

Douglas Hutchison
Executive Director of Education
Glasgow City Council

9 Lùnastal 2022

Dear Mr Hutchison

Request for Gaelic medium primary education (GMPE) to Glasgow City Council 2022.

As you will be aware Comann nam Pàrant, as a statutory consultee, submitted views on this request for GMPE as part of the Glasgow City council's full assessment. In line with the other statutory consultees who responded, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Education Scotland, our view was that provision should be made for the families who had requested it. We were, therefore, extremely disappointed that despite the views of the statutory consultees, and the council's acceptance of the unmet demand for GMPE, the request was refused. There are a number of comments that we would like to make in response to this decision.

Point 1.58 of Statutory Guidance states "The education authority must decide to secure provision of GMPE in the GMPE assessment area unless, having regard to the list of mandatory matters, it would be unreasonable to do so. This creates an effective entitlement to GMPE where there is evidence of reasonable demand and no fundamental obstacle to securing such provision. This sets a high bar for an education authority that requires it to justify a decision not to secure the provision of GMPE (particularly as the nature and form of the delivery of GMPE is for the education authority to determine)."

For the following reasons we do not agree with the council's conclusion that it would be unreasonable to provide places in GMPE for all the families who have requested a place:

- There are spaces currently available in existing primary provision in the city.
- Although the council give statistics in the response on teachers, there is no information on whether granting the request would actually lead to a requirement for any additional staff.
- The cost of an additional primary school is referred to, but with no explanation given as to why this is relevant to the request. The pupils who are currently without a space in GMPE could have been accommodated within the existing provision. The council already have plans for additional new provision which will proceed irrespective of the outcome of this request.
- Lack of space in secondary is referenced as a reason for refusing primary provision. Given that allowing all pupils access in this academic year would allow the Council a full seven years to ensure an increase to secondary provision, it seems unreasonable to penalise families this year for the Council's failure to plan appropriately for GMPE. We understand that there is often dropout between primary and secondary, meaning additional availability at secondary. As far as we are aware there has been no discussion with parents regarding their expectations for secondary.

We also note from the response that there is no reference to the Equality and Human Rights assessment as recommended by Education Scotland.

It is deeply disappointing that Glasgow City Council who have such a good track record on supporting GME should be the first local authority to refuse a request that met the requirements of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

We have spoken at length with parents regarding their experience of the process of applying for a place for their child in GME within Glasgow. This has been described to us as a “horrible and stressful process”. An example of the dilemma faced by parents is that, once rejected for GME, in order to submit a placing request for an English medium school, they are forced to remove their name from the waiting list for GME. This results in these families being unable to keep their child’s name on the waiting list for GME in the hope of receiving a school place closer to the start of term. We do not believe that the current application system, designed for EME, is fit for purpose for GME. In reality, it is discriminating against those applying for GME. These children who have been refused a place in GMPE, have been in Gaelic pre-school for two years and have now lost the opportunity to become fluent speakers of Gaelic. Additionally, they have been lost to the Gaelic community, something that might be considered to only have a minor impact, but which has a disproportionately huge impact in a minority language situation.

There has been a suggestion that children who are unable to secure provision in Glasgow could access provision in neighbouring authorities as an interim arrangement, but no information has been given on what support with transport will be made available. As you will be aware, in all areas where children access GMPE outwith their own authority, they are supported with transport by their own local authority. We feel this would be the least that the local authority could provide in the current situation and would be grateful if you could provide confirmation on this for parents.

Can you please advise how Glasgow plan to increase access to learning Gaelic as part of the 1+2 initiative? This would at least allow those children who have had to move from Gaelic pre-school to English education to continue to interact with Gaelic within their school day.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd

Magaidh Wentworth
Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta)

Cc: Jim Whannel, Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Joan C Esson HMI, Foghlam Alba