

**Comann Nam Pàrant Response to Full Assessment
Education (Scotland) Act 2016
Requested by East Renfrewshire Council**

The information provided by the local authority relating to the request

Statutory Guidance is that, at the stage of full assessment, statutory consultees should be given details of the request. The information we received on the request had no detail other than that the request was for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) from August 2023.

The Initial Assessment

Statutory Guidance is that statutory consultees should be given details of “any information which the education authority was required to take into account during the initial assessment about the demand for GMPE in the GMPE assessment area.”

The information on the initial assessment given to consultees was as follows, “In response to this request, an initial assessment was undertaken in November with the Education Department contacting the parent who made the request and those families who supported the request to determine demand and identify the child’s school year group.”

We have not been given any information on other factors listed in Statutory Guidance (1.28 and 1.29) to which an education authority must consider as part of the initial assessment so are unable to comment on these factors.

The Potential need for GMPE in East Renfrewshire

It is the opinion of Comann nam Pàrant that the initial assessment has clearly identified the need for GMPE in East Renfrewshire.

Location of provision

We agree with the decision to designate the whole authority area as the GMPE assessment area. However, when deciding on location of provision the residency of families who have requested GMPE must be taken into consideration. A local authority has an obligation to promote and support GME and provision which is accessible and attractive to families will make it easier for the authority to fulfil this obligation and achieve growth in GME. Given the large area and poor road infrastructure in more rural parts of East Renfrewshire, provision should be centrally located. Gaelic medium education is based on a 3-18 curriculum, and we recommend that the local authority consult with parents to establish a cohesive 3-18 structure for GME.

Information relating to the demand for GMPE in the area of the authority from parents of children who are under school age and have not commenced attendance at a primary school

Since the request was submitted Comann nam Pàrant have identified a further 5 children whose parents are interested in GMPE. This response from families is the result of minimal promotion via our social media and it is likely that if the local authority were to undertake a more robust assessment of demand that more families would be identified.

The extent to which children resident in the area of an education authority adjacent to the area of the education authority in question could access GMPE in the GMPE assessment area

Families from East Renfrewshire have been able for many years to access Gaelic medium education by submitting a placing request to Glasgow City Council. Due to oversubscription within Glasgow, this is no longer an option but if provision is established, to help meet the continuing high demand in Glasgow, it would be reasonable if families from Glasgow could access provision in East Renfrewshire if places were available.

The extent to which children resident in the GMPE assessment area could access GMPE in the area of an adjacent education authority

The two adjacent authorities to East Renfrewshire with GME provision are Glasgow and South Lanarkshire. Due to oversubscription for GME within Glasgow this is longer an option for families from East Renfrewshire. South Lanarkshire is the only other option, and this will be discounted by most parents for the following reasons:

- Distance and travel time – one parent with a child currently attending provision in South Lanarkshire has said her daughter’s travel time can be over 1.5 hours per day. Many parents would not regard this length of travel time as acceptable.
- Geography –working parents most probably travel to work in the opposite direction from South Lanarkshire, meaning that in an emergency they would be even further away from their child.
- Transport is not provided for after-school activities, so opportunities are limited for pupils to engage in these extra-curricular activities.

Conclusion

East Renfrewshire’s current Gaelic Language Plan includes a commitment to “actively seek and promote opportunities for children and young people from 3-18 to learn Gaelic in our schools and centres.” This parental request for GMPE, and subsequent finding on initial assessment that there is potential demand for GMPE in the local authority area, provides an opportunity for the council to fulfil this commitment in their Gaelic plan by making provision for Gaelic medium education within the authority.

We have no doubt that once provision is established that demand will increase for Gaelic medium education in East Renfrewshire. We would be happy to work with East Renfrewshire Council in further promotion of provision to families.

We look forward to seeing provision established in 2023, or in 2022 if the council finds that there is demand for the start of the next school year.

M Wentworth
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