



ALL-GAELIC SCHOOL CONSULTATION

Engagement Strategy



Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out the Council's strategy for engagement and consultation with key stakeholders in respect of fulfilling action 2.11 of the [Council's Gaelic Language Plan](#):

“Argyll and Bute Council will engage fully and constructively with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as adviser on Gaelic education, and other stakeholders (including parents and parent representatives) with a view to bringing forward, within the next 2 years, a consultation to ascertain the demand for an all-Gaelic School within the local authority area.”

This paper provides relevant background information, including details of the current provision of Gaelic education across Argyll and Bute, and invites feedback and comments on the demand for an all-Gaelic School within the authority area.

Contextual Information

Argyll and Bute Council have a duty under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 to prepare and publish a Gaelic Language Plan. These plans are submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, a body corporate established by Scottish Ministers which, under section 5(1)(a) or (b) of the 2005 Act, must either approve the plan or propose modifications to it.

Action 2.11 of the agreed Argyll and Bute Gaelic Language Plan sets out that:

“Argyll and Bute Council will engage fully and constructively with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as adviser on Gaelic education, and other stakeholders (including parents and parent representatives) with a view to bringing forward, within the next 2 years, a consultation to ascertain the demand for an all-Gaelic School within the local authority area.”

The basis for this engagement and consultation exercise is in fulfilment of the above action. The purpose is to ascertain as many views as possible on the level of demand and support for an all-Gaelic School within Argyll and Bute, from all parties with an interest in education – Gaelic or English Medium.

Current Provision

Gaelic Medium Education (GME) is currently available in Oban, Appin, Dunoon, Mull, Tiree and Islay. Further information is available in the [Argyll and Bute Annual Education Plan](#).

Table 1 below provides an overview of the current provision provided within each establishment as of December 2023.

- [Gaelic Medium Education](#) - is an option within Scottish education that gives children and young people an opportunity to become fluent in Gaelic. As children and young people move from stage to stage, they will continue to develop their fluency. In so doing, they also fulfil all the aims and goals of Curriculum for Excellence and accrue all the benefits of bilingualism. Learners do not have to be from homes where Gaelic is spoken. They begin to learn through the medium of Gaelic, preferably in early learning and childcare settings or in P1. The early stage of learning through the medium of Gaelic, and where no other language is used, is referred to as 'total immersion'. Total immersion is

developed within the context of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 where immersion is taken forward in a caring and nurturing environment. The exceptions to the total use of Gaelic includes comforting a child who is distressed, for an emergency situation, or for explaining issues connected to health, safety and wellbeing. The next stage of learning in Gaelic Medium Education is the 'immersion phase'. In this phase, the curriculum in its entirety continues to be taught through the medium of Gaelic across all four aspects of learning, as defined in Building the Curriculum 3. Teachers' monitoring and tracking of progress and achievement should confirm that children now have a secure base in Gaelic language, which they can transfer to developing reading and writing skills in English language. English is taught through medium of Gaelic. Further information can be accessed on the [Education Scotland website](#).

- **Gaelic taught as learner** - Gaelic Learner Education sits alongside the teaching of other modern languages in Scotland. Gaelic is learned in the same way as French and other languages are taught. In the primary school, there is the opportunity to offer Gaelic (Learners) as an L2 (beginning in P1) or L3 (beginning at any point between P5 & P7). This is under the auspices of the Scottish Government's 1+2 Language Policy, and pupils should have the opportunity to continue these languages in High School. Many local authorities in Scotland currently offer Gaelic Learner Education in the Primary School as an L2 or L3, meaning that children who do not have access to Gaelic Medium Education in their area can learn Gaelic. This may be the first step to fluency via other pathways. Further information can be accessed on the [Education Scotland website](#).
- Gaelic the only subject taught through Gaelic - [further details on the national qualifications that are offered can be accessed via the SQA website here](#).

Table 1

School	Gaelic medium education	Gaelic taught as learner	Gaelic the only subject taught through Gaelic
Pre-5			
Bowmore Gaelic Pre-5 Unit	10		
Bunnessan Gaelic Pre-5 Unit	5		
Rockfield Gaelic Pre-5 Unit	9		
Salen Gaelic Pre-5 Unit	16		
Sandbank Gaelic Pre-5 Unit	5		
Tiree Pre-5 Unit	15		
Primary			
Achahoish Primary School		4	
Ardrishaig Primary School		34	
Arinagour Primary School		4	
Bowmore Primary School		116	
Bowmore Primary School Gaelic Unit	32		
Bunnessan Primary School		12	
Bunnessan Primary School Gaelic Unit	10		
Cardross Primary School		78	
Castlehill Primary School		85	

School	Gaelic medium education	Gaelic taught as learner	Gaelic the only subject taught through Gaelic
Clachan Primary School		11	
Craignish Primary School		24	
Dalmally Primary School		29	
Dervaig Primary School		15	
Dunbeg Primary School		40	
Easdale Primary School		31	
Gigha Primary School		10	
Iona Primary School		11	
Keills Primary School		32	
Kilninver Primary School		24	
Lismore Primary School		6	
Lochdonhead Primary School		17	
Lochnell Primary School		82	
Park Primary School		92	
Port Charlotte Primary School		29	
Port Ellen Primary School		73	
Rhu Primary School		96	
Rockfield Primary School Gaelic Unit	50		
Rockfield Primary School		239	
Salen Primary School Gaelic Unit	49		
Salen Primary School		32	
Sandbank Primary School Gaelic Unit	41		
Sandbank Primary School		18	
Small Isles Primary School		20	
St Columba's Primary School		62	
Strath of Appin Primary School Gaelic Unit	13		
Strath of Appin Primary School		13	
Taynuilt Primary School		29	
Tiree Primary School Gaelic Unit	48		
Tiree Primary School		32	
Tobermory Primary School		73	
Ulva Primary School		9	
Secondary			
Dunoon Grammar School	5	115	23
Islay High School		56	7
Oban High School	13	306	26
Tiree High School		34	15
Tobermory High School		10	26
3-18			
Tarbert 3-18		29	
GRAND TOTAL	321 (60 Pre-5)	2032	97

National Position

There are currently eight stand-alone Gaelic schools in Scotland:

Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu (Primary)	Glasgow
Ard-sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu (Secondary)	Glasgow
Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghleann dail (Primary)	Glasgow
Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Bhaile a' Ghobhainn (Primary)	Glasgow
Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis (Primary)	Inverness
Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar (Primary)	Fort William
Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh (Primary)	Portree
Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce (Primary)	Edinburgh

How does a stand-alone school differ from a Gaelic Medium Unit?

- All teaching staff speak Gaelic
- The intention of a Gaelic school is for all ancillary staff to speak Gaelic
- After school activities or lunch clubs are delivered in the medium of Gaelic
- All the children are “mainstream” children
- GME is on an equal footing to English medium education
- Leadership and strategic direction of a stand-alone school are focussed on the needs of Gaelic immersion
- Collegiate time for teachers is wholly dedicated to delivering the Curriculum for Excellence with appropriate attention paid to immersion and specific requirements of language acquisition
- Increased ability to draw on wider Gaelic community

Budget Provision

The total budget for Gaelic in 2023-24 is £2,161,854, with the Council costs totalling £1,630,846 and grant funding of £531,008. The grant funding allocation has been reducing year on year. It is used to cover 75% of the cost of teaching posts, but now only covers 57% due to the grant reductions and the increasing costs associated with posts, for example the recent pay increase.

The grant funding is made up as follows:

Income	£ 355,000	Gaelic specific grant
1140 Income	£ 162,772	
SMHSS Income	£ 1,236	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme
FURAN	£ 12,000	For the Furan Gaelic Centre, Oban, and comes from Bòrd na Gàidhlig Gaelic Language Plan Implementation Fund
Total	£ 531,008	

Consultation Approach

The consultation will be carried out in line with the Council's agreed Consultation Toolkit, which has recently been subject to scrutiny and review by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee and deemed fit for purpose. The toolkit draws on lessons learned from previous consultations and from best practice set out in the National Standards for Community Engagement.

Given the nature of the engagement at this stage is simply to seek views on the potential demand for an all Gaelic School, this consultation does not fall within the terms of the statutory processes set out within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, which sets out specific requirements relating to the handling of proposals to establish new schools, relocate schools, and other major changes to schools; or s7(1) of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, which provides that the parent of a child under school age may request the education authority in whose are the child is resident to assess the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE).

However, there are useful guidelines and principles set out within these statutory processes that we may wish to adopt in relation to this non-statutory consultation. For example:

- Setting a consultation period of at least 6 weeks, excluding school holidays
- Provision of accurate information in respect of the scope of the consultation subject
- The Local Authority will attempt to answer all relevant questions and requests for additional information, as far as is reasonably practicable, before the end of the consultation period;
- Prepare and publish a consultation report, which draws together all of the consultation feedback, and recommends next steps following a review of the same.

Key Considerations

As part of this process there are a number of key considerations that the Council will have regard to, including:

- An examination of the extent to which the development of an all Gaelic School would impact on the Council's Capital and Revenue budgets, set against a background of reducing budgets and conflicting priorities;
- Recognition that, at present, there is no Capital provision to build and establish a new all Gaelic School;
- Recognition that Scottish Government funding for Gaelic Education could become available should a proposal for an all Gaelic School progress – namely, the Gaelic Specific Grant (funding awarded to cover some of the costs of delivery of Gaelic Education), and the Gaelic Schools Capital Fund (funding to assist with capital costs incurred in developing Gaelic Education provision). More information on these funding streams can be found at Paragraphs 2.68 – 2.72 of the [Statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education](#);
- Requirement to provide additional Revenue funding to resource any new School, including the recruitment of additional, suitably qualified Gaelic Teachers and other support staff;
- Recognition that any borrowing for Capital projects comes at a cost to the Council's Revenue - the average cost of which is currently approximately £64,000 per annum for every £1million borrowed;

- The funding implications for other elements of the Education Service if the budget for staffing/additional support needs remains the same;
- The funding implications for other service areas across the Council, should a decision be taken to develop an all Gaelic School;
- Congniscance of the ongoing recruitment challenges within Education, and Argyll and Bute Council as a whole, particularly in respect of the ability to recruit Gaelic Medium School Leaders in Argyll and Bute;
- Will assist in informing the Council of the further steps which require to be taken once we have fully and constructively engaged with all stakeholders, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig;

Consultation Period

A 10 week consultation will be undertaken between 22 April 2024 (post Easter holidays) and 30th June 2024 (prior to summer holidays), taking account of other consultation and engagement activities that are ongoing/planned across the Council.

Stakeholders/Audiences

For the purposes of this consultation, the key stakeholders have been identified as:-

- Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Elected Members
- All Pupils
- All School Staff
- All Parent Councils
- Wider parent/carer community
- Parents of prospective pupils
- Education Trade Unions
- All Community Councils
- Comann nam Pàrent
- Spòrs Gàidhlig
- Comunn na Gàidhlig
- Stòrlann
- Fèisean nan Gàidheal
- Education Scotland
- Constituency/List MSPs and MPs
- Media
- General public

Further detail on how each stakeholder group will be engaged as part of the process is included within the Operational Plan on page 9 below.

Question Set

The survey questions for this engagement and consultation exercise are:-

1. Do you think the Council should provide an all Gaelic School in Argyll and Bute?
2. If yes:-
 - a) Please outline your reasons why you think this should be provided?

- b) What would an all Gaelic School look like? (e.g. ELC, primary, secondary, 2-18?)
- c) Do you have any views on how an all Gaelic School could be funded? (e.g. external funding, increase Council Tax, reduce the budget of another service?)
- d) Where should an all Gaelic School be located in Argyll and Bute?
- i. Campbeltown
 - ii. Dunoon
 - iii. Helensburgh
 - iv. Lochgilphead
 - v. Oban
 - vi. Rothesay
 - vii. Other – please specify
3. If no:-
- a) Why not?
4. What is your interest in an all Gaelic School?”
- I am a pupil
 - I am a teacher
 - I am a parent/carer
 - Other – please specify
5. Please provide a contact email address if you would like us to communicate with you post consultation.
6. Please provide the first part of your postcode.

Responding to the Consultation

- An online survey will be issued to all stakeholders – available via the following links
 - <https://forms.gle/RQF3DfT98t3yFjJS9>
 - <https://forms.gle/XHDuzN6uvbYsm9Fp8> (Gaelic version)
- Details of the consultation, with links to the relevant background information and the survey, will be available on the relevant pages of the [Council website](#). This includes access to a Gaelic version of the documentation.
- A dedicated email inbox has been set up to allow stakeholders to contact the Council about the consultation (gaelicschoolconsultation@argyll-bute.gov.uk).
- Hard copies of the consultation can be provided upon request.

Operational Plan

The table below sets out the proposed engagement activity / timescales in respect of each stakeholder group:-

Stakeholders	Engagement Method(s)	Dates
Elected Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsement of engagement strategy / timeline – Policy Leads/ELT • Provide all Councillors with a copy of engagement materials via email • Ongoing engagement to answer questions/provide further information as requested 	Sept '23 / March '24 w/c 15 April
Bòrd na Gàidhlig	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a copy of proposed engagement strategy / endorsement of approach • Ongoing engagement throughout process 	3 engagement meetings held between December 2023 and February 2024
Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email engagement materials to all Head Teachers for distribution to pupils / to arrange focussed engagement during the consultation period as deemed appropriate by Education Service • Ongoing engagement to answer questions/provide further information as requested 	w/c 15 April
School Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email engagement materials to all Head Teachers for distribution to all school staff • Ongoing engagement to answer questions/provide further information as requested 	w/c 15 April
Parent Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email engagement materials to all Parent Council Chairs for distribution to Parent Council members • Ongoing engagement to answer questions/provide further information as requested 	w/c 15 April
Wider parent/carer forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send engagement materials to all parents via Xpressions Application • Ongoing engagement to answer questions/provide further information as requested 	w/c 15 April
Parents of prospective pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send engagement materials to all ELC settings for distribution to parents/carers • Ongoing engagement to answer questions/provide further information as requested 	w/c 15 April

Trade Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email all relevant TUs with engagement materials • Ongoing engagement to answer questions/provide further information as requested 	w/c 15 April
Community Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email engagement materials to all Community Council Chairs for distribution to wider membership • Ongoing engagement to answer questions/provide further information as requested 	w/c 15 April
Other Gaelic specific stakeholders (as set out on page 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email engagement materials • Ongoing engagement to answer questions/provide further information as requested 	w/c 15 April
Constituency/List MSPs and MPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email engagement materials • Ongoing engagement to answer questions/provide further information as requested 	w/c 15 April
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of press release / engagement materials for issue to local press 	w/c 15 April
Wider public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of engagement materials via press and social media 	w/c 15 April