

GAELIC EDUCATION

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Gaelic education has arisen as a key issue in connection with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill. The Bill provides that Bòrd na Gàidhlig can issue guidance on the provision of Gaelic education. This briefing provides a statistical overview of Gaelic educational provision and considers its recent development.

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KEY POINTS

- The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill 2004 provides for Bòrd na Gàidhlig to draft guidance on Gaelic education.
- The Scottish Executive issued draft guidance on Gaelic education to education authorities for consultation on September 17 2004.
- In 2003-04 there were 1,972 pupils in Gaelic medium primary, 284 in Gaelic medium secondary and 2,513 secondary learners.
- In 2003-04 34 secondary schools offered Gaelic classes for fluent speakers and 19 secondary schools offered Gaelic medium education.
- The biggest expansion in Gaelic medium education has been in the pre-school sector – 1,236 children were in Gaelic medium pre-school in 2003.
- Plans for a Gaelic secondary school in Glasgow were announced on 21 May 2004.
- There is a shortage of Gaelic medium and Gaelic subject teachers. The Executive has increased allocations on teaching training courses.

INTRODUCTION

In 2004, 2,879 pupils received Gaelic medium education. 1,236 (43%) of these were in pre-school (Scottish Executive 2004). A target under the spending review is to increase the number of pupils in Gaelic Medium Education by 20% by December 2009 (Scottish Executive 2004a p 25). This would mean an extra 576 pupils over five years. To date, the area of greatest increase has been pre-school, in which pupil numbers increased by 9% between 2003 and 2004.

Education is central to language planning and movements for the revitalisation of minority or regional languages have often concentrated their efforts on education and media. Some of the main campaigning organisations for Gaelic were established in order to increase education provision e.g the playgroup association, Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Araich¹ (CNSA) and parents' organisation, Comunn nam Pàrant. This focus on education has been evident in Government as well - a key part of Executive support of Gaelic is through the education specific grant. A focus on education is common to other minority language planning policies. For example, the development of Irish Gaelic medium schools was central to policy approaches to revitalising the language after 1922. (Coady and O Laoire, 2002).² Although socio-linguists have recognised that it is learning and using the language in the home that is fundamental to revival, they have also recognised that education is more generally open to public policy interventions (see Fishman, 1991).

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Gaelic education was first provided for in the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act, now incorporated in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (the 1980 Act). This provides at s.1 that the duty to provide school education includes the teaching of Gaelic in 'Gaelic speaking areas'. There is no definition of Gaelic speaking areas and it is unclear whether or not the 1980 Act implies any distinction between Gaelic medium education and Gaelic taught through the medium of English. A general right to education was specifically established by the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000 ('the 2000 Act'). Such education must be

directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential (2000 Act, s.2(1)).

Education authorities must have regard to

The general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents (1980 Act s. 28).

The 2000 Act required that local authorities report on Gaelic provision as part of their annual statement of improvement objectives. In addition Gaelic is included as a 'National Priority' in Education under the general heading of inclusion.

Campaigners such as Comunn nam Pàrant and Comunn na Gàidhlig (CnaG) have long campaigned for a right to Gaelic medium education where reasonable demand exists. This formed part of CnaG's proposal's for Secure Status for Gaelic in 1997, and continues to be a proposal in responses to the consultation on the draft Gaelic bill. The draft bill had made no specific mention of education (although it was covered indirectly along with other public

¹ A parent led group campaigning for and developing pre-school provision.

² Although the authors do question whether the policy has been effectively implemented.

authorities). In response to issues raised in consultation the Executive included a provision in the bill as introduced at s. 9 for Bòrd na Gàidhlig to prepare guidance on Gaelic medium education. Under the 2000 Act, local authorities must 'have regard' to this guidance. The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 requires education authorities to prepare and publish annual statements of improvement objectives and they must include an account of the ways in which, or circumstances in which, they will provide Gaelic medium education. Further detail on this was contained in the Education Guidance which was issued for consultation by the Minister for Education and Young People on 17 September 2004 (Scottish Executive 2004b).

DEVELOPMENT OF PROVISION

The first Gaelic bilingual education project was established in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in 1975. The first Gaelic medium primary units opened in Glasgow and Inverness in 1985 and a wholly Gaelic primary opened in Glasgow in 1999 (Mercator, 2001). In May 2004 the Executive announced assistance with funding a Gaelic secondary school in Glasgow. In addition, Highland Council have recently announced plans for a Gaelic primary school in Inverness which is due to open in 2006 (Inverness Courier, 2004).

The greatest expansion of Gaelic provision has been in the pre-school sector rising from three centres in 1993 to 62 in 2004. In 2004 Gaelic medium education was offered in 60 primary schools and 34 secondary schools offer Gaelic language classes for fluent speakers. Fifteen schools also teach other subjects in Gaelic (Scottish Executive 2004a).

Together with the work of parent led groups such as Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Araich (CNSA) the development of Gaelic education has been assisted by the Gaelic specific grant and the general policy of expanding nursery provision. The Gaelic specific grant in education was established in 1986 and provides 75% funding for projects. It is currently used by 21 Authorities. Authorities are encouraged to bid for new or additional projects and to mainstream Gaelic provision after five years.

CURRICULUM MATERIALS

A national resource centre, Stòrlann, was established on the Isle of Lewis in 1999 to develop curricular materials. In addition, part of the National Grid for Learning is a web site for Gaelic teachers, (Gaelic on Line) enabling sharing of curriculum materials and discussion of different schools' provision. See <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/gaidhlig/englishsummary.asp> The recently announced plans for a Gaelic secondary school in Glasgow is intended to act as a 'hub' for the development of curriculum and teaching practice (Scottish Executive 2004a).

The following section outlines pupil numbers at different levels of education before considering the supply of teachers.

PRE-SCHOOL

In 2004, there were 1,236 children receiving Gaelic medium pre-school education. This represents 1.2 per cent of all pre-school children and was an increase of nine per cent since 2003. They received education across 62 providers of Gaelic medium pre-school education. There were 21 in Highland, 19 in Eilean Siar, with the remainder covering an additional 11 local authority areas. Virtually all providers were local authority (39 centres) or voluntary sector (19 centres) run. 32 centres were attached to primary schools, 22 centres operate mainly as playgroups and eight were stand alone nurseries (Scottish Executive 2004).

Pre-school Gaelic medium	1993-94	2000 - 01	2004
Children	54	413	1,236
Centres	3	34	62

Source: Scottish Executive 2004 and 2004d.

Currently 100% of all four year olds and 85% of all three year olds receive pre-school education for 2.5 hours a day, five days a week. 1.2% of these children receive Gaelic medium education. As 0.34% of the pre-5 population (930 children) were noted in the census as Gaelic speakers, and 1.84% of the general population had 'some knowledge of Gaelic', the current pre-school provision would appear to be catering for the current level of Gaelic speaking. This does not however account for any potential future increase, (based on Scottish Census 2001 and Scottish Executive 2004).

PRIMARY

In 2003/04 there were 1,972 pupils in Gaelic medium primary education (Scottish Executive 2004f). In 2001/02 Gaelic Medium education was available in 59 primary schools to 1,859 pupils.

Primary Gaelic medium	1993-94	2000 - 01	2001-02
Children	1,080	1,925	1,859
Centres	45	58	59

Source: Scottish Executive 2004d(national dossier) and [CnaG](#) 2002.

Of the above 59 centres, 25 were in the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and 18 in the Highland Council area. However, pupil numbers are also relatively high in Glasgow, Argyll and Bute and South Lanarkshire. In all, 14 local authorities offered Gaelic medium primary education in 2001-02.

Local Authority	centres	pupils
1. Highland	18	678
2. Eilean Siar	25	563
3. Glasgow	1	129
4. Argyll and Bute	4	85
5. South Lanarkshire	1	74
6. Edinburgh	1	63
7. North Lanarkshire	1	68
8. Aberdeen	1	51
9. East Dunbartonshire	1	29
10. East Ayrshire	1	28
11. Stirling	1	25
12. Perth and Kinross	1	19
13. Angus	1	10
14. Inverclyde	1	7

Source: [CNA G Pupil Numbers 2001 - 2002](#) CNA G (2002)

A high proportion of pupils enrolling for Gaelic medium education in urban areas come from non-Gaelic speaking homes. Pupils follow a two year 'immersion' programme and the language continues as the predominant mode of instruction thereafter. The 5-14 guidelines state that: Gaelic medium education should aim 'to bring pupils to the stage of broadly equal competence in Gaelic and English, in all skills, by the end of Primary 7' (Mercator, 2002, p. 9). Most development of Gaelic teaching has been through 'total immersion' Gaelic medium provision.

However, there are some alternative approaches. The 'Gaelic Language in the Primary School' initiative (GLPS) was established in 2000. Teachers volunteer to take 20 days training and usually deliver up to an hour a week of Gaelic teaching. An evaluation of the scheme noted its potential to introduce Gaelic to more children.

GLPS is of course only one of a range of measures for promoting uptake of Gaelic in Scottish education. Although it cannot deliver the levels of proficiency which arise from Gaelic-medium primary education, it nonetheless has an important role to play in helping a relatively hidden language of Scotland to assume a higher public profile. It may encourage pupils to stay with the language beyond primary school and it may help to bring the language back into families and local communities (Johnstone et al, 2003, para 16).

SECONDARY

In 2003-04 there were 284 pupils in Gaelic Medium Secondary, and 2,513 secondary learners, (Scottish Executive 2004f). In announcing the development of the first Gaelic Medium secondary school, the Education Minister, Peter Peacock recognised the problems facing Gaelic secondary education:

There has been a particular bottle-neck in the development of Gaelic medium secondary provision due to the scarcity of suitably qualified teachers, course materials, and also difficulties with class sizes (Scottish Executive 2004a).

In 1983, two schools in Lewis were the first to provide Gaelic medium at secondary level education (Mercator 2002 p 11). There are currently 34 secondary schools which offer Gaelic for fluent speakers and 19 schools offering at least one other subject through Gaelic medium (Scottish Executive 2004f).

An analysis by year group in 2002 showed a predominance of Gaelic medium education in S1 and S2. In 2001-02 there were 302 pupils receiving Gaelic medium secondary education in some subjects and there were 2131 Gaelic learners. However, over half of these were in the first two years of secondary. The 'drop off' was particularly noticeable with Gaelic Medium education: 70% of those receiving Gaelic medium education being in the first two years of secondary. The division over school years and type of course is set out in table 4:

2001-02 Year	Gaelic language learners		Fluent Gaelic language		Gaelic medium	
	Pupils	%	pupils	%	Pupils	%
S1 & S2	1,254	59%	495	53%	210	70%
S3 & S4	715	34%	333	36%	56	19%
S5 & S6	162	8%	100	11%	36	12%
All years	2131	101%	928	100%	302	101%

Source: CnaG web site [% rounded up, accessed September 2004]

Gaelic provision was concentrated in the Highlands and Western Isles. Of the 34 schools offering Gaelic language learners (i.e not fluent or Gaelic medium), 25 of them were in these areas. A further four were in Argyll and Bute. The remaining four schools were in Edinburgh, Aberfeldy, Glasgow and Cumbernauld. This left 25 Local Authorities with no Gaelic learners provision in 2001 -02.

SQA QUALIFICATIONS IN GAELIC

The number of pupils taking Gaelic learners Higher, fluent Gàidhlig Higher and fluent Gaelic language standard grade has been steadily increasing since 1999. Gaelic learners standard grade had been rising since 1999 but dropped in 2002 to a similar level as in 1999.

2003	Gaelic (learners)	Gàidhlig (fluent)	Urdu	French
Standard candidates	334	183	181	37,988
Standard centres	22	23	21	398
Higher candidates	147	75	No course	4,886
Higher - centres	23	15	No course	386

Source: SQA Statistics 2003 related excel tables SG3, SG1, NH1, NH4a <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

Number of Centres and candidates 2003

For Standard grade in 2003, 22 centres presented candidates for Gaelic learners and 23 centres for Gàidhlig (fluent speakers). This compares with 21 centres offering Urdu and 398 offering French. For Higher, in the same year, 23 centres offered Gaelic learners and 15 offered Gàidhlig. Although far fewer pupils sit 'Gaelic learners' or 'Gàidhlig (fluent)' than, for example, French, it does compare relatively favourable with Urdu. Standard grade Gaelic learners reached a peak of 385 in 2001 before falling back to 334 in 2003, similar to the 1999 level of 329. There have been greater and more sustained increases in Gàidhlig (fluent) standard grade and in both learner and fluent speaker Higher. Over the period 2000 to 2003, the numbers of candidates presented for Higher Gaelic learners has increased by 75%, and for Higher Gaelic (fluent speakers) by 83%. Since 1999, the number of candidates presented for standard grade fluent speaker Gàidhlig has increased by 93% from 95 to 183 pupils.

Chart 1: Candidates for standard grade 1999 - 2003

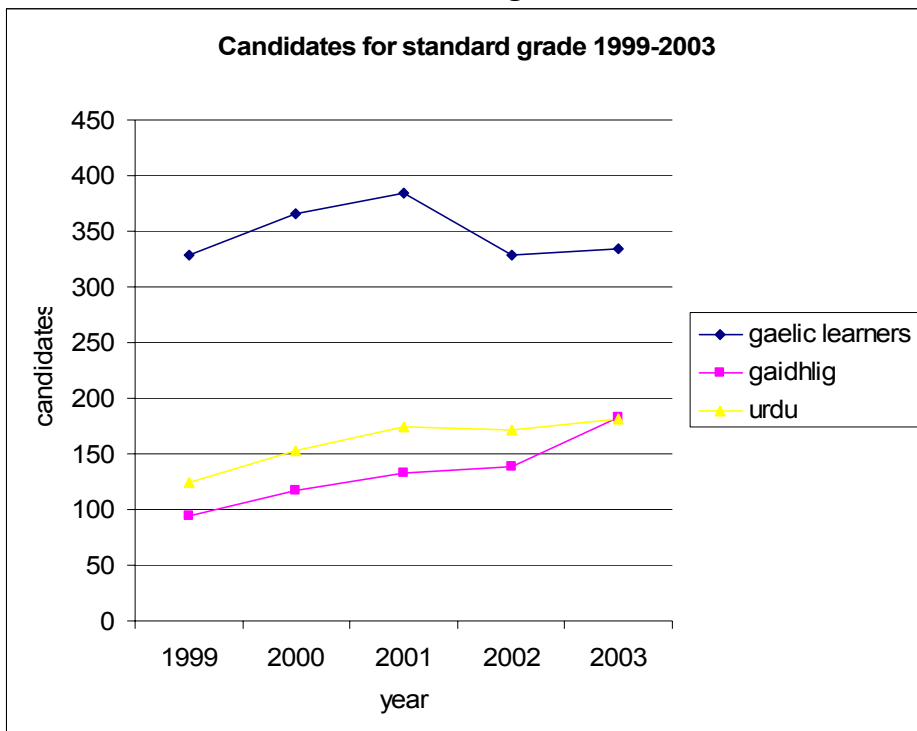
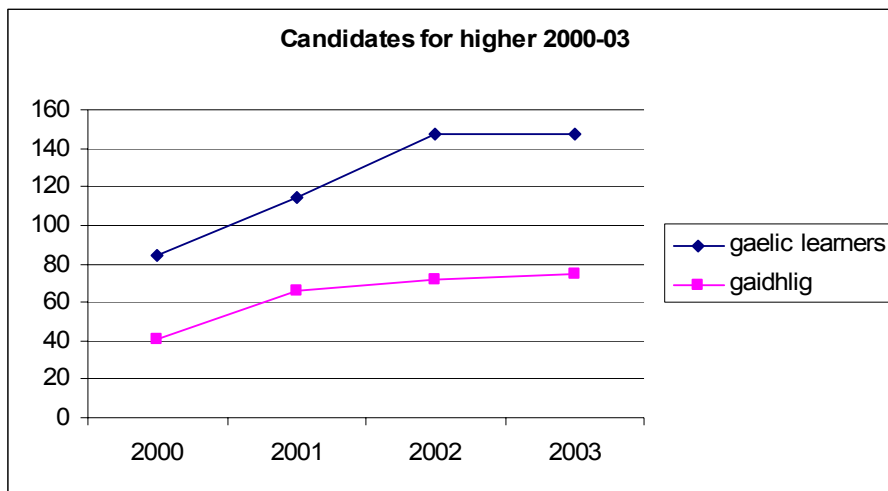


Chart 2: Candidates for Higher 2000-03



Sources: SQA statistics available at <http://www.sqa.org.uk>

TERTIARY AND LIFELONG LEARNING

FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

In further education, ten colleges provide full or part time courses for Gaelic (Mercator 2002, p 13). There are degree courses offered by Sabhal Mòr Ostaig³ entirely through the medium of Gaelic. They currently offer degrees in Gaelic and Media studies, Gaelic language and culture and Gaelic and North Atlantic Studies. The UHI Millennium Institute of which Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is a partner, also offers courses in Gaelic as does Lews Castle College. In addition Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities have departments of Celtic studies and both Dundee and Stirling Universities offer courses in Gaelic.

LIFELONG LEARNING

A survey in 1995 indicated that there were around 8,000 adults on Gaelic learners courses, although these are likely to be mostly at beginner level. CnaG promote 'immersion' courses, which in 2001/02 had 185 students in eight FE colleges (Mercator 2002 p16). A distance learning 'access' course for second language learners at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has around 200 students. This is now in its third year and a number of students go on to Sabhal Mor Ostaig to do degree courses and achieve fluency.⁴ However, identified weaknesses in the infrastructure for adult learners of Gaelic include a lack of a co-ordinated approach, lack of tutor training and little post-beginner provision. This is partly a reflection of reliance on local authority day or evening classes. These factors contribute to a fragmented pattern of provision and few Gaelic learners reaching fluency (MacCaluim 2002).

GAELIC TEACHERS

The supply of Gaelic teachers, although not provided for directly in the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill, has been highlighted by, for example CnaG and Highland Council, as of crucial importance in the maintenance and development of the language. The issue provoked considerable discussion during consideration of Mr Russell's bill in the previous parliamentary session and had prompted a members' debate in November 2001. Whilst the Education, Culture

³ [Sabhal Mòr Ostaig](#) is the Gaelic college on Skye and is part of the UHI Millennium Institute.

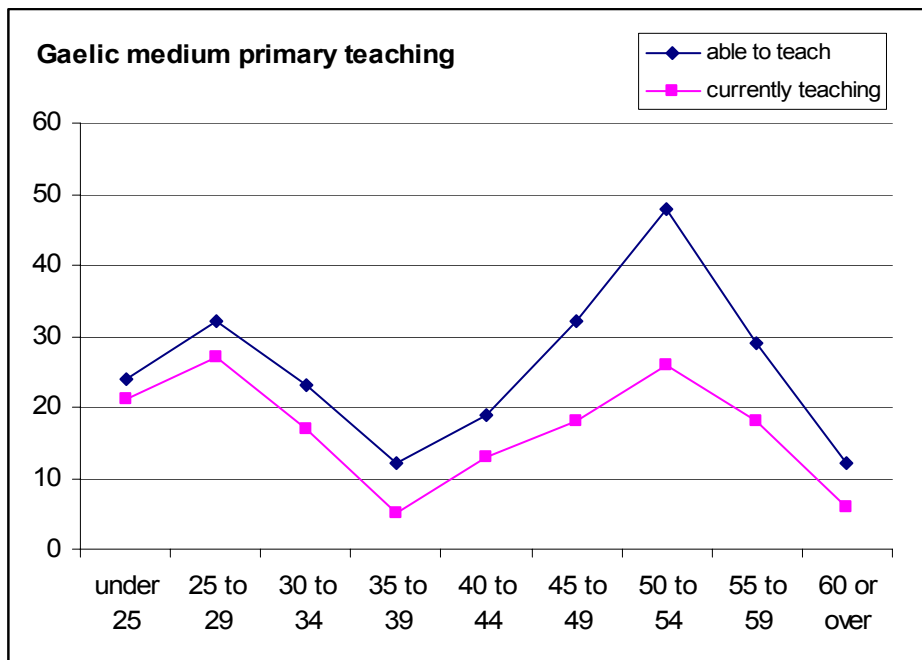
⁴ Scottish Parliament Gaelic Officer, personal communication 29 October 2004

and Sport Committee agreed that teacher supply was a key issue, its report noted that the bill would not create teachers.

The Committee agrees that it is essential to increase the number of qualified teachers to ensure Gaelic's survival and it also agrees that the Bill will not directly create teachers and indeed, does not address the question of Gaelic-medium education (para 19, Scottish Parliament ECS 2003).

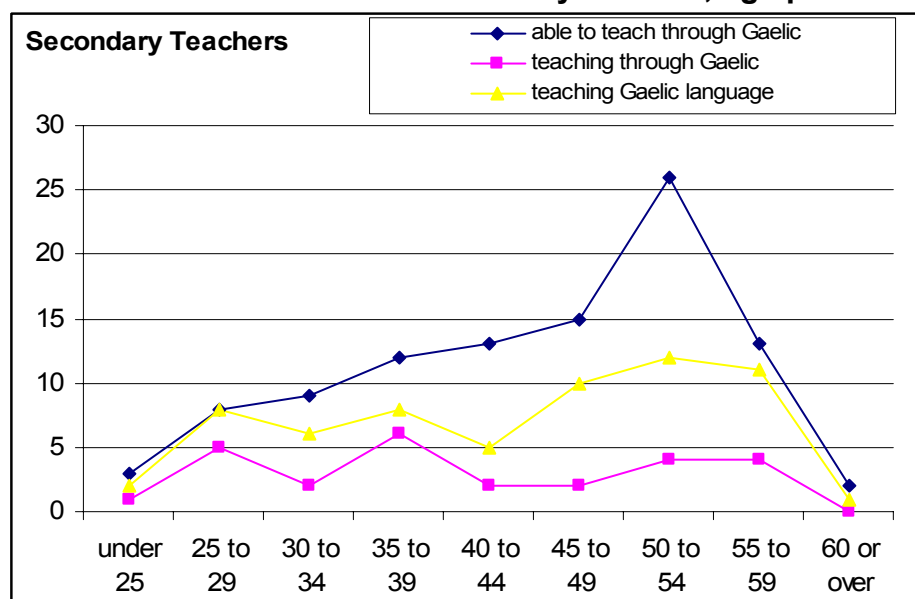
The 2003 staff census indicates that there are 152 primary teachers currently teaching through Gaelic and 233 able to do so (table 2.9, Scottish Executive 2004e). Ability to teach in Gaelic shows a peak in the 40 to 55 age group which is in line with the general age profile of the teaching profession. However, in primary Gaelic medium education there are more Gaelic teachers in their 20's than in their 30's. This is against the general trend of level numbers of teachers in this age group. Younger primary teachers appear to be more likely to be using their ability to teach in Gaelic - with little gap between those able to teach and those currently teaching (Scottish Executive 2004e).

Chart 3: Gaelic medium primary teachers, age profile. 2003



Source: Table 2.9 Scottish Executive (2004e), <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00352-30.asp>

Chart 4: Gaelic teachers in secondary schools, age profile. 2003



Source: Table 3.7 Scottish Executive (2004e), <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00352-30.asp>

Online course at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is seeking to make available its Gaelic Medium Subject Teaching Course for electronic delivery. This course is aimed at teachers who are Gaelic speakers but are presently teaching in English. The Scottish Executive has been able to provide funding for this course to prepare on-line delivery.⁵

GAELIC SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION

103 secondary school teachers are able to teach through Gaelic, but 26 currently do so (table 3.7, Scottish Executive 2004). There is at least one Gaelic medium teacher in 18 subjects, but currently six subjects - Gaelic, Geography, English, Home Economics, Physics and Biology - are actively taught. In addition 63 teachers are teaching Gaelic language.

Table 6: Gaelic teachers by subject area. 2003

Subject	Able to teach in Gaelic	Currently teaching in Gaelic
Gaelic	39	17
Mathematics	9	0
Religious Education	4	0
Technical Education	4	0
Geography	3	3
English	3	1
Home Economics	3	1
General Science	3	0
History	3	0
Art	3	0
Modern studies	2	0
Physics	1	1
Biology	1	1
French	1	0
Classical Studies	1	0
Chemistry	1	0
Computing studies	1	0
Physical education	1	0

⁵ Scottish Executive, personal communication, 20 October 2004

Source: Table 3.10, *Scottish Executive 2004e*, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/00352-30.asp>
Replaces the annual survey of local authority requirements in the workforce planning projections.

Gaelic Secondary ICT Implementation Group

A Gaelic ICT Implementation Group has been set up for the development and delivery of Gaelic medium education at secondary level. It is hoped that a virtual solution to Gaelic secondary could offer a way of meeting the increased demand for Gaelic subject teaching at a secondary level in many parts of Scotland.⁶

Initial Teacher Education

For primary Gaelic medium, Local Authorities estimated in 2002 that around 210 newly trained teachers would be required over the next 7 years, with the largest requirement (58) specified by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. For secondary, Local Authorities estimated that around 106 newly trained teachers would be required over the same period, again with the largest requirement (32) specified by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, (para 17 SHEFC 2003). Highland Council estimated in September 2003 that 30 new teachers a year are required across Scotland, (TES 2003 p 6).

This requirement for new teachers has been answered by increases in course allocations and the development of new courses. SHEFC allocate funding for Gaelic teacher training, based on guidance from SEED. In response to SEED guidance that Gaelic provision was a priority, SHEFC allocated an additional 10 places to Strathclyde in 2001/02 for Gaelic medium primary and a further five places each in Strathclyde and Aberdeen in 2002/03, (SHEFC 2002). In 2004 25 primary GME teachers were expected to graduate and four secondary GME teachers (Scottish Executive 2004f).

In 2004, Aberdeen University, together with Highland Council introduced a primary part-time distance learning course where a number of students will graduate able to teach in Gaelic Medium (Scottish Parliament 2004). A new teacher training course for Gaelic primary teachers was announced on 23rd April 2004. A one-year postgraduate diploma in education course is planned to be offered by the UHI Millennium Institute, the body developing a university for the Highlands and Islands, in partnership with Strathclyde University, (Scotsman, 2004). In addition there is a Gaelic Secondary Teachers Conversion Course at the Gaelic College, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

However, there are some indications in press reports that the training courses are not filling up. A distance learning course run by Lews Castle College had three students signed up by May 2004. Five students signed were up to a Gaelic teaching distance learning course run by Highland (TES 2004a). An editorial in the Times Educational Supplement in February 2004 had noted that:

Places on university training courses remain unfilled and a mere handful of secondary Gaelic specialists emerge each year. Different approaches to training may yield more but don't hold your breath for mass recruitment (TES 2004b).

A more optimistic assessment was given by Duncan Ferguson, chair of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and rector of Plockton Highschool, speaking about the development of a Gaelic secondary school in Glasgow.

If teachers are convinced there are going to be schools of this kind with more certain career opportunities, it will stimulate interest among potential teachers (TES 2004c).

⁶ Scottish Executive, personal communication, 20 October 2004
providing research and information services to the Scottish Parliament

The Executive has provided funding to Comunn na Gàidhlig to promote Gaelic medium teaching as a career (Scottish Executive 2004f). This funds provision for those who already speak Gaelic. There is no provision at present for existing teachers to learn Gaelic in order to transfer to Gaelic teaching.⁷

FUNDING GAELIC EDUCATION

The Gaelic specific grant for education was established in 1986 and is currently used by 21 local authorities. In 2004/05 it is £3.034m and the spending review in September 2004 announced increases of £0.4m in 2006/07 and £1m in 2007/08.

In addition the Executive announced in April and May of 2004:

- £90,000 for Storlann
- £250,000 for the specific grant for secondary education
- £2.75 million towards Glasgow City Council's £3.5 million capital costs for the new Gaelic secondary school.

⁷ Scottish Parliament Gaelic Officer, personal communication, 27 October 2004
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