourage children to retell stories they are familiar with and to use their imagination to develop their own stories. Drama techniques such as hot seating or freeze-frame encourage children to respond to role play and make relevant comments. Drama scripts can be used to teach and reinforce the school's grammar programme.

Corrective Feedback

If the child makes an error, the teacher / member of support staff should correct this in a fun and encouraging way. The adult should model the correct structure so the children will grow accustomed to repeating this. A variety of correction strategies should be used (Tedick and Lyster, 2022):

- Recasts (canaidh an tidsear an aon rud ach ceart) (the teacher will say the correct phrase / sentence)
- Explicit correction ("Oh, tha thu a' ciallachadh… can mar seo e…") ("Oh you mean …. Say it like this…..")
- Clarification requests (Dè tha thu a' ciallachadh….?) (What do you mean?)
- Metalinguistic feedback (A bheil fios agad dè bha ceàrr anns an thuirt thu?)(Do you know what is

not quite right in that sentence?)
- Elicitation (Bha mi a' coiseachd….? Choisich…. Neo Ciamar a bhios sinn ag ràdh X anns a' Ghàidhlig? Neo An can thu a-rithist e?) (Say that again / how do we say X in Gaelic? Etc)
- Repetition (Am faod mi dhol dhan taigh bheag?) (repeat the phrase correctly in Gaelic)

Transition

Sgoil-Àraich to Clas 1

The sgoil-àraich transition report will include a short statement on understanding and usage of Gaelic. This provides a starting point for C1 teachers in planning for progression. The listening and Talking tracker will also provide evidence for this.

Clas 7 – S1

For learners transferring from primary to secondary, transition will be carefully planned with secondary colleagues.
The transition period may include:
- Gaelic staff from secondary inputting in Clas 7
- samples of Gaelic writing being collected for secondary to provide a starting point for planning for progression
- formal oral assessment of Gaelic language competence, to provide a starting point for planning for progression

All staff delivering 3-12 GME will have regular opportunities to collaborate and discuss effective implementation of this policy.

Apendix 1 – Resources to support Gaelic Literacy and Immersion

Apendix 2 – GME Assessment Calendar

References

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