Curriculum for Excellence Gaelic Excellence Group

Group’s report

February 2011
## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The case for Gaelic Medium Education</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and the benefits of bilingualism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gàidhlig and other subjects</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommendations</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group membership</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Note about the use of the terms Gàidhlig and Gaelic

Gàidhlig – as the SQA subject
Gaelic – the language
Foreword

“Gaelic is one of the national languages of Scotland, and it gives a priceless window onto a world that cannot be reached through any other language. It also gives the chance to understand another culture, and when you have a second language, it is easier to pick up a third and a fourth.

“As well as being a precious cultural gift, you can also speak to lots of people throughout Scotland in their own language. And it’s fun to learn another language.

“Quality has been proven at every level of Gaelic education and today’s technology is being used extensively to add to the quality of that education, and to give more and more people access to Gaelic education. Gaelic educational resources are growing steadily, and with the advent of the Gaelic Act public bodies and local authorities are looking more and more to Gaelic. The Act gives legislative stability to the language which it never enjoyed in the past, and as a result Gaelic speakers have more rights and opportunities.”

Bòrd na Gàidhlig (www.gaidhlig.org.uk)

Curriculum for Excellence provides a context within which Gaelic can flourish and be used as a tool to promote excellence in education within the Gaelic speaking areas and beyond.

The Gaelic Excellence Group was tasked with raising awareness of the importance of the language across all subject/curriculum areas within Curriculum for Excellence not just for the young people who attend Gaelic Medium Education (GME) provision but for all people in Scotland.

This report will:

- provide information on and examples of good practice and methodology from across the country
- identify resources to help on the journey towards excellence in the classroom
- highlight areas for development, especially those aimed which have potential to contribute to the aim of increasing the numbers of Gàidhlig speakers
- set out a number of recommendations on ways forward for Gaelic in the curriculum

Curriculum for Excellence Gaelic Excellence Group
1. The Case for Gaelic Medium Education and the benefits of bilingualism

Gaelic medium Education (GME) – in and of itself – provides an inspiration through examples of some of the best practice in Scottish education, whether specifically in languages or in other parts of the curriculum.

Gaelic is not just for the Gaels! GME in Scotland is inclusive, and attracts young people from a wide variety of backgrounds. While many come from homes where Gaelic is the first language and where a strong sense of community pervades, significant numbers come from homes where no Gaelic is spoken, and from families who have no connections to the perceived heartland of the language. The increase in numbers learning through the medium of Gaelic suggests a strong interest from parents in the language and culture, along with a desire to have their children educated bilingually in an environment that enhances learning, increases attainment and broadens cultural awareness.

For research on GME attainment see Appendix 1.a, How effective is Gaelic-medium education?

GME: an excellent education
An excellent education will develop outstanding / sector leading knowledge and skills. Every subject in the curriculum has a strong part to play in developing skills that go far beyond the recall of knowledge, and equip young people to play a part in the social and economic life of Scotland and beyond. Our ability to use language helps us to express our emotions, verbalise our thinking, process learning, and instil a sense of self-confidence and personal identity.

The case for bilingualism
GME’s overarching objective (the creation of competent bilinguals, functional in both languages across all areas of the curriculum) is pursued through constant emphasis upon the development of core communicative skills across the four competencies. This in turn leads directly to the development of self-confidence and a wide range of social and other transferable skills. GME promotes the benefits of bilingualism. GME:

- links different language communities
- provides experience of different cultures
- raises awareness and understanding of first language
- enables personal and social development
- increases achievement and attainment
- widens communication and employment opportunities
- enables cognitive advantages e.g. creative thinking
- provides confidence for learning further languages
GME also inspires pupils to develop a life-long appreciation of languages and cultures.

"Research has shown that bilingualism is beneficial for children’s development and their future. Children exposed to different languages become more aware of different cultures, other people and other points of view." (Professor Antonella Sorace, University of Edinburgh: www.bilingualism-matters.org.uk

Research also indicates that bilingualism may lead to even wider long-term benefits, irrespective of the languages concerned:

“…[bilingual children] also tend to be better than monolinguals at 'multitasking' and focusing attention, they often are more precocious readers, and generally find it easier to learn other languages. **Bilingualism gives children much more than two languages!**” (ibid)

Appendix 2 provides further discussion of the benefits of bilingualism.

**Excellence in language learning**

Language professionals have long acknowledged the importance of communicative language learning techniques. The communicative approach “promotes the use of real language in realistic contexts, and attempts to replicate, in the classroom situation, the processes and conditions under which acquisition of the mother tongue takes place.” (Templeton, Brian C, University of Glasgow: *Teaching Secondary Modern Languages in Scotland*: www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk).

This is precisely the process that takes place in GME classrooms: pupils from the earliest age acquire language (in most cases a second language) through constant input and natural usage, in a wide variety of interesting, real-life contexts and over a prolonged period of time. Modern Language teachers in secondary school, when presented with a GME S1 or S2 class, have frequently commented on the ability of the pupils to acquire another language.

**Excellence in Scottish education**

Gaelic language and culture rank high among the most precious jewels of Scottish heritage, playing far above its weight¹: a “unique selling point” of interest and importance to historians, linguists and sociologists, musicians, writers and visitors and cultural tourists throughout the world, and to economists, promoters and politicians within Scotland.

GME gives children and young people not only an unrivalled insight into Scottish cultural heritage and its place in the wider world, but also a sense of ownership in that heritage. Learners can recognise that they have a personal part to play in the

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¹ According to the last Census, over 92,000 people in Scotland (just under 2 per cent of the population) had some Gàidhlig language ability. Almost half of these people lived in Eilean Siar (18,420), Highland (18,360) or Argyll & Bute (6,520).” (General Register for Scotland: *Scotland’s Census 2001 – Gaelic Report*)
continuance and development of the culture and language about which, and through which, they are learning. As one of the indigenous languages of Scotland its relevance to Scottish education as a whole is precious and its nurturing a self-evident need.

In order to secure the future of Gaelic language and increase the number of speakers, Bòrd na Gàidhlig published their action plan Ginealach Ùr na Gàidhlig in April 2010. (See Appendix 3 for an outline of the plan.) It is anticipated that the provision of GME and the increase in numbers enrolling, in particular in the central areas of Scotland, will have a positive impact on statistics emerging from the 2011 census.

2. Gaelic in the Primary and Secondary sectors

**GME in Practice: Key Principles**

One of the key principles in achieving excellence in Gaelic is through the total immersion of learners at the early stages of their Primary education. In Gàidhlig medium classes learning and teaching is wholly through Gàidhlig during the immersion phase from P1 to P3. English language is then gradually introduced through the medium of Gaelic, with Gaelic remaining the predominant language of the classroom in all areas of the curriculum.

Learners should hear the language in the routines of the class, the interactions between the teacher and pupils, through songs, rhymes and role-play activities which will build confidence and gradually enable the pupils to use the language in a variety of ways. In time the pupils will become familiar, at a pace appropriate to their circumstances, with the structure and rules of the language leading to the development of reading and writing skills.

As the pupils continue to progress through the stages of the primary school, teachers will ensure that Gaelic is the language of learning and of communication. Activities and tasks will be planned to broaden the depth of oral language, increase knowledge of language structures and foster cultural awareness. The development of active-learning opportunities and inter-disciplinary learning provides real life contexts for the pupils to use Gaelic in a meaningful way.

Local circumstances can mean that many teachers work in a degree of isolation. To meet the challenges, teachers often need to depend upon whatever networks and resource-sharing they themselves can create.

Provision within stand-alone Gaelic medium primary schools is generally recognised as the most effective mode of delivery, giving maximum support both to (a) pupils in their language acquisition and (b) the teachers who constantly search for innovative ways of delivering all areas of the curriculum with comparatively few resources or theoretical research. To date there are three stand-alone Gaelic medium primary schools in the country, but the excellence of their provision is widely recognised, and reflected not only in their own ever-increasing rolls but also in strong parental demand for the provision of further such schools in other areas, particularly mainland Scotland.
Appendix 1.b provides a link to current statistics on the availability of GME provision and pupil-numbers involved.

Teachers in GME classes are well placed and prepared for the experiences and outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence. Not only are they “dual qualified” (trained to teach through the media of both Gaelic and English) but they have had to be innovative and creative in developing their pedagogy and methodology. The majority of GME teachers display very high levels of commitment to their subject and an enthusiasm for the learning of the Gaelic language. Despite the lack of resources in comparison to their English-Medium peers, they have created classroom environments that stimulate and motivate learners, and ensure progression of skills and knowledge.

GME teaching builds excellence by itself building upon children and young people’s own experiences. Teaching through the medium of Gaelic reflects both existing contexts for excellence across all learning and language contexts that help promote excellence even further. The various contexts for excellence include:

- language-rich activities, promoting both receptive (listening, interpreting etc) and productive (talking, writing etc) skills
- effective direct and interactive teaching
- a balance of spontaneous (pupil-generated, including play) and planned (teacher-led, including whole-class, group and individualised) activities
- harnessing the motivational benefits of following young people’s interests through responsive planning
- a similar approach to assessment, building on the principles of Assessment is for Learning
- the promotion of both collaborative working and independent thinking and learning
- the creation of meaningful links for learners across different areas of the curriculum
- frequent opportunities to communicate in a wide range of contexts, for relevant purposes and for real audiences within and beyond places of learning
- the development of problem-solving skills and approaches
- the appropriate and effective use of ICT

The GME teacher is the model by which many of the pupils acquire the language. It is therefore essential that the teacher uses the target language as far as is possible, without resorting to English to explain something. Teachers should have CPD opportunities to further enhance their own linguistic ability in order to provide a stimulating and confident Gaelic ethos in GM primary and secondary classrooms.

Networks and links with other establishments are particularly important to GM teachers (who are all, to some extent, pioneers) in order to enhance the learning environment and keep abreast of current educational thought and practice. Many
such links have been successfully established, both within their community and beyond, and are set out at Appendix 4.

The cultural dimension of GME is also greatly enhanced through bringing children together with members of the community who are fluent in Gaelic, and with singers, artists, writers, actors and musicians in different contexts: this is seen as a vital element, contributing to the development of identity and raises awareness of the Gaelic language and Gaelic culture. Examples of such work is also included in Appendix 4.

**Gaelic Learners in the Primary School (GLPS)**

The GLPS scheme is a programme for English-medium pupils, initiating their learning of Gaelic as a second language, with training and resources provided for teachers. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has conducted a survey of the health and implementation of the Gaelic Learners in the Primary School (GLPS) scheme. Amongst their detailed findings, they learnt that some 202 teachers gave GLPS or other Gaelic tuition to English-medium pupils, of whom there were almost 5,500, mostly in the upper years of the primary school.

It is particularly encouraging to learn of this work, especially in schools in the Central belt where there is no history of Gaelic language learning previously. Perhaps we would like to see much more active encouragement of this approach as an interesting, exciting, relevant and stimulating part of primary education – It would be worthwhile to gauge the success of the project in different schools/different authorities.

GLPS and GME are clearly different in structure, intent and execution, and these differences could helpfully be explained to parents by local authorities. Ultimately, it would be beneficial for the continuity and progression of young people’s learning if it became possible for any pupil involved in the GLPS scheme to have access to continued study of Gaelic at secondary level.

**GME in the Secondary Sector**

Where circumstances permit, it is essential for the development of the language that “Gaelic Medium teaching should extend as far as possible across and beyond the curriculum”. *(Literacy and Gàidhlig - Principles and Practice)*

Although there are well established transitions from GME nursery provisions to either GME schools or units, the number of pupils able to continue their education to examination level in a range of subjects at Secondary school is still developing. The significant differences in how secondary schools approach and teach GME nationally and the issue of staffing in order to increase subject provision are also areas to be addressed.

Until such times as recruitment provides specialist teachers able to teach their subject through the medium of Gaelic at Secondary level, strategies to increase the exposure to Gaelic will have to be developed.

As well as curriculum areas and subjects, the curriculum comprises other contexts that can help increase young people’s exposure to Gaelic - the ethos of the school
and young people’s opportunities for personal achievement can provide useful contexts; Inter-disciplinary learning allows more in-depth exploration of topics, issues and problems within and across subject areas and disciplines, enabling the understanding of different perspectives across subject areas and disciplines and encouraging greater depth and critical thinking.

Inter-disciplinary learning requires practitioners to ensure there is depth of learning within subjects but also connections. Local authorities and individual head teachers will be essential stakeholders in the planning of a more cohesive curriculum in secondary GME.

**Gaelic Learners in the Secondary School (GLSS)**

Gaelic learners who opt to take Gaelic as a subject in Secondary school are a vital part of the Gaelic learning community. In Highland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar schools where Gaelic is currently commonly studied in S1 and S2, a concerted effort should be made to keep these pupils interested and involved in both learning the language and in cultural pursuits. The learners’ course, Ceumannan, with a dedicated website has gone a considerable way to enhancing the learner’s experience in Secondary school.

An opportunity to make Gaelic language learning widely available in schools, particularly in the Central Belt could be considered to attract new learners and/or to continue the experience of those who have learnt Gaelic in primary settings. The Confucius Hub model to promote Chinese language and culture based in Hillhead High School in Glasgow might provide a model for development. ([www.hillheadhigh.glasgow.sch.uk](http://www.hillheadhigh.glasgow.sch.uk))

3. Gàidhlig and other subjects

Gaelic Medium Education in all subjects is the model to which the group aspires, whilst conscious that there is a considerable way to go to achieve the level of resources and trained teaching staff enabling that to become a reality in most secondary schools. There are, however, some barriers which can be changed, with some effort and commitment. There is, for example, a perception that Mathematics, Science and perhaps some of the more terminology-based subjects are considered by some parents to be more ‘difficult’ for pupils in Gaelic. If courses are properly constructed and resourced and the teacher has been given support with terminology, this should not be the case for a pupil who has spent many years in a Gaelic Medium classroom.

The subjects below can be closely linked to Gaelic Medium Education and also provide opportunities in English Medium to explore themes related to Gaelic and Gaelic culture.

**English** – There are strong connections between English, Gaelic and literacy. Curriculum guidance is clear that English should provide an opportunity for non-Gaelic students to learn about Gaelic culture and literature in translation, and to relate this to Scots language and literature.
**Geography** – Our landscape and maps are an encyclopaedia of human experience and knowledge with links to disciplines such as geography, ecology, history, folklore, language and material culture. Vast areas of Scotland are peppered (and sometimes smothered) with Gaelic place names. A better understanding of Scottish toponymy through its inclusion in education would lead to a better appreciation by the populace of the Scottish landscape and its heritage. Currently many, if not most, Scots cannot even pronounce, let alone interpret, Gaelic place names on our maps. Such an ability – to read, interpret and enjoy the map of Scotland – should not simply be the preserve of fluent Gaelic speakers or readers but should be open to all people educated in Scotland.

**History** – The highlighting of key events that have shaped the Gaelic language, culture and landscape and the development of knowledge and understanding on the influence of these events on the modern day.

**Modern studies** – The opportunity to debate and discuss controversial and challenging issues in a rapidly changing society. The engagement of young people in a subject which has strong links to a variety of media – including print, TV and other media in Gaelic - allowing them to use using complex language structures to shape their arguments and reasoning.

**Modern Languages** – Learning another language will bring appreciation of different or new cultures and also increased career and employment opportunities. Learners with GME experience will display an increased confidence in learning new languages.

**Expressive Arts/Physical education** – These subjects naturally work across learning promoting creativity, individual excellence and wider confidence. Opportunities can present themselves for learning outside the formal school setting linking with the local community or further afield. The support from key ambassadors of their craft in music, art, sport or drama can enhance the learning experience leading to the more effective overall achievement of young people. Partnership with organisations that major in arts grounded in Gaelic culture and language will have particular resonance for teachers and students of Gaelic, or with an interest in the culture.

**Science/Mathematics** – These subjects are co-dependent with specific terminology and challenging themes but can promote creativity, curiosity and questioning attitudes which should be encouraged and nurtured in young people.

**Technologies**- One of the subject areas that has the potential to provide a more rigorous network of teaching and learning, sharing of resources and creative links. Extending the classroom for the young people where key teaching and demonstrations can take place through video-conferencing or comparative data from rural and urban settings can be analysed or explored. Opportunities such as Crofting Connections can have particular relevance in Gaelic speaking areas and elsewhere.
RME – A subject that provides knowledge of other religions, promotes tolerance, explores moral themes and develops a young person’s understanding of the world. Many of the young people who have been through GME already have an understanding of and can empathise with different cultures.

Business Education – Raising awareness of employability skills, enterprising opportunities, and creating links with the local business community and beyond. Raising the profile of the Gaelic language, traditions or culture has been highlighted in the action plan published by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and young people have a vital role to play in the increase of Gàidhlig speakers.

Home Economics – Opportunities to learn about traditional and less traditional Scottish food and to create dishes of their own. Important links to Health and Well-being issues in the Curriculum for Excellence.

4. Resources

The provision of resources and availability of a wide range of published curriculum materials have always been a challenge in GME. The creation of Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig in 1999 established an organisation to produce, publish, co-ordinate and disseminate teaching resources specifically for GME. Core resources in most of the subject areas provided much needed materials to supplement and extend the curriculum in nursery, primary and secondary.

The provision includes resources for fluent speakers and learners of the language. When English reading is introduced after the initial total immersion phase, most GME establishment find that pupils are able to read an advanced range of English texts; there is a potential market for increasing the range of titles available in Gàidhlig to further extend the breadth of language and literary contexts to which readers in Gaelic are exposed.. Stòrlann has gone some way to alleviating the lack of resources previously in GME, and further developments in this area are necessary and would be a welcome boost for learners in and of Gaelic.

GME teachers have the opportunity to influence the programme planning of resources through an annual consultation and the Stòrlann website and annual catalogue provides up-to-date information on the current and legacy materials available for all establishments. The Stòrlann website also carries a range of very useful resources for all levels – and further resources are signposted at Appendix 5. Most of the GME establishments will have the range of materials published by or through Stòrlann but there is also the issue of valuable texts from a variety of sources that may now be out of print that are no longer being available or even known to teachers e.g. Leabhar Mòr na Gàidhlig.
5. Development

Teacher development
We are confident that the overall quality of teaching in Gaelic and in GME schools is very high, supported by the clear commitment of those involved. For the future health and sustainability of Gaelic to be promoted, teacher recruitment needs to remain a priority for the continuing expansion of GME. Support for the current workforce also needs to be reviewed. CPD opportunities are usually at a local level with An t-Alltan conference being the only opportunity for teachers to meet at a national level. The use of Glow for CPD opportunities is highlighted as one solution which will be more powerful once use of Glow becomes more consistent across local authority areas.

GME teachers produce excellent resources to use within their own classes but there is reluctance with some to share online due to lack of confidence in language skills. The sharing of resources would disseminate good practice and provide support for the one teacher school, the secondary specialist who is considering teaching the subject through Gaelic or the teacher who has moved to a new stage within the primary. CPD online courses could support the continuing development of language skills and be available for all levels of ability from the probationer teacher to the more experienced GME teacher. The introduction of distance learning has led to an increase in the number of teachers entering the profession and on addressing specific local authority shortages.

The participation of GME teachers in the tutor led course STREAP has been very successful in supporting the language skills of both secondary and primary teachers. STREAP is delivered by blended learning, mainly online, offering provision through the use of technology as well as face-to-face, telephone and peer support. This method of delivery would be an excellent model to build on for future Gaelic CPD provision.

Comparative practice
Comparative research has highlighted the efficacy of the Athrawon Bro service in Wales in supporting teachers in achieving excellence in Welsh-medium education.

The Athrawon Bro – discussed in more detail in Appendix 7 - is a specialist team of Welsh language teachers working in schools and with teachers from across the four local authorities. They promote best practice and high quality teaching and learning in Welsh. The team is funded by a grant from the Welsh Language Board.

Additional support needs
Despite the success story that is GME the lack of specialist staff to support pupils with additional support needs is an area of concern. The GME classroom is no different from mainstream classrooms with a range of pupils with different abilities and needs. The lack of advice in how to support a child with language and communication difficulties or dyslexia or dyspraxia in a bilingual setting can be worrying for many teachers. Meeting pupil needs and ensuring they are progressing in their learning whilst learning a second language is complicated. There is a need for practice development to enable greater teacher understanding of the issues as they affect GME schools, and complementary practice development of the specialist
knowledge of Speech and language therapists, Psychologists and associated staff. Parents of children with special needs also require reassurance that GME will not hamper their child’s progress.

**Public awareness**
The research on the attainment of GME pupils and the work of Prof Antonella Sorace, The University of Edinburgh with local authorities, are fundamental to the continuing growth of GME and the message of the benefits of bilingualism. Parents are enrolling their children and a large number are showing commitment by learning the language themselves. However, there are many parents who are Gaelic speakers and are not sending their children to GME. There could be many reasons from economic circumstances a perceived lack of resources or that children are already being fluent speakers. There could also be a lack of understanding or a lack of information available to parents in order to allow them to make an informed choice. Negative publicity generated by some sections of the media must also be a factor. Research exploring why the largest growth for GME provision is on mainland Scotland rather than the communities of the Western Isles would be valuable.

The work of Comann nam Pàrant (CNP) and Comhairle na Gàidhlig (CNAG) are crucial to supporting parents who send their children to GME and developing opportunities for using and learning the language within the community. Their respective roles are essential to the task of preserving the Gaelic language. They link very closely to the work of the schools. CNP provide homework support and family learning group opportunities. They provide support and advice for parents who want to develop GME provision in a particular area. CNAG has been responsible for the setting up of Sradagan youth groups, training teenagers to become leaders and extending the language learning opportunities of learner and fluent parents.

**Early years provision**
The extension of pre-school provision is crucial to the creation of a new generation of Gàidhlig speakers. Bòrd na Gàidhlig are developing a new comprehensive service which will support the delivery of early years provision from March 2011. This initiative will coordinate, support and develop all aspects of Gaelic learning for 0-5 years, working in partnership with local authorities to deliver 3-5 provision and in close partnership with the Parental Advisory Scheme.
6. Recommendations

Through the work of the Excellence Group for Gaelic it is hoped to raise awareness of the importance of the Gaelic language to the Scottish education system. Through Curriculum for Excellence we have the opportunity to continue to develop excellent language learning practice and provide our young people with quality teaching and learning whilst equipping them for their future careers. Through GME the number of speakers is increasing but there are challenges ahead. In order to realise the ambitious action plan published by Bòrd na Gàidhlig – Ginealach Ùr na Gàidhlig - the role of GME needs to be at the centre of developments.

Our recommendations are:

- Continuing development of secondary subject provision through the medium of Gaelic with a strategic plan for investment in future staff, including the retraining of existing Gaelic-speaking staff and opportunities for interested staff to learn Gaelic.
- The full development of the terminology database and the creation of new resources to provide a high-quality basis to support learning through the medium of Gaelic from 3-18 is of paramount importance.
- The establishment of a National Centre of Excellence for Gaelic drawing on the Confucius Hub model at Hillhead High School in Glasgow to support development and dissemination of courses and resources, CPD opportunities and the co-ordination of pupil-centred Gaelic activities in and outwith the classroom.
- Schools should take full advantage of Gaelic organisations to help them deliver Gaelic-related activities both curricular and extra-curricular. They should be aware that funding is available for such activities from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and The Scottish Government. Such activities e.g Gaelic music days, drama workshops, visiting speakers such as WWII ex-servicemen would also enhance the quality of provision and breadth of experience in all schools where Gaelic is offered. Ensuring that a larger number of pupils remain in Gaelic education after primary school and compulsory years in secondary schools (where applicable) would lead to schools delivering the shared aim of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and The Scottish Government to increase the numbers of Gàidhlig speakers in Scotland.
- A pilot scheme based on the Welsh Athrawon Bro model whereby experienced Gaelic/GME teachers target a school/cluster of schools/local authority area to provide support in language, CfE best practice and CfE/AiFL ideas to enhance pupil experience in Gaelic.
- National CPD opportunities with a range of online support, resource sharing and development.
- National policy and practice regarding the support of pupils with ASN within GME
- The introduction and implementation of a module on Gaelic/Scottish Studies within the curriculum providing every pupil in Scotland with an opportunity to learn about the vast contribution of Gaelic to the country.
• Awareness raising on the benefits of bilingualism and the attainment of GME pupils.
• National database of all Gaelic organisations, online support, agencies and companies.
• The establishment of Gaelic learners classes in secondary schools already offering GME.
## Gaelic Group membership

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<th>Name and occupation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Donalda McComb, Head Teacher</td>
<td>Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christina Walker, Gaelic lecturer</td>
<td>Aberdeen University</td>
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<td>Cathie Johnston, Education Officer</td>
<td>Bòrd na Gàidhlig</td>
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<td>Mairie MacLeod, Gaelic Officer</td>
<td>Bòrd na Gàidhlig</td>
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<td>Magaidh Wentworth, Parental Officer</td>
<td>Comann nan Pàrant</td>
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<td>Fiona Dunn, Gaelic Language Officer</td>
<td>Glasgow University</td>
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<td>Norma Young, Quality Improvement Officer</td>
<td>Highland Council</td>
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<td>Joan Esson</td>
<td>HMIe</td>
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<td>Ruairidh MacIlleathain</td>
<td>Journalist and educator</td>
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<td>Mary MacMillan, Gaelic Manager</td>
<td>LTS</td>
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<td>Finlay Cunningham, Gaelic Development Officer</td>
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<td>John Norman MacLeod, Vice Principal and Director of Studies</td>
<td>Sabhal Mor Ostaig</td>
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<td>Dr Anne Lorne Gillies</td>
<td>Singer, songwriter, Gaelic educationalist</td>
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<td>Graham Williamson</td>
<td>SQA</td>
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<td>Yvonne Forrest, Class Teacher</td>
<td>Stenhouse PS, Edinburgh</td>
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<td>Johanna Marshall, Chief Executive</td>
<td>Storlann Naiseanta na Gàidhlig</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shona Cormack, Development Officer/Class Teacher</td>
<td>Storlann Naiseanta na Gàidhlig</td>
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How effective is Gaelic-medium education?

_Gaelic-medium Education in Scotland: choice and attainment at the primary and early secondary school stages_ (Fiona O’Hanlon, Dr Wilson McLeod and Professor Lindsay Paterson, University of Edinburgh, September 2010)

This was the final report of the project ‘The Output of Gaelic Education’, funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig. To read the full Report go to www.education.ed.ac.uk/research/publicationsN-Q.html; or www.gaidhlig.org.uk

Among the results of the research the following may be highlighted:-

**Attainment**

- In Primary 3, attainment in English is lower among Gaelic-medium pupils than among English-medium pupils, but this gap has disappeared by Primary 5, by which stage Gaelic-medium pupils may in fact be ahead of English-medium pupils in English reading. The higher attainment in English reading is sustained into Primary 7 and (though with weaker evidence) for pupils taking Gàidhlig in Secondary 2.
- There is some evidence, too, that Gaelic-medium pupils are ahead of English-medium pupils in science in Primary 5, and (with weaker evidence) in Primary 7, although this is a consequence of the Gaelic-medium pupils’ being in schools with relatively high science attainment, rather than being a contrast between Gaelic-medium and English-medium streams in the same school.
- There was no evidence of any differences in mathematics attainment between pupils in Gaelic-medium education and those in English-medium education in Primary 7 or between those taking and those not taking Gàidhlig in Secondary 2.
- By the end of primary school, most pupils in both Gaelic medium and English medium are judged by their schools to have reached the level of attainment expected of pupils at that stage (level D of the 5-14 curriculum) in English reading, writing, talking and listening, mathematics and science. Most pupils in Gaelic medium are judged to have reached this level in Gaelic reading, writing, talking and listening.
- However, the evidence from the formal science tests carried out as part of the Scottish Survey of Achievement and the Survey of Gaelic Education suggests that these teacher judgements in science are too optimistic, and that only 6% of all English-medium pupils and 11% of Gaelic-medium pupils reach level D in science in Primary 7.
- Apart from in English reading and writing at Primary 3, there was no evidence that Gaelic-medium pupils had lower attainment than English-medium pupils. Thus the Gaelic-medium pupils’ acquiring an additional language – or, for those having Gaelic as a home language, consolidating and developing their Gaelic skills – did not detract from their attainment across the other main areas of the curriculum, and their Gaelic gave them broader attainment than their English-medium counterparts.
• Although most Gaelic-medium pupils were judged to have attained the expected level D for Gaelic in Primary 7, by this stage their attainment in Gaelic had, on average, fallen behind their attainment in English, especially in reading.

• Pupils in Gaelic-medium education were less confident in science than English-medium pupils, and were less engaged with scientific content than English-medium pupils. However, Gaelic-medium pupils also reported that their teachers were highly engaged with teaching science, more so than was reported by their English-medium counterparts about their teachers. Teachers of Gaelic-medium streams were less experienced than teachers of English-medium streams, and both Gaelic-medium and English-medium teachers in schools with Gaelic-medium streams thought more highly of their pupils in their attitude to the study of science than the average English-medium teacher in Scotland.

• There was no evidence of systematic geographical variation in the characteristics or attainment of Gaelic-medium pupils or schools: the differences were due to Gaelic-medium streams or to schools, not to council policies or other broad features of the areas in which Gaelic-medium education takes place.

• Most of the higher attainment amongst Gaelic-medium pupils as compared with English-medium pupils is likely to be due to the schools in which Gaelic-medium streams are situated rather than to any differences within these schools between the Gaelic-medium and English-medium streams.

• These conclusions on attainment are broadly consistent with previous findings about Gaelic-medium education in Scotland, notably those by Johnstone et al (1999) that were based on data collected in the mid-1990s. The main differences from that previous period are that Gaelic-medium pupils no longer have lower attainment in science than English-medium pupils, and no longer have higher attainment in mathematics.

Choice, provision and purpose

• One reason why people choose Gaelic-medium education relates to heritage, whether of family, locality or Scotland. These levels of allegiance to Gaelic culture could exist together, reinforcing each other and creating a sense of commitment to regenerating the language.

• A second set of reasons was connected to the perceived benefits of bilingualism, and was often based upon knowledge of research that demonstrates a connection between cognitive development and bilingualism, or specifically between bilingualism and learning further languages.

• Continuing from Gaelic-medium primary education into taking Gàidhlig for fluent speakers in secondary was largely a matter of inertia, of not wanting to waste the language-learning work that had already been done.

• Alongside these dominant motives were various other, more incidental factors – notably a sense that the school where Gaelic-medium education was provided was a generally good school, and the belief that Gaelic-medium education might be effective because its classes tended to be small.
• Choice of English medium was attributable to more diverse motives. A common one was fear by parents who could not understand Gaelic that they would not be able to help their children with homework. There was also a different version of the heritage argument – that Gaelic was not part of the parents’ family traditions. Some parents believed that education was not the means to revitalise Gaelic. There was also some sense from a minority of parents that Gaelic-medium education is divisive, both because of its financial cost and because of the segregation which it was perceived to create in schools. However, many other parents of English-medium pupils welcomed the cultural diversity which the Gaelic-medium stream was perceived to bring to the school.

• There was recognition by parents who wanted Gaelic-medium learning to be extended that finding suitable teaching staff was difficult, especially at secondary. But several parents, even among those committed to Gaelic medium, would not want Gaelic to be the medium of education in all subjects at secondary: it was often said that the sciences might be better taught in English, and that Gaelic was best suited to the social subjects.

• There was an appreciation of the importance of informal contexts for children to use their Gaelic, such as in cultural events, and there was a widespread desire for these opportunities to be sustained and developed.

• Most respondents recognised the importance of encouraging children to use Gaelic outwith school, but most also saw the great difficulty in doing this, even in communities where Gaelic is spoken and where the child has Gaelic at home.

• Many respondents would like English-medium pupils to have more opportunities to learn Gaelic than are available at present, and some would like all pupils in Scotland to study the language. The main reason given was that the language is perceived to be an important part of Scotland’s heritage.

Appendix 1.B: Gàidhlig-Medium Education – Statistics

In school session 2009-10 numbers of pupils involved in GME in Scotland were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Number of pupils</th>
<th>Number of GME Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>2256</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3497</strong></td>
<td><strong>132</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: www.cnag.org/munghaidhlig/stats*
Appendix 2

Extract Two are better than one Prof Antonella Sorace, originally published in Children in Scotland magazine (January 2009, p.14-15).
www.childreninscotland.org.uk

In many parts of the world growing up multilingual is the norm: if children hear enough of both languages and have enough motivation and fun, they will pick them up. What many people don’t know is that the experience of dealing with two languages seems to give bilingual children some general cognitive advantages in other domains. These advantages are particularly evident in tasks that involve cognitive flexibility and the control of attention: bilingual children seem to be better at selectively paying attention, at inhibiting irrelevant information, and at switching between alternative solutions to a problem...

What is the link between enhanced cognitive control and bilingualism? Bilingual speakers must develop a powerful mechanism for keeping the two languages separate, so that fluency in one language can be achieved without intrusions from the unwanted language. Therefore the bilingual child’s constant experience of having two languages available and inhibiting one when the other is activated enhances their ability to multitask in other domains. There is more good news for bilingual children: it’s been suggested that some of these cognitive advantages are maintained in old age. If these results are confirmed by future research, it will be possible to conclude that bilingualism provides a defence against the decline of general processing functions that is a feature of normal cognitive aging.

A further spin-off of bilingualism is higher awareness of language and greater ability to think about it and talk about it. Bilingual children have a greater ability to focus on the form of language, abstracting away from meaning. Parents of bilingual children often report that their children engage in ‘language play’ that may take the form of ‘funny accents’ or impossible literal translations between one language and another. Many parents also report that bilingual children have more precocious reading skills, and this has recently been confirmed experimentally. Bilingual children recognize symbolic lettersound correspondences earlier than monolingual children, although this does not appear to be related to greater awareness of the sounds themselves and it is also a function of the specific languages acquired as well as of the level of proficiency attained.

Because of their experience of selecting languages according to the perceived linguistic competence of the person they are addressing, bilingual children have also been said to have an enhanced ‘awareness of the other’. This often goes under the heading of ‘Theory of Mind’, which is a term used to describe the ability to understand other people’s mental states, and more specifically that other people may have beliefs, desires and intentions different from one’s own. The cognitive abilities involved in Theory of Mind normally emerge around the age of 4 years in monolingual children; they are permanently impaired in autistic children. It has been reported that bilingual children develop Theory of Mind, on average, a year earlier than monolingual children.
It is remarkable that the experience of dealing with two languages may have such extensive repercussions in so many apparently unrelated domains of cognitive development.
Appendix 3

Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Executive Summary of Ginealach Ùr na Gàidhlig

The Action Plan proposes 5 Priority Action Areas:

**ACTION AREA 1: SUPPORT FOR PARENTS**

- National Parental Advocacy and Support Scheme to be expanded
- Development and promotion of immersion programmes as a route to functional fluency for parents, with ongoing mentoring from fluent speakers

**ACTION AREA 2: PROMOTION OF GAELIC ACQUISITION**

- Initiation of a national campaign to promote Gaelic, utilising the internationally recognised benefits of bilingualism and encouraging acquisition
- Raise profile of Gaelic across all sectors of Scottish Government activity including Ministerial announcements as an essential core part of the Government’s vision
- Further develop mygaelic.com as the Gaelic information portal and networking, along with other new technologies to promote Gaelic learning
- Localised campaigns through Bòrd-funded activities, getting community and Gaelic organisations’ support and engagement

**ACTION AREA 3: ADULT LEARNING**

- Additional investment in Ùlpan model of teaching Gaelic to ensure courses are fully developed, more accessible and certificated
- Designate two establishments as Gaelic Learning Centres offering excellence in Gaelic acquisition opportunities and an Information Line for prospective learners
- Develop learners’ website support mechanisms jointly with BBC Alba and MG Alba and encourage BBC Scotland to offer more Gaelic learning programming for adults
- Assess and, where possible and desirable, implement the findings of the Adult Learning Review carried out by Edinburgh University

**ACTION AREA 4: 0-5 YEARS EDUCATION**

- A new, comprehensive Bòrd na Gàidhlig early years initiative to coordinate, support and develop all aspects of Gaelic learning for 0-5 years, working in partnership with local authorities to deliver 3-5 provision and in close partnership with the Parental Advisory Scheme in Action Area 1
• Implement further recommendations of the Early Years Research, as appropriate

ACTION AREA 5: 5-18 YEARS EDUCATION

• Closer alignment of the Scottish Government’s Scheme of Specific Grants for Gaelic Education to the recommendations of this plan to ensure continuity of support for local authorities providing Gaelic medium Education
• In partnership with the Scottish Government, work with local authorities to increase number of GM units and standalone Gaelic schools
• Implement the Teacher Recruitment Strategy including the incentivisation of new teachers to teach in certain areas and incentivise currently qualified teachers to move into Gaelic teaching
• Initiate a series of Gaelic summer school-type initiatives for teenagers
• Develop supportive partnerships with local authorities to expand and improve effectiveness of GME delivery, develop it further and promote GME to parents
• Delivery of Gaelic Language in Primary Schools (GLPS) in primary and Gaelic in secondary schools to be increased, working in partnership with local authorities
Appendix 4

Networks and links

- **Stòrlann Nàiseanta na h-Alba (The National Gaelic Resource Centre)** offers opportunities to attend National Gàidhlig Teachers’ Conferences (e.g. A’ Chuisle and An t-Alltan). These conferences are well attended by GME teachers from all sectors and authorities, and bring many benefits, including examples of best practice in methodology, demonstration of new resources, discussion of classroom experiences and sharing of standards, and – perhaps most importantly, especially for the most isolated – opportunities for informal social interaction among friends and colleagues.

- The continued development of the **National Assessment Resource (NAR)** will provide opportunities for GME teachers to contribute examples of best practice and share standards. An example created and submitted by teachers at Sgoil Ghaidhlig Ghlaschu received the languages quality mark and is available on the NAR. ([www.ltscotland.org.uk](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk))

- Through the use of technology in general and, in particular, **Glow**, there can and should be more frequent opportunities to create an ever-expanding network to the mutual benefit of all who work in GME in whatever context. The **Mallaig Associated Schools Group** example on GLOW is an excellent model illustrating how these remote schools worked together to share teaching and learning experiences in a range of subjects. ([www.ltscotland.org.uk/usingglowandict/sharingpractice/cookbooks](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/usingglowandict/sharingpractice/cookbooks))

- **Pebblepad** – the e-portfolio system for recording pupil work in a secure internet area currently being trialled by the Highland Council.

- **MerIT**, currently being trialled by Glasgow City Council: another tool for recording information and helping pupils understand how their achievements link to the four capacities in the Curriculum for Excellence ([www.mymerit.net/home/copyright](http://www.mymerit.net/home/copyright))

Cultural links

- **Air Iomlaid** – Tollcross Primary Edinburgh/Sleat Primary Skye ([fruitmarket.co.uk/education/air-iomlaid](http://fruitmarket.co.uk/education/air-iomlaid))

- **Leabhar Beag na Gàidhlig** – Aberdeen City Council / Aberdeen Word Festival ([brigh.co.uk/leabhar_beag_na_Gaidhlig](http://brigh.co.uk/leabhar_beag_na_Gaidhlig)) Also Ayrshire, Ireland etc ([http://www.leabharmor.net/leabharbeag/index.htm](http://www.leabharmor.net/leabharbeag/index.htm))

- **Pròiseact nan Ealan** – Sgeulachdan project: story-telling secondary schools residency etc ([www.gaelic-arts.com/an-duigh/sgeulachdan](http://www.gaelic-arts.com/an-duigh/sgeulachdan))
• Fèis Òigrìdh annual inter-authority primary school drama event (Central Belt) (www.feisean.org)

• Comhairle nan Leabhraichean – Sgriobhadh sa Sgire – visiting writers and poets (www.gaelicbooks.org)

• Mòds – An Comunn Gàidhealach, both local and national (www.acgmod.org)

• Comann na Gàidhlig (CNAG) – visits to, for example, Edinburgh Castle, Scottish Parliament etc with Gaelic speaking tour guides (www.cnag.org.uk)

• Fèisean nan Gàidheal’s Meanbh-chuíeag drama group routinely tours primary schools with funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Meanbh-chuíeag can offer bespoke drama opportunities for local authorities when commissioned. Eg. Pantomime in CnES schools at the end of 2010.
Resources for teachers

The development of GME in secondary schools has highlighted the need for more subject specific texts and materials especially for subjects with complex terminology or technical vocabulary. **An Seotal** is the initial stage of a Gaelic terminology project which will co-ordinate the creation of a number of on-line terminology databases for Gaelic-medium subject teaching in the secondary school.

There are many resources available through other organisations, agencies and companies that also support GME. Some examples include:

- **BBC Alba** produce quality TV and radio programmes that are well used within the curriculum linking very closely to the experiences and outcomes of Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Well-Being, and Environmental Studies. As many programmes are only available for a short time an arrangement with BBC Alba whereby relevant programmes could be made available to schools for educational use would be most welcome. It is appreciated that there would be undoubtedly copyright issues.

- **BBC** provide an excellent range of web-based materials for fluent speakers and learners of Gàidhlig.

- **LTS** provides access to a wide range of resources through its pages at [http://gaidhlig.ltscotland.org.uk/](http://gaidhlig.ltscotland.org.uk/) and also provides support and guidance on CfE policy and practice, Glow, and subject specific resources. They have produced quality dual language materials e.g. Na Gàidheal ann an Canada.

- **Comhairle nan Leabhraichean** have a key role in encouraging and promoting the study, teaching, knowledge and appreciation of Gàidhlig writing and the public performance of creative works in Gàidhlig. Their website provides information on a range of current published text along with information on new writers.

- **Tobar an Dualchais** is an online archive containing thousands of oral recordings including stories, songs, poetry, music and factual information recorded in Scotland and further afield, from the 1930s onwards.

- **Sabhal Mòr Ostaig** [www.smo.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk)

- **Am Baile** – Highland Council’s Cultural archive and information website. [www.ambaile.org.uk](http://www.ambaile.org.uk)
Appendix 6

Links for Gàidhlig organisations and partners

**Aberdeen University Celtic Department**
www.abdn.ac.uk/celtic

**Acair Limited**
Gaelic Publishers
www.acairbooks.com

**Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba**
Gaelic place-names of Scotland
www.gaelicplacenames.org

**Am Baile**
History and culture of the Scottish Highlands and Islands.
www.ambaile.org.uk

**An Comunn Gàidhealach**
Promotes the Gaelic language and culture
www.acgmod.org

**An Gàidheal Ùr**
Gaelic Newspaper
www.an-gaidheal-ur.co.uk

**An Lòchran**
Glasgow Gaelic Centre
www.anlochran.co.uk

**BBC Alba**
BBC Scotland's Gaelic website
www.bbc.co.uk/alba

**Bòrd na Gàidhlig**
Statutory body responsible for the development and promotion of Gaelic
www.bord-na-gaidhlig.org.uk

**Cànán**
Design, language and creative media service
www.canan.co.uk

**Ceòlas**
Gaelic Music Summer School in the Hebrides
www.ceolas.co.uk

**Cearcaill na Gàidhlig**
Gaelic rich journeys through Scotland's West Highlands and Western Isles
www.gaelic-rings.com

Clì Gàidhlig
The voice of Gaelic Learners
www.cli.org.uk

Comhairle nan Leabhraichean
The Gaelic Books Council
www.gaelicbooks.org

Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis
The Gaelic Society of Inverness
www.gsi.org.uk

Comann na Gàidhlig
Gaelic Development Agency
www.cnag.org.uk

Edinburgh University Celtic Department
www.cellscot.ed.ac.uk

Edinburgh’s Telford College
Offers a variety of Gaelic courses by Distance Learning
www.ed-coll.ac.uk

Fèisean nan Gàidheal
Gaelic arts tuition festivals throughout Scotland
www.feisean.org

Fòram Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis
Inverness Gaelic Forum
www.inbhirnis.org

Gàidhlig Air-loodhne
Advice and resources for Gaelic teachers
www.ltscotland.org.uk/gaidhlig/

Glasgow University Celtic Department
www.gla.ac.uk/departments/celtic

Lews Castle College
Delivers a range of courses and is part of the UHI
www.lews.uhi.ac.uk

Royal National Mòd
www.acgmod.org

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
Scotland's Gaelic College
www.smo.uhi.ac.uk

**Scottish Natural Heritage**
SNH Gaelic Pages  
[www.snh.org.uk/gaelic/](http://www.snh.org.uk/gaelic/)

**Seachd – The Inaccessible Pinnacle**
Gaelic Feature Film  
[www.seachd.com](http://www.seachd.com)

**Sgleog**
Children and Teenagers website  
[www.sgleog.com](http://www.sgleog.com)

**Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig**
National Gaelic Educational Resource Agency  
[www.storlann.co.uk](http://www.storlann.co.uk)

**The Scottish Government**
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

**Tobar an Dualchais**
National Gaelic Archive  
[www.tobarandualchais.co.uk](http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk)

**University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)**
Partnership of learning centres providing university level education in the Highlands and Islands  
[www.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.uhi.ac.uk)
Appendix 7

Athrawon Bro: Welsh team-teaching: extract from Fraser (Gillies), Dr Anne, 1989 Gaelic in primary education: a study of the development of Gaelic bilingual education in urban contexts (University of Glasgow, doctoral thesis)

“(The Athrawon Bro’s) impact is far-reaching, and enhances both the pedagogic and the linguistic practice in the schools (if these can indeed be separated).

“ I saw the Athrawon Bro in action in a school in Holyhead (Ysgol Gynradd Llaingoch) – a primary with a roll of almost 2,000, large classes and a negligible number of “native” Welsh-speakers. Seven Athrawon were working alongside the class teachers five mornings a week for two terms.

“The Athrawon themselves suggest cross-curricular topics, in consultation with the Headteacher, stimulating and inspiring the class-teacher to add her / his own input and continue the work in the same or related areas. Some teachers were initially resistant to the idea of such an “invasion” of their domain but soon came to recognise the usefulness of the scheme especially in dealing with learning difficulties of all kinds, including linguistic…

“ I also visited a school in a socially deprived district of Holyhead (Ysgol Gynradd Llanfawr) where the Athrawon had recently been in situ. In this school crime, vandalism, truancy etc. had constituted a major problem, but with the help of the Athrawon Bro the Headteacher had built up a new and lasting morale among both staff and pupils. Although only 5 children from the entire school roll (200+) were considered to have had any Welsh on entry to the primary, the language is now flourishing as a medium of education across the entire curriculum. Staff feel more hopeful that in future parents in this area may feel motivated to opt for Welsh-medium secondary education, despite almost total disinterest in the past…

“ The Athrawon Bro also help to staff residential centres, open throughout the year, to which teachers accompany their classes for a week’s leisure activities through Welsh. The primary 7 class of the last-described school was on such a course when I visited the school. These are felt to be vital in terms of staff-pupil relations, and in establishing Welsh across non-scholastic areas of the children’s experience.”
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