COMHAIRLE na GÀIDHEALTACHD

PROPOSAL TO REORGANISE EDUCATION PROVISION IN THURSO

Comann nam Pàrant is the national parental organisation who represent the views of families in Gaelic medium education. We have restricted our comments on the proposal to points relevant to Gaelic education.

The proposal paper from the council includes the following:

- *discontinue Gaelic Medium Education at Mount Pleasant Primary School and*
- *provide Gaelic Medium Education provision associated with the new primary school*

Educational Benefits of this proposal

Comann mam Pàrant welcome any development which will strengthen Gaelic medium education in Thurso. In 2013 GME was introduced in Caithness with 7 pupils starting P1 at Mount Pleasant primary and 16 children recorded as attending sgoil-àraich. The number of pupils in GMPE rose to 23 in 2019 but since then there has been a steady decline with 8 pupils currently in GMPE. There have undoubtedly been challenges in delivery of GME in Thurso but the very small number of pupils in GME is disappointing after 13 years of provision. We are unsure what the current status of the Gaelic medium nursery is but there are no pupils recorded as attending Gaelic early years provision in Mount Pleasant.

The consultation paper states "*The proposal also provides the opportunity to strengthen Gaelic Medium Education through co-location within a single campus, supporting continuity of immersion, improved transition into secondary Gaelic provision, and a more coherent 3–18 learner pathway, subject to the outcome of consultation*" but gives no further explanation as to the rationale for moving the Gaelic provision out of Mount Pleasant.

We hope that any such move would be an opportunity to enhance and promote Gaelic provision. As the proposal refers to a coherent 3-18 learner pathway, we assume that there will be Gaelic medium nursery provision on the campus, primary education and an expansion of the offer at secondary.

We do have some concerns regarding the delivery of Gaelic immersion with a small Gaelic medium class in such a large campus but expect that measures will be put in place both to protect immersion and ensure a bilingual ethos throughout the campus.

M Wentworth
30.09.26