

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE21 June 2017Report by Director of EducationGAELIC MEDIUM EDUCATION: OUTCOME OF A REQUEST FOR AN ASSESSMENT**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To inform elected members of the outcome of a request for an assessment of the demand for Gaelic Medium Primary Education in East Renfrewshire.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to note the contents of the report and the outcome of the initial assessment.

BACKGROUND

3. Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) takes the form of immersion, i.e. children experience all their learning in the early years of primary school (Pr. 1 - 3) through the Gaelic language. Thereafter, immersion continues but in Pr. 4 – 7 English is introduced, while Gaelic remains the predominant language of the classroom.

4. At present East Renfrewshire Council does not make such a provision but supports families who wish such an experience for their children, and are successful in being granted a placing request to schools in neighbouring local authorities, through provision of transport. We do likewise for children or young people who wish to access specialist provision such as the School of dance in Knightswood Secondary in Glasgow.

5. The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 places a duty on education authorities to promote and support Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) and establishes a process by which parents can request Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) from their education authority.

6. Statutory guidance, issued by the Bòrd na Gàidhlig came into force on 1 February 2017, Part 1 of which sets out the steps education authorities must take to assess demand on receipt of a request for GME.

7. Under the legislation and statutory guidance parents of children under school age, and who have not yet started to attend a primary school, have the right to request an assessment of the need for GMPE from the education authority in whose area their child lives. Any request must also set out or be accompanied by evidence of demand for GMPE from parents of other children resident in the same education authority area and who are in the same year group as the specified child. An initial assessment should be completed within a 6 week window; a full assessment allows 10 weeks for the local authority to undertake and report on the exercise.

8. A parental request may also contain evidence that there is demand for GMPE from parents of other children under school age, who are resident in the same education authority area and have not yet begun to attend a primary school but who are in a different year group to the specified child.

9. When an education authority receives a parental request made under the 2016 Act, it must designate the geographical area in relation to which it will undertake its assessment of the need for GMPE referred to as a 'GMPE assessment area'.

10. The threshold for an obligatory full assessment under the 2016 Act is that an education authority is satisfied that there is demand in the GMPE assessment area from the parents of at least **five** children who are resident in the GMPE assessment area and all in the same pre-school year group; the specified child should be counted in this total.

REPORT

11. On 6 April 2017 the department received a request from a parent resident in East Renfrewshire seeking an assessment of the demand for GMPE in East Renfrewshire for her child, known as the 'lead child', who is due to start primary school in August 2018. Included in the request were the names of a further 48 children across a range of year groups, whose parents had expressed an interest in GMPE for their children.

12. The department wrote to each parent included in the request for assessment, inviting them to complete a proforma confirming their wish for GMPE for their child. The department received 8 positive responses, including that of the lead child, by the deadline of 5 May 2017. The breakdown of numbers for each year group was as follows:

Year Group	Number of Positive Responses
2017 - 2018	0
2018 - 2019	2
2019 - 2020	2
2020 - 2021	2
2021 - 2022	2

13. As such the threshold of **five** children in any one year group was not met. This response is in line with the current existing demand i.e. around 2 per stage.

14. An analysis of those who responded positively indicates that 50% came from an existing bilingual / Gaelic speaking family and 25% from parents indicating they would learn the Gaelic to be able to support their child(ren) at home.

15. Where any education authority determines that there is **not a potential need** for GMPE in the GMPE assessment area, it has three possible options, it can:

- take no further action to provide GMPE in relation to that parental request; or
- exercise its discretion to carry out a full assessment of the need for GMPE in that GMPE assessment area; or
- without carrying out a full assessment, exercise its discretion to take such steps as are necessary to secure the provision of such GMPE as it considers appropriate in the GMPE assessment area.

16. The department has at this stage decided to take no further action, given the very low response rate and the other information which we hold about current demand.

17. We have written to all parents whose names were provided as part of the request and indicated that should they wish to pursue GMPE for their child in a neighbouring local authority, we will support as we do at present through provision of transport. We have also posted the outcome on the Council's website as per the statutory guidance.

18. There is no formal appeal process established by the 2016 Act for appeals against decisions taken by local authorities. Whilst not setting out any specific procedure, the accompanying statutory guidance does however advise that should parents feel the process has not been followed correctly, they can appeal through the authority's own appeals procedures. In the case of East Renfrewshire Council, such an appeal would be heard through the Education Appeals Committee. Any decision made by the Education Appeals Committee would be accepted by the Education Department.

Next Steps

19. As indicated above there is no need for the Council to take any further steps in relation to provision of GME. The statutory guidance also indicates that we need not carry out an initial assessment of a parental request if an earlier request was made within the preceding two years in relation to the same GMPE assessment area.

20. Gaelic Learning does not at present feature in the department's 1+2 Language Plan, but we will assess the demand and opportunity to introduce Gaelic when that plan is reviewed in 2019.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

21. There are no financial or efficiency matters relating to this paper.

CONCLUSION

22. The education department received a request for Gaelic Medium Primary Education, one of the first, if not the first, to receive such a request under the new legislation and statutory guidance. The response from parents was below the nationally set threshold of five preschool children per year group, which is in line with the evidence we hold on current demand, i.e. 2 per year.

RECOMMENDATION

23. Elected members are asked to note the contents of the report and the outcome of the initial assessment.

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