

I have now been working in Sgoil nan Loch and Sgoil na Pàirc for nearly a year and I find it hard to believe as time has just flown by. I previously worked in the Glasgow Gaelic School where I spent 16 years. When I started working there in 1999 there were 104 children, and I am pleased to say that when I left last year this number had grown to over 500 in the primary school with a 30/30 nursery which was full, and a growing secondary with over 200 young people. I found this progress to be extremely encouraging and when I moved home I wished to see the same story on the island. I am delighted to say that I am heartened by the growth in the Lochs area .

Gaelic medium began in Pàirc school in 2003 and in Balallan in 2001. It hasn't been without its trials and tribulations but it is now alive and kicking in Sgoil na Pàirc and since 2012 in Sgoil nan Loch, with the numbers set to increase further.

The Sgoil nan Loch numbers have doubled in three years from 11- 22 and now sitting at nearly a third of the school. That has meant we needed to recruit another teacher this year. The Gaelic Nursery numbers are also healthy, with 9 children and more due after Christmas. The Pàirc unit has also almost doubled, growing from four last year to seven this year with two Primary one children due in August 2016.

Ann Macdonald has been with Sgoil nan Loch since the unit opened in 2012. Sha has taught in a variety of schools such as Pàirc itself for two years, Dingwall Primary School and Airidhantium Primary School and she is knowledgeable in Gaelic Medium approaches. She has been and is presently involved in several Council education initiatives and leads on school development projects. She is presently in the Primary 1-2 class and ensures that true immersion strategies are employed throughout the curriculum.

Jenny Kearns is our new Gaelic teacher and she works in our Primary 3-7 class. She is a very skilled teacher and has already made invaluable links with other units throughout the country. She is involved in assisting the Stòrlann with resource development work alongside other Gaelic teachers, as well as being involved in transition projects with the Nicolson Institute.

In our Gaelic Nursery Sandra and Christine work hard to prepare the children for school. They are both experienced in the trade and this is evident in the children and their level of Gaelic, which they develop in a nurturing environment.

Laura Maclean who works in Pàirc is our probationer teacher. She trained in the Glasgow Gaelic School. She is full of enthusiasm and ideas and has already developed strong relationships with the staff and parents. Her hard work and positive attitude manifests in the learning and teaching of the children.

The two schools work closely together and there has been strong links forged over the years and Ann, Jenny and Laura are determined to continue these links. Apart from school development work and professional development they also try to ensure that the children meet regularly. The children enjoy talking about their learning through Skype and every opportunity to work together is exploited. This is important to the children as they see other children in other Gaelic Units who they will eventually meet up with in the Nicolson. It also allows the children to work in larger groups and with different personalities, facilitating their development and application of skills in different situations. The nursery and primary also have a robust relationship which ensures that children have a seamless transition from the nursery to the primary and the two departments work closely to ensure learning is connected.

I would like to invite everyone to come to our Open Day. I will provide a presentation myself about the school and you will get an opportunity to see around the school and talk to the teachers. If you have any questions about Gaelic medium education I will be pleased to answer them.

Patricia MacLeod, Headteacher Sgoil nan Loch & Sgoil na Pàirce, December 2015

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Open Day **Sgoil na Pàirce** Thursday 14th January 2016

Headteacher Presentation 9:30am

Classroom tour and opportunity to speak to the teachers 9:45am

Tea coffee and baking: 10:30am

Open Day **Sgoil nan Loch** Tuesday 19th January 2016

Headteacher Presentation 9:30am

Classroom tour and opportunity to speak to the teachers 9:45am

Tea coffee and baking: 10:30am