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Convenor
Education, Children and Young People Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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By email: ECYP.committee@Parliament.Scot

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Dear Convenor

Thank you for hearing evidence from the Bill team for the Scottish Languages Bill at the Education, Children and Young People Committee on 1 May. The Committee asked for a written response to the following question -

“What consideration has been made of the availability of Gaelic-speaking teachers, specialist education staff, and ELC professionals to support the expected expansion of Gaelic education?”

It is recognised that there are workforce challenges existing across both Gaelic medium education and English medium education streams. The supply of teachers able to teach in Gaelic-medium education continues to be a priority for Scottish Ministers

A number of measures are in place across Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, local authorities, relevant public bodies and Gaelic sector funded bodies to try to address some of the challenges. Some of the main initiatives are set on in the **Annex A** to this letter. Some of these aspects have already been referred to in evidence before the committee in recent weeks.

A range of actions by different bodies in the system is required to effect change and to contribute to ensuring that workforce recruitment, retention and professional support is in place. This planning and approach should consider both Gaelic and English provision as integral. Some of the actions referred to have been in place for a long time and need to be continued, supported and expanded, whereas other initiatives are relatively new and will need to be continued, strengthened and evaluated over time.

Thank you for opportunity to provide more specific details in relation to the question. I hope this response is helpful and answers the question.

Your sincerely

Claire Cullen
Head of Gaelic & Scots

Teachers as a Priority

- Scottish Government is committed to protecting teacher numbers and is offering local authorities £145.5 million in 2024/2025 budget for that purpose.
- This funding will allow local authorities to protect teacher numbers, in order to support children's education. This funding can be applied across Gaelic and English medium streams.
- The Strategic Board for Teacher Education (SBTE), which is made up of a range of key education stakeholders, is looking at issues around the recruitment and retention of teachers in Scotland in detail, including promoting teaching as a valued profession. To further support this a target, it has been included in the more recent Gaelic National Plan.

Scottish Government Guidance on Initial Teacher Education

- The annual guidance letter from Scottish Government to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) emphasises the importance of Gaelic teacher recruitment by making clear that the 'supply of teachers able to teach in the medium of Gaelic continues to be a priority for Scottish Ministers. The Scottish Government would like SFC to continue to assist in promoting provision in this area and to give consideration to any initiatives which could improve effectiveness. We ask that SFC encourage Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers to increase the places currently allocated to them and to promote a positive approach in relation to applications for all ITE programmes.' This letter also encourages interviews being offered to all applicants for teaching for Gaelic-medium education.

Pathways and Routes into Gaelic Initial Teacher Education

There are a range of options for Gaelic courses and Gaelic teacher training courses which provide a route into GME teaching. This section provides some examples of courses offered at certain establishments.

- Sabhal Mòr Ostaig offers a 4-year specific BA (Hons) Gaelic and Education for fluent and learners with a focus on immersion and bilingual teaching practices in schools. Year 3 and 4 of the degree are available at other UHI colleges by distance learning.
- At Sabhal Mòr Ostaig a PGDE Gaelic pathway is also on offer at primary and secondary and available by means of distance learning at other UHI colleges
- Both Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Glasgow University offer one year Gaelic immersion courses to support teachers who wish to transfer to GME teaching.
- University of Edinburgh offers an MA GME primary for both Gaelic learners and fluent speakers.
- Strathclyde University, Additional Teaching Qualification for modern language teachers to be able to teach Gaelic as a modern language.

- Strathclyde University, BA and PGDE, primary and secondary for Gaelic medium teaching.
- Sabhal Mòr Ostaig offer an MEd Gaelic Education Course for postgraduate teachers and a range of professional support and learning opportunities such as podcast series [Oideas - Sabhal Mòr Ostaig \(uhi.ac.uk\)](https://www.uhi.ac.uk/oideas) and forum for discussion of research papers (Club Irise).

Teacher and Student Bursaries, Funding and Support

- In 2023 the bursary scheme to incentivise career changes into teacher training was extended for Gaelic. Prior to 2023 the focus of the bursary was STEM subjects. Prospective teachers who wished to teach STEM subjects (Physics, Maths, Technical Education, Computing Science, Chemistry, Home Economics) through the medium of Gaelic were eligible to apply for those subjects. From 2023 the scheme was extended to also include Gaelic as a secondary subject and Gaelic medium education across all secondary subjects and in primary.
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig can fund local authorities to enable teachers to undertake courses to strengthen Gaelic language skills through the Gaelic Language Act Implementation fund – recently rebranded as the Gaelic Plans Fund. A previous initiative, Gaelic Immersion for Teachers ran for a period allowing teachers over an academic year to transfer from English to Gaelic medium.
- Local authorities can also include language courses, provision of back fill for teachers to be released for language courses in their annual bids for Gaelic Specific Grant. This is a ring-fenced funding scheme (£4.48 million for 24/25) made available by Scottish Ministers to Scottish Local Authorities for up to 75% of the cost towards delivery of Gaelic education.
- The Student Awards Agency Scotland Guidance [Previous Study - SAAS](#) provides that SAAS will waive previous study rules on Cert HE Gaelic Immersion courses. Students who have received funding for a degree or Higher National level qualification already are still eligible to receive funding for this course. If the Cert HE Gaelic Immersion is studied prior to another programme of study (e.g. an HNC or degree), it will not be taken into account for previous study.
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig has a fund to support those currently working toward a career in Gaelic teaching or Gaelic medium teachers looking to develop their professional skills. Under this fund students from the following can be considered: students undertaking a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) in Gaelic education; students undertaking a Gaelic early years or Gaelic childcare course; Students undertaking a Gaelic education undergraduate degree; teachers that are employed in a role relating to Gaelic medium education that wish to undertake a course to develop their skills or qualified teachers looking to develop their skills to move into Gaelic medium education - [Gaelic Education Grants 2023/24 – Bòrd na Gàidhlig \(gaidhlig.scot\)](#).

GME Support for Professional Learning and Language Learning Resources

- Stòrlann [An t-Alltan - Co-labhairt do thidsearan Gàidhlig](#) provides resources for Gaelic medium education which once produced are free for authorities. Stòrlann also provide career long professional learning. Stòrlann is funded by Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

- Local authorities also provide career long professional learning for their teachers and those from other authorities. Some local authorities provide CLPL for Gaelic medium education. Education Scotland also provides support for GME teachers.
- A number of other organisations are funded to provide materials for Gaelic medium education – there are many however one example is Keep Scotland Beautiful - [Sgoiltean-Èiceo sa Gàidhlig \(keepscotlandbeautiful.org\)](http://Sgoiltean-Èiceo sa Gàidhlig (keepscotlandbeautiful.org)).
- In June 2023 Sabhal Mòr Ostaig held a conference on Gaelic Medium Education . Recordings from sessions are available on line. [Foghlam na Gàidhlig: An-Dè, An-Diugh, agus A-Màireach - YouTube](#)
- Sabhal Mòr Ostaig offer Gaelic language at different levels include “An Cùrsa Comais” (for intermediate learners) and Gàidhlig is conaltradh” (fluent) on site at Scotland's National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture. A Gaelic Summer School is being provided in 2024 as a bridging course for complete beginners to allow summer study leading to direct entry on to An Cùrsa Comais
- SMO provide a Social Services: Children and Young People course part time over one or two years foundation apprenticeship and a Professional Development 18 months distance learning SVQ3 for pupil support assistant or early years practitioners in Gaelic medium education - [SVQ3 Social Services \(Children and Young People\) - Sabhal Mòr Ostaig \(uhi.ac.uk\)](#).
- Sabhal Mòr Ostaig also provide a range of distance learning Gaelic courses for language “An Cùrsa Inntigridh” which progresses onto “An Cùrsa Adhartais” which in turn can provide access to the second year of degree courses.
- Fèisean nan Gàidheal has a network of development officers that support a growing range of activities which include Fèisgoil, its education services.
- The Go Gaelic course offers support and learning for primary teachers who may wish to deliver Gaelic learning at either L2 or L3 in primary schools.
- [Gàidhlig | e-Sgoil](#) delivers Gaelic & Gàidhlig SQA courses in partnership and in 2022-23 60 candidates were presented for both learner and fluent Gaelic courses at National 5, Higher & Advanced Higher level, with a pass rate of 97%.
- The work of Comann nam Pàrant [Gaelic Education | Comann Nam Pàrant](#) in providing support for 0-3 cròileagan groups also requires to be referenced. For many families this can be a first encounter with Gaelic and GME or a touch point for those returning to the language in adulthood with their own family. The welcome and language support provided to families can be a step for many to roles in ELC, teaching and across the sector - [Support for Parents | Comann nam Pàrant .](#)

Additional Support

- e-Sgoil Misneachd programme consists of focussed sessions for P1 – S3 Broad General Education (BGE) Gaelic medium or ex-Gaelic medium pupils with the aim of improving pupil confidence to help retain and strengthen Gaelic language skills. These sessions are driven by learner need and school requirements and can thereby provide targeted support to learners with certain Additional Support Needs enabling

them to continue to engage with Gaidhlig across the BGE. This provision is funded and freely available to all Scottish schools and is currently at capacity.

GME Teacher Promotion

- A campaign promoting the rewards of a teaching career is currently being considered, with the aim of improving recruitment and retention to the subjects facing the greatest shortages and Gaelic will be included in any forthcoming activity. However, in recent years - following a General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS) survey of teachers - Bòrd na Gàidhlig produced a booklet 'So You Want to Teach in Gaelic' which outlined the pathways to teaching and other professional careers in GME. [Becoming a Gaelic teacher ; So you want to teach in Gaelic?](#) Bòrd na Gàidhlig has also created a padlet outlining the routes to teaching. [Teach in Gaelic](#). Alongside this Bòrd na Gàidhlig launched a campaign, #DèanDiofar (make a difference), on social media with videos of six tutors discussing how they came to teach and why they enjoy it. This is being followed up by a similar initiative for early years staff. #DèanDiofar Tràth-bhliadhnaichean (Make a difference in the Early Years).
- A teacher recruitment officer has been a requirement of the annual grant in aid letter between Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig and quarterly reports on activity are provided. The Scottish Government continues to support Bòrd na Gàidhlig's ongoing promotion of opportunities and pathways for Gaelic workforce.
- The National Gaelic Language Plan 2023 – [2028 National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28 \(gaidhlig.scot\)](#), which was approved by Scottish Ministers and published by Bòrd na Gàidhlig in December 2023 has some specific GME workforce related targets including: “Gaelic-medium Education will be considered as an integral part of the work of education groups such as the Teacher Workforce Planning Advisory Group, the Strategic Board for Teacher Education and across all aspects of education reform” and “A co-ordinated approach to GME support for teachers in schools will be developed.”

Data

- Bòrd na Gàidhlig has published research on the numbers in Gaelic education for some time. Currently available on the Bòrd na Gàidhlig website is education data from 2011/2012 onwards. This has included numbers of full-time equivalent staff in Gaelic nurseries, primary and secondary with a breakdown of local authority area. Pupil numbers in GME at ELC, primary and secondary are also published. [Education Data – Bòrd na Gàidhlig \(gaidhlig.scot\)](#). At the time of writing the most recent statistics available on the website are for 2022/2023. There have been some changes in the way that the information has been gathered and presented over that period.
- The Bòrd na Gàidhlig website, for example, shows that in 2011/12 there were 189 teachers in GME primary (169 FTE) whereas in 2022/23 this has risen to 239 FTE. GME teachers in secondary was listed as 98 in 2011/12 and had risen to 126 in 22/23.
- Scottish Government collect data including number of teachers who are teaching through the medium of Gaelic and those able to teach through the medium of Gaelic. These numbers for 2023 are included below.

Primary and Secondary teachers by ability to teach through Gaelic - 2023

	Able to teach through Gaelic	Currently teaching through Gaelic	Teaching Gaelic language
Primary	418	266	NA
Secondary	183	121	85
Total	601	387	85

- The number of teachers able to teach through Gaelic but not currently teaching through Gaelic was referred to in evidence before the Education, Children and Young People Committee on 8 May by Mr Charity of CLAS (Comann Luchd-teagaisg Àrd-sgoiltean). Mr Macleod, Chief Officer for Education and Children services, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar speaking on behalf of the ADES (Association of Directors of Education in Scotland) also made references to some of the actions that can be taken by authorities to grow their own pathways and support staff in local areas.
- Innovations that can assist with recruitment and retention include for example: employers being clear that Gaelic is a 'desirable' or 'essential' skill in general recruitment for relevant posts. Offers of support with language classes, communities of practice, opportunities provided in workplace to connect with other speakers to use language in work-place setting either formally or informally. Encouragement of active offer by employers and service providers. Rolling recruitment for posts in difficult to fill areas; advertising Gaelic medium posts in advance of recruitment for English medium posts; or measures to assist with identifying suitable accommodation in an area. These are examples of things which can be deployed separately or in conjunction to assist with recruitment and retention.