

Gaelic Medium Education: What is it?

(from the website of the Bòrd na Gàidhlig at <http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk/home/>)

Gaelic Medium Education is available in Local Authorities across Scotland is seen as one of the most effective ways of achieving fluency in Gaelic.

Children from Gaelic speaking homes and non-Gaelic speaking homes attend Gaelic Medium Education.

Children in Gaelic Medium Education learn all areas of curriculum through Gaelic until the end of Primary 3 (although this may vary in some authorities). They are totally immersed in Gaelic. The teacher will carefully plan activities that support language learning.

Around the end of Primary 3 some English is introduced into the learning but the language of the classroom is always Gaelic.

Children tend to progress quickly in English reading as they have been learning reading skills in Gaelic which they can transfer into another language. By the time they leave Primary school they generally tend to be at the same level in English as children who go through English medium education and they are also fairly literate in Gaelic.

When children move to secondary school they will be taught at least Gaelic language. Some secondary schools offer a range of subjects through the medium of Gaelic up the qualification level.

Organizing the learning of Gaelic: what is needed?

Read about three organizations involved in revitalizing Gaelic through education (source: <http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk/fdp/en/community/main-gaelic-groups/>) . Find 3 aspects that have to be taken care of when introducing a minority language in education.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Bòrd na Gàidhlig was established as a public body by the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 which was commenced on 13th February 2006.

The legislation is designed to promote the use of Scottish Gaelic, secure the status of the language and ensure its long-term future. The Act sets out 3 main aims for Bòrd na Gàidhlig:

- to increase the number of persons who are able to use and understand the Gaelic language;
- to encourage the use and understanding of the Gaelic language; and
- to facilitate access, in Scotland and elsewhere, to the Gaelic language and Gaelic culture.

Clì Gàidhlig

Clì Gàidhlig is the Gaelic Learners Association. CLI was established to assist adult learners of Gaelic in becoming fluent Gaelic speakers. CLI run courses throughout the country, for different levels, with an emphasis on conversation. CLI also organise a range of specialist courses including Ùlpan courses (a fast and effective way to learn a language) as well as Gaelic Awareness courses.

LearnGaelic.net is a new website for anyone interested in learning Scottish Gaelic. It includes information and links to resources for learners at different ages and levels of fluency. The website also has loads of resources that parents can use with children – songs, rhymes, games etc.

[Stòrlann Nàiseanta Na Gàidhlig](#)

Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig create resources for Gaelic education.

They have a range of free interactive resources for families including [Gaelic4parents](#), where families can also access support for homework and other issues relating to Gaelic education. Gaelic4parents has a wealth of resources that parents can use with children.

[An Seotal](#) is a project managed by Stòrlann. It develops terminology for the teaching of a range of subjects in the secondary school through the medium of Gaelic.

Frequently asked questions (of parents) – how would YOU answer them?

1. Why Gaelic Education?
2. Is Gaelic an easy language to learn?
3. Should we speak Gaelic at home if our child is learning Gaelic at school?
4. How do we use the Gaelic language at home if only one parent can speak it?
5. How can I support my child if I don't speak Gaelic?
6. What if my child has Additional Support Needs?
7. Are there Gaelic activities available outwith school?

Check the answers given at <http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk/fdp/en/information/frequently-asked-questions/>

Motivations of adults / motivating adults to learn Gaelic

What motivations / arguments are given in this text from the website of the organisation Ùlpan that organizes Gaelic courses for adults? (<http://www.ulpan.co.uk/home/learning#b>) Which arguments do you find more, which less important/convincing?

Why learn Gaelic?

Gaelic is now officially an endangered language, owing to centuries of oppression and under-investment. To ensure the future of Gaelic, we need new speakers of the language.

There are now around 60,000 Gaelic speakers in Scotland, with many more who understand or who are learning the language.

Students decide to learn Gaelic for many different reasons, for example:

- an interest in languages
- wanting to help children or grandchildren who are learning
- a love of Gaelic music
- an interest in placenames

But there are many benefits to be had from learning Gaelic.

Employment

The recent boom in [Gaelic Medium Education](#) in schools means there are lots of job opportunities in Gaelic, both for teachers and school support staff.

Gaelic is also a valuable skill for employment in local authorities and other public bodies, as well as in the media, and in the arts and cultural sector.

Education

Through the Ùlpan course, students can acquire the language skills that would allow them to pursue Gaelic at a higher educational level.

Students may want to enroll in full-time courses at [Sabhal Mòr Ostaig](#), working towards a degree there or at another Scottish university. Gaelic can be combined with teaching, music, development, history and more.

Students who learn Gaelic will also find it easier to go on and learn more languages. It can even help keep the brain fit and less susceptible to conditions such as Alzheimers.

Culture

Scottish culture is rich in Gaelic folklore, literature and song. Many students are already interested or participating in Gaelic culture, and wish to improve their language skills to help them appreciate this.

Learning Gaelic can also give a new perspective to artists, writers, theatre-makers and musicians working in Scotland.

Heritage

Gaelic plays a part in the family history of many people in Scotland. It also plays a big part in the history of Scotland as a whole, and a knowledge of the language can bring this to life for students.

The history and culture of Gaelic-speaking Scotland is encoded in the language, and many students are keen to experience this before it is lost to them.

Motivating parents to send their children to Gaelic medium / bilingual schools

Watch two of the clips which were made to convince parents of the benefits of education in Gaelic. What benefits are mentioned? What possible fears of parents are addressed?

<http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk/fdp/en/in-the-home/learning-gaelic/>

<http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk/fdp/en/in-the-home/using-gaelic/>

"Gaelic medium education is available to all children. Why not give your child the opportunity to benefit from bilingualism?"