

# Bun Sgoil Achadh na Creige.



Fàilte gu  
Prìomh a h- Aon.

## Aims



**We aim to work in partnership with parents/carers and children in Rockfield to :**

- Provide a happy, safe and nurturing environment.
- To encourage positive relationships and respect for self and others through the use of positive behaviour reinforcement strategies.
- Develop self esteem through an ethos of celebration of achievements and where each child's contribution is valued.
- Provide opportunities to explore and discover through active learning.
- Develop necessary skills to prepare our children for the future and for life-long learning.



We recognise the importance of continuity of children's learning and experiences to enable them to build on prior learning and achievement. To promote this and foster continuity of learning all of our new Primary 1 children have been involved in our 'Teddy Transition Project' and Pre School Induction Visits. Children who attended Rockfield Pre 5 and Sgoil Araich have also visited the Primary 1 classes regularly in the last two terms at school. These meetings have provided opportunities for your child to get to know the staff and familiarise themselves with the school.



# Fáilte gu Bun Sgoil Achadh na Creige!

## Gaelic-medium Education - Information for Parents

Welcome to Rockfield's Gaelic Primary Classes!

The first years of education are an exciting challenge for children, as they learn to read, write and count. Children who attend the Gaelic-medium classes in Nursery and Primary School experience these new challenges through the medium of Gaelic.

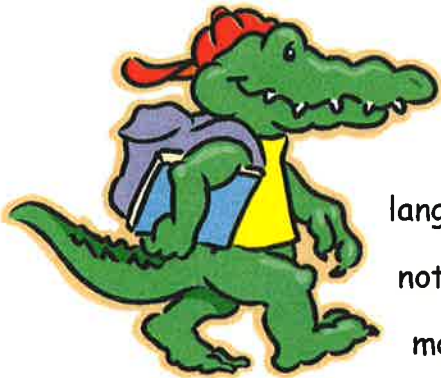
This booklet contains information about the Gaelic Primary Classes in Rockfield School. We hope it answers most of the questions, which you might have about your child's education.

Remember: if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us. We know that this is a new experience, not just for the children, but for their families as well. We are very approachable and pride ourselves on our strong relationship with our parent body.

We plan to hold 'end of topic' presentations for parents during the school year. This will give the children and staff a chance to show you what they are learning. We will also be holding Parents' Evenings when you can come along and discuss progress with the staff of the Gaelic classes.

We look forward to working with you in order to make these first years of your child's Primary Education happy, rewarding and profitable. With your help, your child can successfully meet this exciting new challenge.

### Moving from Nursery to Primary school



If your child has already attended the Sgoil Àraich at Rockfield School, their acquisition of the Gaelic language will be well underway. However, the following notes, which explain how Gaelic-medium teaching works, may be of interest to you.

### What is 'Gaelic-Medium Education'?

All the subjects that comprise the Primary School Curriculum are presented using the Gaelic language rather than English.

The children are "immersed" in the Gaelic language, in the same way most of them were immersed in English as babies. As parents, you did not so much "teach" your child English as offer them models of how to use the language. Through listening to you, they learned how to ask for things, to name things, to attract attention, and so on - all without explanation. This is the process used in the primary school, through the medium of Gaelic wherever possible.



Children absorb this new language quite naturally, just like the millions of bilingual children throughout the world. Of course, to begin with, your child will probably need to speak in English on some occasions, and the staff will respond - but primarily in Gaelic, unless it is a real emergency.

As in the nursery school, the process starts at the school door each morning, when the children are welcomed and taken off to their new day's activities. As time passes, each child acquires more and more Gaelic vocabulary and confidence in their use of the language. Once the process is under way, it will continue to flourish as they move through Primary School.

Recently there have been some very informative research findings published by Edinburgh University on the longer-term effect of Gaelic Medium Education. The full report is available on the Bòrd na Gàidhlig website at [www.gaidhlig.org.uk](http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk) should you wish to read it.

### Do parents have to be able to speak Gaelic?

Most of the children currently in the Gaelic classes do not have Gaelic at home as a first language. However, there is help and support available to parents when doing homework with your child, reading the Gaelic reading scheme or consolidating Gaelic phonics at home. The [www.gaelic4parents.com](http://www.gaelic4parents.com) website is accessible to all parents and offers a wealth of support. There is 'live' help available for homework from 5.30pm - 7.30pm from Monday to Thursday each week. As of August 2011, all parents will be able to self-register for the forum within the site and will not require a password from the school.



We can provide you with a list of useful phrases, vocabulary and every-day language, also recorded on a CD, to encourage you to use Gaelic at home.

There are Gaelic language courses for adults within the community and as distance learning with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (Gaelic College of the University of the Highlands and Islands) should you wish to develop your skills further.

### Settling in to Primary 1.

The teacher uses certain techniques and activities to help your child get used to hearing and speaking Gaelic all the time. For example:



**Active learning:** Whenever possible, the teacher will match what she is saying to a specific action. That way, your child can both see and hear what the teacher means. Typical activities would be playing with water and sand, working with puppets and dolls, linking colours to objects, role-play, songs and so on.

**Repetition:** The teacher will use certain phrases over and over so that the children get used to them and the context in which they are used. Children will be encouraged to repeat these words and phrases.

**Praising and encouraging:** Every effort made to show understanding and to speak back will be encouraged. Attempts to communicate will be praised.

**Mistakes will not be criticised:** Instead, children will simply be asked to repeat the correct way of saying something (just like you did when they were growing up).

**Fun activities:** Children learn best when they are enjoying themselves, so every effort is made to offer them a range of fun activities such as songs, rhymes, language games, picture books, board games etc.

## A Curriculum for Excellence.

The curriculum is the plan which ensures that every area of educational development is covered systematically. The aim is to offer the child as many learning experiences as possible. The curriculum follows a set of national guidelines and differs only from that followed by English-



speaking children in that it is designed to offer a wide range of opportunities to explore the Gaelic language.

**Speaking and Listening** is at the heart of Gaelic

Medium Education as children must be able to

vocalise their thoughts before they can write them, or fully comprehend texts.

## **A Typical Day.**

"Circle Time": At the start of each day, the children and the teacher sit together and talk about a whole range of things: what day of the week it is, what the weather is like, what they did at home the previous evening, what they are going to do during the day, and anything else that sparks discussion.

Our children use a carefully structured reading scheme, Heinemann Storyworlds, which includes non-fiction texts known as Discovery Worlds in addition to a range of fiction. The books in the scheme build up the children's knowledge of the structure of the Gaelic language from the earliest level. The children start by recognising individual words within the texts. These words will go home in boxes as reading homework. As the scheme progresses, so does the volume of text experienced by the children. Story-telling is particularly popular, so there is a daily session

where children are also encouraged to talk about the book they are currently reading.

In the early stages, the children practise letter shapes and drawing in order to ensure good pencil control before they move on to formal writing. The formation of letters is very closely linked to the Phonics Scheme, Facal 's Fuaim. The children cover two new sounds per week and learn how to correctly form these as part of their literacy learning.

Children are given plenty of opportunities to read and write in a variety of ways. In Rockfield School everyone has a chance to make up their own books during our annual 'book project'.



**Numeracy and Mathematics:** The emphasis is on encountering numbers and mathematical activities in a fun and practical way, often through structured activities where the children work with cubes, measure with rods, play with water etc. They learn a lot of basic concepts without even realising it. As in reading, the classes follow an established national scheme, New Scottish Heinemann adapted to the Gaelic context. The emphasis is on active learning in keeping with the ethos of a Curriculum for Excellence.



**Physical Education:** teachers emphasise the importance of looking after the body and keeping fit. Children acquire gymnastic skills, hand / eye co-ordination through ball games and learn to participate in track and team events. Movement and dance provide an opportunity for self-expression.



**Interdisciplinary topics, including Science:** Most of the early work is explored through topics such as the seashore, pets, transport and shopping. This may involve trips out of school, talks from visiting specialists, as well as a great deal of practical work (like planting seeds and looking after plants). Once again, the children are learning without even noticing. Interdisciplinary topics, meaning that a range of curricular areas is included in each child's learning, are particularly useful in developing new and relevant vocabulary to discuss everyday things.

The teacher uses **drama** lessons to develop more language activities. Memory games like "I went to the shop and bought..." help children practise their vocabulary for food and drink, for example. They quite naturally learn how to handle some of the more complicated forms of the verbs as well. Other games like a Gaelic version of "hokey - cokey" permit practice of the language for parts of the body. Children particularly enjoy activities where they have to move round the room as though they were different kinds of animals. Drama offers a very valuable way of developing use of the language within carefully structured situations whilst allowing children to act things out in their own individual way.

**Music:** Every opportunity is taken to pass on traditional songs and



rhymes known throughout the Gaelic world, whilst also introducing the children to modern song and music-making.

**Religious and moral education:** All children join in whole school, Campus and infant assemblies. Special arrangements have been made for Catholic children to join St. Columba's Catholic Primary School for Mass and Sacramental Preparation.

**Health and Wellbeing:** Health Education, along with literacy and numeracy, are permeating themes of a Curriculum for Excellence. The social, emotional and physical health of children is supported through a range of activities throughout their primary career.

**Art:** There are many opportunities for the children to develop their



artistic talents through use of different techniques and materials. The results of their handiwork enliven every wall surface in and around the Gaelic classes and the rest of the school.

**In conclusion...**

**We are delighted to welcome your family to the Gaelic Classes in Rockfield. Please do not hesitate to speak to me or your child's teacher at any time should you have a concern or require some support with your child's learning.**

**Catriona Garvin**

**(Principal Teacher)**