

## Submission from Fèisean nan Gàidheal

### Background

Prefacing this by stating we do not consider Gaelic to be a foreign language, we welcome the fact that it is one of the languages included in the 1 + 2 Approach to language learning proposed by the Scottish Government. Fèisean nan Gàidheal is, therefore, happy to offer this paper to members of the Scottish Parliament's European and External Relations Committee, to highlight new and innovative ways in which we could assist in the teaching of Gaelic language in Scottish schools and in reinforcing, to young people, the relevance of Gaelic to them and their identity.

Although its main remit is to support the work of local Fèisean, Fèisean nan Gàidheal has been involved for several years in delivering a range of arts and Gaelic language based education and community services. These include (hyperlinks will take you to further information):

- [Sgioba-G](#) language work to support Gaelic content of local Fèisean
- Blas Festival [Education programme](#)
- [Youth Music Initiative](#) work in schools
- [Drama work](#) in schools and an annual [Sgoil Shamhraidh Dràma](#)
- [Meanbh-Chuileag](#) drama tours
- [Còig Latha](#) residential Gaelic-medium event for teenagers
- Work with [Iomairtean Gàidhlig](#)
- Creative writing particularly in Gaelic [drama](#) and [song](#)

Fèisgoil is a new service that will pull together the various strands of education and community work Fèisean nan Gàidheal has been involved in and expansion of that work will include a new Gaelic teaching service. Fèisgoil will offer local authorities a valuable service that could help deliver non-certificated Gaelic teaching and areas of the [Curriculum for Excellence](#) relating to [Expressive Arts](#), [Health & Well-being](#) and [Literacy & Gàidhlig](#). The service could also assist local authorities and public bodies deliver commitments in their [Gaelic Language Plans](#).

While not all aspects of the service will be of interest in the context of the European and External Relations Committee's Inquiry on learning foreign languages in primary schools, we hope those aspects that deal with language teaching will.

### Fèisgoil: The Opportunities

Fèisgoil has been established in response to a number of opportunities created by Scottish Government priorities for Gaelic, the creative industries and Scottish Studies as well as priorities set out in the [National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17](#), [Creative Scotland's Corporate Plan](#) and the plans of local authorities and public bodies developed under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

The main areas that Fèisgoil could assist with include:

- Creative Scotland's new [Youth Arts Strategy](#) and [Talent Development](#) investment
- Expansion in Gaelic education required at all levels, supporting Gaelic medium education and strengthening areas for improvement identified in the 2011 HMle [report Gaelic Education: Building on the successes, addressing the barriers](#)
- Expansion in the use of Gaelic at community level through the organisation of Gaelic medium activities and events as part of [Iomairtean Gàidhlig](#) and independently of them

Tha Fèisean nan Gàidheal a' faotainn taic bho na buidhnean seo | Fèisean nan Gàidheal is supported by the following bodies



- Curriculum for Excellence requirement for young people to experience Scottish culture
- Unmet demand for the teaching of Gaelic in schools
- Delivery of elements of Scottish Government proposals for Scottish Studies
- Scottish Government proposals for learning additional languages (1+2)
- Implementation of some of the recommendations in the report by the Gaelic Excellence Group
- Comhairle nan Eilean Sear's plans to ensure Gaelic arts activities are available in all its schools through its Gaelic Arts Strategy
- Assistance required by bodies to deliver elements of their Gaelic Language Plans

### **Fèisgoil: The Service**

The services Fèisgoil could offer include:

- Programmes of Gaelic classes using *Ceumannan* and Gaelic Language in Primary Schools scheme (GLPS) resources
- *Blasad Gàidhlig* - A Taste of Gaelic for schools requiring an introduction to Gaelic language and public bodies that require Gaelic awareness training
- Drama workshops with Meanbh-Chuileag (Gaelic medium or Gaelic related)
- Drama programmes with Meanbh-Chuileag (Gaelic medium or Gaelic related)
- School tours with Meanbh-Chuileag personnel delivering commentary in Gaelic
- Gaelic language work at Fèisean with Sgioba-G
- Mini-Fèisean in schools and communities (see Annex 2 Case Study)
- Traditional Music classes in schools and communities
- Music and Songs delivered in Gaelic in schools (YMI) and Gaelic songs delivered in schools where Gaelic is not currently taught
- Gaelic cultural courses/tours for various areas
- Assistance with creative writing through drama work and bespoke courses
- In-service training face-to-face or online for existing Fèis tutors, new tutors and teachers

Fèisgoil can also offer other services such as

- Small-scale written Gaelic translations
- Simultaneous interpretation (Gaelic to English) at meetings and events
- Gaelic proof-reading
- Simple graphic design for Gaelic flyers and posters
- Tours in Gaelic of historical and heritage sites across Scotland

Fèisgoil will be delivered to a high standard, using tutors acquainted with teaching in the informal and formal education sectors. Over the years, many tutors have been trained to teach music and do so in Fèisean, in schools through the Youth Music Initiative, as well as in other situations.

While the use of non GTC-registered teachers in schools was not encouraged in the past, Curriculum for Excellence encourages the engagement of people from communities and outwith schools to enhance the educational experience for young people. The Youth Music Initiative has proved that good quality educational outcomes can be achieved by cooperation between classroom teachers and tutors delivering specific programmes of work that enhance pupils' experiences.

In the new strand to our work – the teaching of Gaelic - one of the main advantages of the Fèisgoil service is that local authorities could deliver Gaelic classes in a very cost-effective manner. They would not, for example, have to train their own teachers with the associated costs of obtaining cover for them while they undergo training. Fèisgoil tutors will be trained to the same standard as classroom teachers are to deliver GLPS. Funding available for GLPS could, therefore, be used entirely for delivery and, since the classroom teachers would have to

be present during lessons, they could learn along with the pupils and continue with some Gaelic after a series of Fèisgoil classes ends.

As well as utilising the skills already available through our tutor pool, in order to deliver the new Gaelic teaching strand, Fèisgoil will train tutors in language teaching, transferring skills already employed in the teaching of music, but ensuring that they are sufficiently acquainted with existing resources, such as Ceumannan and those available for GLPS, which would be used in the first instance. Additional resources have been created by Fèisean nan Gàidheal for use in our Sgioba-G activities, and others would be prepared according to needs identified as the service progresses.

In the first instance, Fèisgoil would utilise Fèisean nan Gàidheal staff and tutors with whom we work regularly. We would organise appropriate tutors as required to deliver programmes of work in specific geographical areas. In the same way that the local Fèisean organise YMI visits to all schools in Highland we will, where practical, work with individual Fèisean that can help deliver the service, both to cover geographical areas more easily and to ensure that the Fèisean themselves are strengthened as a result of Fèisgoil. We will also collaborate with other Gaelic and arts organisations that could assist us in delivering Fèisgoil services.

The Fèisgoil service will be delivered through a combination of work which Fèisean nan Gàidheal is already funded to deliver through existing agreements with local authorities and organisations such as Creative Scotland, HIE and Bòrd na Gàidhlig and by engaging in new contracts with those and other bodies that could use Fèisgoil to deliver their own priorities. In some cases, programmes of work could be co-funded, offering leverage for funding Fèisean nan Gàidheal already has in place. In other cases it would be for the commissioning body to buy services from Fèisgoil on a contract basis.

Funding for the Fèisgoil services may be available from other bodies, and could be applied for by the commissioning body or individual schools. For example, Creative Scotland has a Youth Music Initiative Investment Programme in addition to the funding given to local authorities through a formula. Creative Scotland also has funding for drama work. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has a specific fund - GLAIF - to help organisations deliver elements of Gaelic Language Plans. The Scottish Government gives local authorities funding to support Gaelic education through its Scheme of Specific Grants for Gaelic Education and is making new funding available for the delivery of language learning through its 1+2 proposals. There may also be new funds available for the proposed roll out of Scottish Studies, elements of which Fèisgoil could deliver. Individual schools could access funding such as Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Taic Freumhan Coimhearsnachd or Awards for All (usually through Parent Council, Comunn nam Pàrant or Parent & Teacher Groups) and Fèisean nan Gàidheal staff would be happy to assist applicants putting together Fèisgoil projects.

### **Fèisgoil: Outcomes**

Fèisgoil can deliver a number of outcomes that will assist public bodies and local authorities engaging the service. These are many and varied but some of the more important outcomes will include:

<b>Outcomes for commissioning bodies</b>	<b>Wider outcomes</b>
Delivery of development work in Gaelic education	Increased income to Fèisean nan Gàidheal which will be reinvested in local Fèisean to develop their work
Delivery of elements of the Curriculum for Excellence particularly in areas of the Expressive Arts, Literacy & Gàidhlig and	Increase in employment opportunities for music and Gaelic tutors

Health & Well-being	
Contributing towards the outcomes required of the National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17	Capacity building to deliver an increase in the use of Gaelic
Fulfillment of commitments in individual Gaelic Language Plans, arts strategies and Single Outcome Agreements	Contributing towards an increase in the number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland
Strengthening Communities	Strengthening Communities
Delivery of elements of Scottish Studies	Economic benefits from increased employment and further work
Delivery of Gaelic within the Scottish Government 1+2 language framework	Further work created in the wider creative industries and for service providers in the areas where activity takes place

### **Fèisean nan Gàidheal: Background**

From its base in the Highlands, Fèisean nan Gàidheal – and the Fèis movement - has become an important part of Scottish cultural life. Sustained investment in grassroots activity run largely by volunteers, with appropriate professional assistance from a supportive development body, has proved to be successful. As evidenced in several independent research projects, Fèisean nan Gàidheal is highly regarded as an example of good practice in the development of traditional music, Gaelic song, Gaelic drama, traditional dance and Gaelic language.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal was established in 1991, and support of local Fèisean remains at the core of the organisation's activities. Investment in Fèisean nan Gàidheal should be regarded as investment in the cultural activities of at least 45 communities across Scotland.

As a social enterprise, Fèisean nan Gàidheal's range of functions has expanded over the past few years to enable it to offer key services that are at the heart of traditional music and Gaelic language development in Scotland on a contract delivery model. This growth has been made possible through the invaluable support of Fèis volunteers in communities the length and breadth of the country, a committed team of staff and the building up of successful partnerships with key agencies including the Scottish Arts Council and Creative Scotland, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, The Highland Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Argyll & Bute Council.

The social, educational, linguistic and economic outcomes of the work of Fèisean nan Gàidheal has been more widely recognised in the last decade, with research confirming positive impacts in terms of individual and community confidence, skills development, job creation and equality of access.

Fèisean now employ hundreds of musicians and singers on a regular basis to teach in the community and in schools. Fèisean have played a key part in producing a large number of excellent performers and players, some of whom are now in the top flight of Scottish musicians, making their living from performing and teaching Scottish traditional music and Gaelic song across the globe and producing content that helps to fill the schedules of radio and television programmes as well as contributing to the earnings of recording studios and record companies. Fèisean also play an important part in supporting the Gaelic language skills of young people, and engendering positive attitudes towards the language among participants, with many having gone on to fluency in Gaelic. The current sense of vibrancy in both the traditional music scene and Gaelic language development in Scotland is, in no small measure, due to the success of the Fèis movement.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal directly employs 16 people (14.6 FTEs) and according to the 2010 Steve Westbrook *Economic and Social Impacts of the Fèisean*, commissioned by HIE, the total

employment generated directly and indirectly by the Fèisean, equated to around 60 FTEs, contributing over £2m to the economy.

That report pointed to Fèisean nan Gàidheal being at the forefront of Gaelic arts development, with research having shown that participation not only increases skills in young people but also self-esteem and a sense of identity. At a time of economic uncertainty it is important for people to continue their involvement in recreation and things that will raise their spirits. Volunteers have often reported gaining transferable skills from having been involved in organising and running Fèisean.

At the time that report was compiled the Scottish Government Economic Strategy identified five challenges facing Scotland. The principal ways in which the Fèis movement contributes to the Government's Economic Strategy are through:

- Generating output of well over £2 million per year. The individual Fèisean spent £1.1 million in 2008 and Fèisean nan Gàidheal's turnover in 2008-09 was £1.4 million.
- Equipping young people with the skills and practical experience to take up careers in the creative industries, one of Scotland's target sectors for growth in output, productivity, and exports.
- Increasing participation in the labour force through providing full and part time work opportunities, often in areas with limited employment options.
- Improving equity across Scotland through the quality of work and tuition in remote and rural communities, with a relatively high impact in fragile areas within the Highlands and Islands.
- Encouraging population retention and growth in small and remote communities through providing social activities (especially for young people), social and cultural interaction, and a greater understanding of the Gaelic and cultural heritage of people's home areas. Return visits by tutors, performers, and family members during Fèisean weeks and for related special events encourage the retention of links and future return migration, as evidenced in various studies.

Recent research by the Scottish Government, in the Household Survey, shows that participation in events like Fèisean is at a similar or higher level in Scotland to Opera or Ballet. Given the disparity in the investment in the traditional arts compared to the National Companies, this is an impressive finding and reconfirms a survey carried out by NFO/System 3 for The Herald which showed that people in Scotland would rather that traditional music was supported from the public purse by a far bigger percentage than the other forms of music put together. It showed that, nationally, 31% of people in Scotland felt that traditional music should be publicly funded, compared to only 4% for classical music and 2% for opera. In the Highlands & Islands, support for traditional music rose to 57%, with 4% for classical, and 3% for opera.

The map at Annex 1 shows the areas where activities are organised by Fèisean nan Gàidheal and our Fèisean but does not take into account the actual number of activities. For example, each Fèis generates multiple tuition opportunities as well as performances. YMI in Highland equates to 16 sessions in each school, and so on. Our work contributes considerably to the creative industries and we currently engage with around 32,000 people annually.

The aim of Fèisean nan Gàidheal is to support opportunities for new generations to access Gaelic language and cultural skills development in communities across Scotland, as an important part of our nation's vibrant and inclusive cultural identity. Our objectives are to:

1. Provide support to strengthen the work of community led Fèisean across Scotland, promoting equality of access, safe working practices and community cohesion.
2. Provide support across the Fèis movement to support the learning and usage of the Gaelic language, and to work with partners in the delivery of the National Plan for Gaelic.

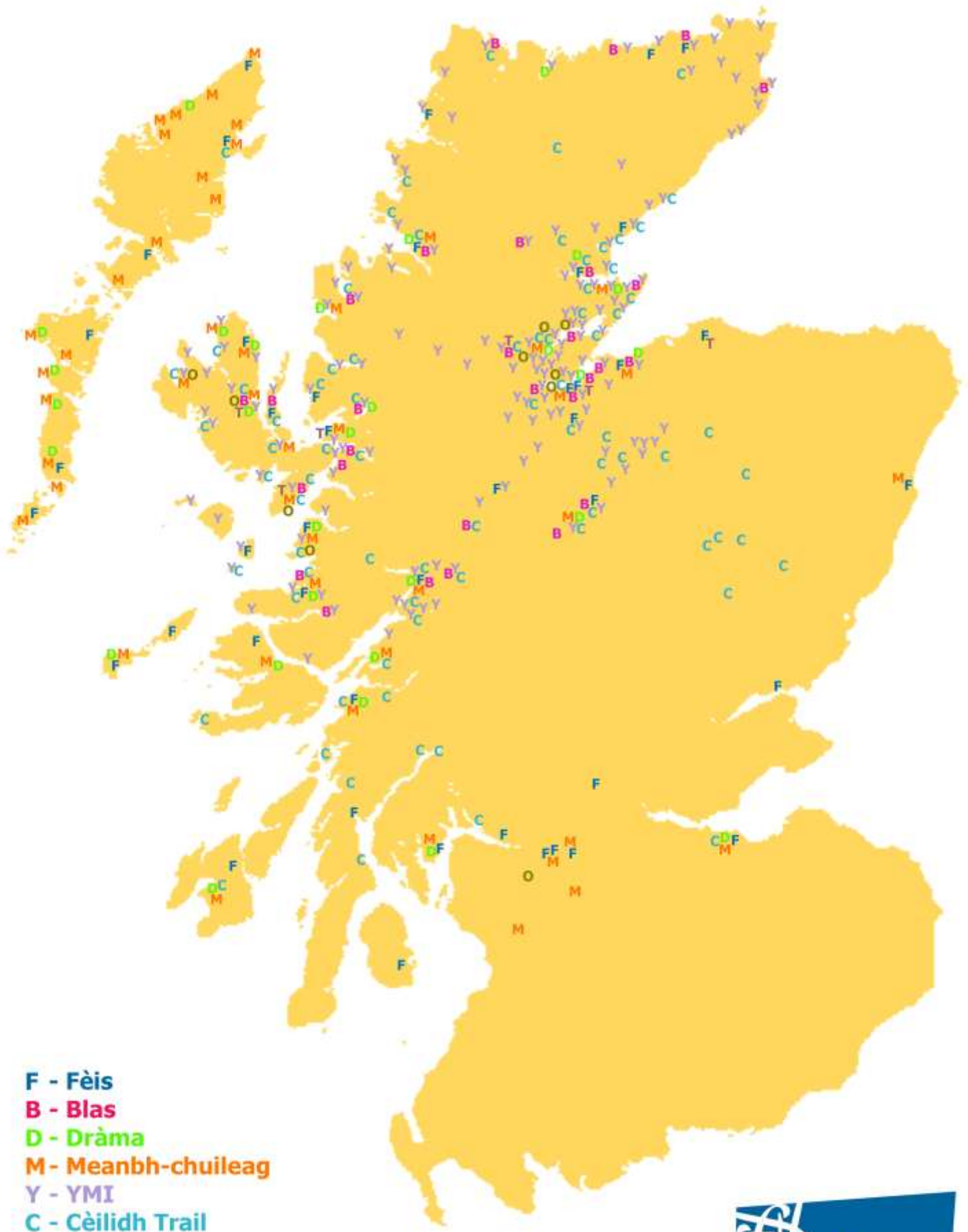
3. To work in partnership with the statutory education sector to provide Scotland's young people with greater access to Gaelic language and culture as an important part of personal skills development, cultural identity and citizenship.
4. To work within the context of local and national policies to assist partners in the delivery of high quality public services, through contracts and service level agreements.
5. To develop and support training opportunities within the Fèis movement in support of personal skills development and the strengthening of Scotland's cultural infrastructure.
6. To act as an advocate for the Fèis movement, Gaelic language and culture and Scottish cultural identity by creating and maintaining links between Fèisean, other organisations and international partners.

### **Further information**

We are content for this submission to be made public.

For further information, or to discuss any aspect of this submission, please contact Arthur Cormack, Fèisean nan Gàidheal's Chief Executive, on 01478 613355 or [arthur@feisean.org](mailto:arthur@feisean.org).

Annex 1 Map showing location of Fèisean nan Gàidheal activities



- F - Fèis**
- B - Blas**
- D - Dràma**
- M - Meanbh-chuileag**
- Y - YMI**
- C - Cèilidh Trail**
- T - Training**
- O - Other**



Annex 2 Case Study: Meanbh-Fhèis @ Portree High School [\[view video\]](#)

A project that supports Curriculum for Excellence Gaelic outcomes in S1

- Delivered in cooperation with Fèisean nan Gàidheal with funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig (Taic Freumhan Coimhearsnachd raised by Portree High School).
- One day mini-Fèis in the school for all first year pupils which includes Fèis classes in the morning and a concert, featuring pupils and Fèis tutors, in the afternoon.
- Separate offered for fluent speakers (through the medium of Gaelic) and learners.
- Tutors use Gaelic in accordance with the ability of the pupils.
- Social, cultural awareness and musical skills are enhanced through the opportunity to try different musical disciplines: for example tin whistle, rhythm, singing as well as step-dance, Gaelic drama and art. Shinty could also be accommodated in the programme.
- Evaluation sheets completed by the pupils afterwards.



	Activity	Outcome	Evaluation	Evidence
1.	Four sessions in the morning with different activities: tin whistle, singing, drama and step-dance for example, allowing pupils to participate in various cultural activities to raise awareness of, and interest in, their own culture and that	<p><b>GAI 3-02a, LIT 3-02a, LIT 3-10a, EXA 3-11a</b> I can respond to the experience of dance by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work.</p> <p><b>EXA 3-14a</b> Having developed ideas from a range of stimuli, I can</p>		



<p><b>of others and to encourage further participation.</b></p>	<p>contribute to devising, rehearsing and presenting drama or scripts.</p> <p><b>EXA 3-15a</b> I can respond to the experience of drama by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work.</p> <p><b>EXA 3-16a</b> I can sing and/or play music from a range of styles and cultures and perform my chosen music confidently using performance directions, musical notation and/or playing by ear.</p> <p><b>HWB 3-04a</b> I understand that my feelings and reactions can change depending upon what is happening within and around me. This helps me to understand my own behaviour and the way others behave.</p> <p><b>HWB 3-10a</b> I recognise that each individual has a unique blend of abilities and needs. I contribute to making my school community one which values individuals equally and is a welcoming place for all.</p> <p><b>HWB 3-11a</b> I make full use of and value the opportunities I am given to improve and manage my learning and, in turn, I can help to encourage learning and confidence in others.</p> <p><b>HWB 3-14a</b> I value the opportunities I am given to make friends and be part of a group in a range of situations.</p> <p><b>HWB 3-19a</b> I am developing the skills and attributes which I will need for learning, life and work. I am gaining understanding of the</p>		
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		relevance of my current learning to future opportunities. This is helping me to make informed choices about my life and learning.		
2.	<b>Afternoon concert with performances by school pupils and Fèis tutors. An opportunity to experience music, drama and song and to gain enjoyment from things such as Gaelic Bingo, engaging in a fun way with the language (with interesting prizes!), or to dance along with the tutors.</b>	<p><b>LIT 3-01a, LIT 3-02a, EXA 3-01a</b> I have used the skills I have developed in the expressive arts to contribute to a public presentation/performance.</p> <p><b>EXA 3-01b</b> I have experienced the energy and excitement of being part of an audience for other people’s presentations/performances.</p> <p><b>EXA 3-19a</b> I have listened to a range of music and can identify features and concepts. I can give constructive comments on my own and others’ work, including the work of professionals.</p> <p><b>HWB 3-20a</b> I am investigating different careers/occupations, ways of working, and learning and training paths. I am gaining experience that helps me recognise the relevance of my learning, skills and interests to my future life.</p>		
3.	<b>Evaluation forms completed after the event are useful to the pupils in assessing how they enjoyed the activities and how they benefitted from them. The findings are also useful to the teachers and Fèis tutors in developing the delivery of future events.</b>	<b>LIT 3-07a</b>	<b>Evaluation as to how the event went and what each pupil gained from the experiences on offer</b>	<b>Evaluation forms and summary of findings</b>

- **It is recommended that this event take place close to the end of a term or the school year. The event provides an opportunity to celebrate work in Gaelic and raises the profile of the language in the school and of Gaelic culture among all pupils.**

- **Photographs and videos should form a record of each event and be available on school and Fèisean nan Gàidheal websites**