

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL: EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

**CONSULTATION REPORT ON THE CONSULTATIVE PROPOSAL:
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GAELIC MEDIUM PRIMARY EDUCATION
AT THORNLIBANK PRIMARY SCHOOL
FROM AUGUST 2023 AND BEYOND**

NOVEMBER 2022

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

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BACKGROUND

1. On Thursday 23 June 2022, the Education Committee approved the issue of a consultative document on the proposal to introduce Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) at Thornliebank Primary School from August 2023 and beyond, following the decision by the Council to introduce GMPE on 16 February 2022. A copy of the original consultative document is attached as Appendix A.
2. The consultative document discusses the legislative requirements with regards to GMPE, notably that the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 places a legislative duty on education authorities to promote and support Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) and that parents can request GMPE from their education authority and that when a threshold of demand is evidenced there is, as described in Statutory Guidance, 'an effective entitlement to GMPE', and that local authorities will 'secure the provision of GMPE in the GMPE assessment area unless it would be unreasonable to do so'.
3. The consultative document details the receipt of a request for assessment of the demands for GMPE by parents / carers of children who reside within East Renfrewshire Council and the subsequent full assessment undertaken by the Education Department to determine demand for such a service. The proposal paper also provides details of how East Renfrewshire residents currently access GMPE provision within other local authorities, the difficulties that families are likely to face in future years given the increasing demands for GMPE and the educational benefits to having provision locally in East Renfrewshire.
4. Accordingly it was proposed that Thornliebank Primary School would be the optimal location for the introduction and delivery of GMPE when a variety of factors were considered. Factors considered, including those raised by statutory consultees, included: school capacity; centrality of location; potential to increase number of places on basis of demand; ability to support the extension of Gaelic provision to early years establishments and the secondary sector; and the ability to maintain the unique identity of the English medium and GMPE schools, whilst supporting integration, inclusion and a collective ethos across school communities.

5. The process of managing admissions to the GMPE school in accordance with the Council's current school admissions and placing request policies is also detailed in the consultative proposal document.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

6. The Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, as amended.
7. The formal consultative document was summarised and issued to statutory consultees with an accompanying letter explaining the process and inviting views, and made publicly available. The information included prior notice of a public meeting to discuss the proposal. The consultation was publicised on the Council's website and engagement through its social media channels. Interested parties were encouraged to provide feedback on East Renfrewshire Council's website www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/school consultation; or alternatively by other means such as completing and returning the consultation response pro forma.
8. Written representations on the consultative proposal were sought from all interested parties including Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comann nam Pàrant and the Parent Councils of all affected schools and early learning and childcare establishments. In addition pupils, parents/carers affected by the proposal, the Parent Council of Thornliebank Primary School and members of staff and unions representing staff in the affected schools, were invited to respond to the proposal. Education Scotland was advised of the consultation and a copy of the consultation pack was shared.
9. Head teachers of affected schools were asked to ensure that they advised staff of the consultation period and that they could submit an individual and/or a group response or respond through their union representative(s).
10. The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended requires that the pupil voice is heard on this matter in so far as the authority considers them to be of suitable age and maturity. The Education Department followed the guidance for local authorities on pupil consultations provided by Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, with the assistance of Children in Scotland, and engaged an independent educational consultant to conduct the consultation exercise with children and young people in the affected primary school. The consultant independently managed the pupil consultation exercise and produced a report of all the results of the pupil consultations which is attached as Appendix B.
11. The consultation period was initially planned to take place from Wednesday 17 August 2022 until midnight on Friday 30 September 2022. However as a consequence of the death of Her Majesty the Queen, the consultation period was extended until Monday 3 October 2022. All relevant consultees were notified of this change of date.
12. The consultation process and consultative document was publicised and copies were made available in both the Council Offices and in affected schools and early learning and childcare establishments. A dedicated page on the Council's website was

established to facilitate information and invite interested parties to respond to the proposal. Responses were invited to be submitted by completing an online form (<https://bit.ly/ERCGMPE>), by posting a hard copy of the response form or by writing to the Education Department. Appendix D of the original consultative proposal document (Appendix A related to this report) shows the pro forma to help consultees submit a response if they wished to use it.

13. Consultees were asked to be clear about who they were, where they lived, why they were interested including their relationship with the affected schools (e.g. parent of pupil in an affected school, member of staff at an affected school, relative of a pupil at an affected school etc.). They were also asked whether or not they agreed with the proposal, offered the opportunity to give reasons for their agreement or otherwise or had any additional comments. Consultees were advised that petitions would be treated as a single response.
14. In order to provide further details of the proposal and to answer any questions, a public meeting was held at 7pm on 15 September 2022 at St Cadoc's Primary School, Newton Mearns. Furthermore a senior officer of the Education Department met with the Parent Council of Thornliebank Primary School at their regular meeting at 7pm on 7 September 2022 to discuss the proposal; this meeting took place remotely.
15. The public meeting was chaired by Councillor Andrew Anderson, Convener for Education and Equalities, with the Education Department represented by the Director of Education and senior officers. The Parent Council meeting was chaired by the Parent Council chair and the Education Department was represented by the Head of Education Services (Provision and Performance). A minute taker was also present. As already noted, the main purpose of the meetings was to set out the proposal and provide further background and clarification in answering questions from the audience. The same presentation was made at both the public and Parent Council meetings; notes of these meetings are attached as Appendix C.
16. All digital and written representations received by the Education Department up to and including midnight on 3 October 2022, have been considered.

THE CONSULTATION: NUMBER OF RESPONSES

17. This section of the report provides information on the number of responses on the consultation received by the Education Department. Details from the consultation with pupils undertaken by the consultants are considered first, followed by all other responses. There were no responses by any school pupils gathered as part of the general consultation.
18. Statutory respondents include: parents/carers¹ of all pupils in the affected school; Parent Council of each affected school; parents of any child(ren) expected to attend an affected school within the next 2 school years; pupils of the affected school considered to be of suitable age and maturity; staff of the affected school; trade unions representing staff employed in the affected school; Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Education Scotland.

¹ Where a carer means the responsible adult with whom the affected young person lives

19. As noted in paragraph 10, an independent education consultant conducted the consultation exercise with children in the affected school. A copy of the consultant's report is provided in Appendix B, which outlines the process of engaging P1 to P7 pupils in the school and provides some detail of how learners (notably House and Vice House Captains with support of staff and the consultant) led the process with their peers in order to support genuine engagement. The report summarises all responses and provides details on pupils' views expressed, which will be expanded later.
20. At the time of the consultation there was a total of 188 pupils attending the school of which 145 pupils (77%) responded to the consultation; those who did not respond chose not to or were absent (6%) during the consultation.

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
Roll	23	24	28	31	29	24	29	188
Responded	17	20	20	24	25	22	17	145

Table 1

21. A total of 80 responses were made to the public consultation (all responses were received via the digital online survey); there did not appear to be any submission made by more than one person (other than by clearly recorded groups) and there did not appear to be any duplicate submissions received.
22. Table 2 shows the total number of responses, inclusive of those from school children from the separate consultation, and indicates whether or not the response is from a statutory consultee:

Total number of responses: Statutory / Non-Statutory			
Respondent	Statutory	Non Statutory	Total
Pupil (consultant)	145	0	145
All other responses ²	27	53	80
	172 (76%)	53 (24%)	225

Table 2

23. Of the total responses received (pupils and public consultation) 76% of responses were made by those regarded as statutory consultees with 24% submitted by other non-statutory groups.
24. Whilst not a statutory consultee, responses were also received from other relevant Gaelic groups such as Comann nam Parant and Gaelic at Eastwood House.
25. Of the 80 responses 59 (74%) indicated that they are resident within East Renfrewshire Council.

² Responses also received from Comann nam Parant and Gaelic at Eastwood House

26. Tables 3 and 4 provide details of the submissions from the public consultation only, with regards to location of residence and statutory non-statutory consultee:

Responses (all) Percentages			
Residence	Statutory	Non-Statutory	Total
ERC	25%	49%	74%
Non-ERC	9%	18%	26%
Total	34%	66%	100%

Table 3

Responses (all) Numbers			
Residence	Statutory	Non-Statutory	Total
ERC	20	39	59
Non-ERC	7	14	21
Total	27	53	80

Table 4

27. Tables 3 and 4 indicate the largest group to respond to the survey is East Renfrewshire residents comprising of almost three quarters of responses with around 25% of responses from East Renfrewshire residents regarded as statutory consultees. Around one third of all responses were from statutory consultees.

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED: SUMMARY OF VIEWS

28. This section provides a summary of the views within the written submissions.
29. The views of pupils are recorded in the independent consultant's report in Appendix B. Table 5 provides a summary of the views in the consultant's report. It shows the percentage of pupils who agreed with the proposal and those who disagreed with the proposal. The consultant notes that 43 pupils chose not to make a response/express a view. Their numbers are not included in the responses.

Stages	Number of Responses	% Responses who agree with proposal	% of Responses who disagree with proposal
P1-P3	57	84%	16%
P4-P7	88	53%	47%
Total	145	66%	34%

Table 5

30. Overall the majority of pupils' responses are in favour of the proposal; at the P1-P3 year stages most pupils are in favour of the proposal whilst in stages P4-P7 the majority are in favour.
31. The majority of pupils who responded at each stage agree with the proposal, with the exception of P5 (44%) and P6 (41%). Further details can be found in the consultant's report in Appendix B.
32. Table 6 provides an analysis of the views of all 80 respondents to the wider public consultation. The table shows whether responses are East Renfrewshire residents or non-East Renfrewshire residents, statutory or non-statutory respondents and whether they are in favour of the proposal or not.

Responses in Favour of Proposal			
Residence	Statutory	Non-Statutory	Total
ERC	65%	41%	49%
Non-ERC	100%	93%	95%
Total	74%	55%	61%

Table 6

33. Overall 61% of respondents agreed with the proposal. Around half (49%) of East Renfrewshire residents agree with the proposal with almost all (95%) non-East Renfrewshire residents in agreement.
34. Of those regarded as statutory consultees almost three quarters (74%) of respondents agree with the proposal; two thirds (65%) of East Renfrewshire statutory consultees agree, with all non-East Renfrewshire statutory consultees in agreement.
35. The largest group not in favour of the proposal is East Renfrewshire residents who are non-statutory consultees with 59% not in favour of the proposal.
36. Further details of the respondents, their statutory status and their position on the proposal is presented in table 7:

Category of respondent ³	Statutory Consultee		Non-Statutory Consultee	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Parent/Carer of child attending affected school	12	6		
Child will attend affected school in future years	1			
Staff Member in affected school/ELC	6	1		
Group	1		2	
General Interest in GME			8	1
No category recorded			2	
Related to a child of an affected school			2	2
Resident of East Renfrewshire			15	21
Grand Total	20	7	29	24

Table 7

37. The groups who responded to the consultation are Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comann Nam Parant and Gaelic at Eastwood House. All groups who responded are in agreement of the proposal.
38. Of the statutory consultees, 19 responses were received from parents / carers of children who currently attend, or who will attend, the affected primary school; of these 13 are in favour of the proposal (68%). 7 members of staff of an affected establishment responded with 6 agreeing with the proposal (86%).

³ Where a respondent recorded several categories, one of which was a statutory consultee category, this was recorded in the statutory category; where a member of staff recorded as also having a child at the affected school, this was categorised as having a child at the affected school. These categories may result in slightly differing figures to those in other tables as a consequence of multiple categories of respondent being recorded.

39. Of the non-statutory consultees, 4 of respondents are those related to a child who attends the affected school, with 2 of these agreeing with the proposal (50%). 36 respondents were recorded as East Renfrewshire residents with no other categorisation; of these 15 agreed with the proposal (42%). These are the only two groups not to have a majority in agreement with the proposal.

40. The table below summarises the responses from all respondents:

All Responses			
Respondent	Number of responses	% Responses who Agree with Proposal	% Responses who Do Disagree with Proposal
Pupils (via external consultant)	145	66%	34%
Public consultation	80	61%	39%
Total	225	64%	36%

Table 8

41. The majority of respondents are in agreement with the proposal.

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED: MAIN POINTS

42. This section details the main points raised at the public meetings and within the written submissions. All submitted written responses were read by officers to ensure that the main points from respondents were included in this report.

Main points: Pupils via Independent Consultants' Exercise

43. The views of pupils are recorded in the independent consultant's report in Appendix B. The consultant's report provides the results of the written responses by pupils to the consultation, recording their views expressed.

44. The following is a summary of the main points arising from the responses submitted by pupils to the proposal. Pupils across stages P1-P3 used a pictorial response sheet whilst those at stages P4-P7 used a text based response sheet. Consequently additional text comments were received from P4-P7 pupils only.

45. In the consultant's exercise the main themes expressed by pupils in favour of the proposal included:

- a. Many children commented upon an interest in learning a new language, and that being Gaelic;
- b. There are not many Gaelic schools and so this will assist in providing such a resource.

There were also more general comments recorded regarding an increase in the number of children attending the school and an opportunity to make more new friends.

46. Of those pupils who disagreed with the proposal, the main themes are paraphrased below:

- a. Concerns regarding an expectation of those children currently attending the school having to learn Gaelic;
- b. Potential difficulties communicating with children attending the Gaelic school;
- c. A lack of space in the school campus communal areas;
- d. A lack of funding for resources for the English medium school.

In addition comments were made regarding concerns related generally to change.

Main Points – Of All Respondents (Other than Pupils via Independent Consultant's Exercise)

- 47. Various themes were highlighted by respondents to the proposal.
- 48. The most popular themes expressed by respondents in favour of the proposal relate more generally to the introduction of GMPE provision within the Council area and are paraphrased below (14 respondents in favour did not provide an additional comment).
 - a. There was wide support for GMPE with respect to the opportunity for children to become multilingual and to increase diversity and culture, and to maintain Scottish heritage with over half of those who made comment referring to this;
 - b. The benefits of GMPE accessible locally within the Council area and a general increase in availability of GMPE places was commented upon by around 17% of those in favour;
 - c. Lack of places in GMPE provision in other local authorities.
- 49. A small number of respondents in favour of the proposal related comments specifically to the proposal regarding the location of GMPE being that of Thornliebank Primary School, commented upon:
 - a. Possible opportunities to improve the school and its resources as a consequence of GMPE being introduced;
 - b. Acknowledgement of challenges faced by the Council to identify a location with available space given the demands for school places in East Renfrewshire and the recognition of the possible extension to 3-18 provision of Gaelic education at a later date, given current spaces in early learning and childcare and secondary provision in the cluster;
 - c. Ease of access to the school's location.
- 50. Those in favour also commented upon areas of concern and these are detailed below:
 - a. The ongoing unique identity of Thornliebank Primary School as an English medium school;

- b. Possible impact on the English medium school's resources and learning and teaching spaces and staffing resources;
 - c. Potential increase in traffic around the school area and location not being central within East Renfrewshire;
 - d. The ability to recruit appropriately qualified staff and the planned staffing complement being sufficient.
51. Similarly to those who agreed with the proposal, the majority of main issues/concerns raised by the respondents who disagreed with the proposal did not relate directly to the proposal to locate GMPE at Thornliebank Primary School, but related more to the introduction of GMPE. Recorded comments from those not in favour of the proposal included:
- a. The financial costs of implementing GMPE and that funds should be used elsewhere – over a half (58%) of those against the proposal commented upon this;
 - b. More specifically, the cost of implementing the service for a relatively small number of children when other services are being underfunded or removed as a consequence of reduced budgets, with several comments relating this to the additional support needs sector;
 - c. Lack of value in learning Gaelic;
 - d. A small number of respondents (3) recorded general concerns of the impact on learners in developing skills and knowledge and understanding in other curricular areas as a consequence of Gaelic;
 - e. The ability to recruit suitably qualified teachers and support staff;
 - f. No guarantee of progression to Gaelic provision in the secondary sector within East Renfrewshire at this time.
52. More specific comments from those who disagree with the proposal, which did relate to the location of GMPE at Thornliebank Primary School, included:
- a. Number of English medium school places being available in the locale and concerns regarding these being reduced at Thornliebank Primary School as well concern for the school continuing;
 - b. Proposed location not being central within East Renfrewshire geographical area.
53. As noted in paragraph 11, a meeting of the Thornliebank Parent Council and a public meeting took place to advise of the proposal and to answer any questions. At these meetings, the points and concerns raised generally mirrored and included:
- a. Learning spaces at the school being overtaken by GMPE provision to the detriment of the Thornliebank Primary School and the extension to spaces allocated to GMPE as a consequence of increased future demand;

- b. Concerns regarding the planned staffing allocation for GMPE provision with regards to recruitment and, instances of staff absence and impact on learners;
 - c. Concerns of reduced resources being allocated to Thornliebank Primary School as a consequence of introduction and where funding for GMPE can be sought;
 - d. The use of financial resources to provide GMPE provision to a small number of children when budget cuts are being made to provision with significant additional support needs;
 - e. The continuation of provided transport for those children who will continue to attend GMPE provision within other local authorities;
 - f. Concerns regarding the long term plans for Thornliebank Primary School as an English Medium school;
 - g. The extension of 3-18 Gaelic provision; and
 - h. Any alternative locations for GMPE across East Renfrewshire.
54. GMPE admissions processes were raised by one respondent, who commented that they believed that all applications from within the council area should be afforded a GMPE place at the school by increasing capacity. No specific comments were raised with direct regard to the Council's current school admissions and placing request policies being applied to applications for GMPE.

COMMENTS ON THE VIEWS EXPRESSED / ISSUES RAISED

55. The points/concerns raised across paragraphs 51 to 54 which specifically relate to the proposal of locating GMPE provision at Thornliebank Primary School are commented upon below.
- a. *Sufficiency of non-denominational primary school places in the locale, ongoing concern for continuation of English medium education at Thornliebank Primary School and centrality of the school.*

Discussion:

Concerns relating to a decrease in the number of places available at Thornliebank Primary School for English medium learners and concerns regarding the ongoing viability of the school with the introduction of GMPE, were raised in all consultation forums.

As noted in the proposal paper in Appendix A, paragraph 38, the Education Department considered a number of factors, some of which were highlighted by statutory consultees, when determining the most appropriate location for GMPE provision within East Renfrewshire. Whilst all of the factors are important each has to be considered within the context of the local authority and the challenges it faces with regards to current and future demands for school places and the high level of

occupancy of our schools. Whilst the Council would have ideally been able to propose a location which is ideal with regards to all factors, this was not possible.

Thornliebank Primary School has a planning capacity which equates to a two-stream school (a school which has two classes at each stage); this means a planning capacity of 420 spaces. As detailed in table 2 (paragraph 40) of the proposal paper, the school has operated with a school roll of between 40% and 46% of the school's capacity in each of the last five years. Thornliebank Primary School has the lowest occupancy rate on the basis of the school planning capacity, of all schools across East Renfrewshire Council; and has very little planned residential developments for the area, with no real projected increase in pupil numbers from new residences.

Furthermore, as required by legislation, where a council has available places it is required to allocate those to placing request applicants who do not reside within a school's catchment area or within the local authority. As at September 2021 the School Pupil Census recorded that 50% of pupils in attendance at Thornliebank Primary School were residents of East Renfrewshire Council. Naturally, should the need for school places for catchment children increase, then the number of granted placing request applications will decrease.

Whilst it is recognised that Thornliebank Primary School is located on the border of the Council's boundary and therefore may be more challenging for learners to attend from other areas, any distance will likely be significantly less than travelling to other local authorities to access GMPE provision. Details of the reduced distance of travel (hypothetical) for those children who currently attend GMPE in other authorities, as well as for those who have indicated a desire for GMPE in 2023, is detailed in table 4 and table of 5 paragraphs 50 and 51 respectively in the initial proposal document, Appendix A. Additionally, whilst the school is not geographically central to the council area, there are very good transport links to the school with the local train station circa 4 minutes away by foot and bus stops located along Thornliebank Main Street adjacent to the school.

The low occupancy rate at Thornliebank Primary School, significant number of placing request applicants in attendance at the school and no real projection of future pupils from new residential developments, reassures the Education Department that the school would be able to accommodate the planned maximum of 50 places for GMPE provision (at this time on basis of indicated demand) without detrimentally impacting on the sufficiency of denominational school places to accommodate the community. This should reassure the community of the Education Department's ongoing commitment to the community of Thornliebank.

The Education Department regards the proposed introduction of GMPE at Thornliebank Primary School as an excellent opportunity to further enhance the school community, extending diversity and providing wider learning opportunities in language skills and cultural heritage via naturally occurring opportunities such as play and communal and social activities, dual language signage, whilst also being able to access specialist provision.

b. Learning spaces at the school being overtaken by GMPE to the school's detriment

Discussion

At all meetings, concerns were raised as to the available learning and teaching spaces at the school, and these being overtaken by GMPE provision to the detriment of the school.

As has already been noted in paragraph 54a, the school is currently operating at under 50% of the school's planning capacity which indicates learning and teaching spaces, which whilst being utilised by the school, are not being operated to maximum capacity.

Based on the number of parents/carers who have indicated a desire for their children to be educated within GMPE provision as detailed in table 1 paragraph 19 of the proposal paper Appendix A, the Education Department is planning primarily over the medium term (4 years) for two dedicated learning and teaching spaces to be utilised for the delivery of GMPE. Initially one teaching space would be required for the first three years of the service with a composite class consisting of P1-P3 pupils. Thereafter in 2026-27 it is the department's proposal to introduce a second composite class at the school to accommodate pupils across the stages P4-P7, as children progress through their education. This would mean a reduction of two learning and teaching spaces available to the English medium school, but would also mean that up to 5 additional areas are still available to be utilised to meet the needs of pupils.

Whilst the demand for GMPE may increase, any increase in the planned GMPE provision would require to be considered very carefully with the needs of the English medium school learners afforded similar consideration, ensuring no negative impact on learners' experiences as a consequence. Any possible increase in the provision would also of course be affected by other factors such as recruiting appropriately qualified staff.

As per paragraph 4, one of the key considerations when identifying an appropriate location for GMPE was an ability for the both schools to have their own unique identity whilst also integrating with each other. As is also noted in paragraph 45 of the proposal paper (Appendix A), the layout of the school is conducive to the creation of a unique school for Gaelic medium whilst simultaneously facilitating the integration of the GMPE provision to whole school activities and accessing shared resources. This will ensure equal status of Gaelic, will encourage a positive and inclusive attitude environment in the school and will contribute to the fluency and confidence of young people learning through the medium of Gaelic.

Furthermore should the proposal be approved the Education Department will work alongside school pupils, staff and parents/carers to ensure the unique identity of each school is maintained whilst developing an inclusive ethos, integrating both schools appropriately.

c. Increased traffic around the school

Concerns were raised by respondents as to the current situation regarding traffic at the school and the possibility of increased traffic with the introduction of GMPE.

As previously noted, the school has a planning capacity of 420 pupils with a school roll currently at around 50% of this. If the school's roll was to be in keeping with

the planning capacity, traffic and movement about the school would already be significantly higher than at present, and more than is being proposed by introducing GMPE.

The proposed plan for two composite classes would result in an increase of up to 50 pupils, albeit these may be more likely to travel to the school by vehicle; this would likely be shared vehicle(s).

The Education Department would continue to monitor the situation with regards to traffic congestion. Alongside the school's own school travel plan, the department would work with the Roads Department to consider risk assessments and the safety of all service users and where required consider mitigations.

d. Staffing: recruitment and cover arrangements

In the meetings and the public consultation, the issue of staffing levels for GMPE provision and the ability to recruit suitably qualified staff was raised as a concern. Respondents commented upon their concerns regarding insufficient staffing being allocated to the school for GMPE with regards to ensuring ongoing full Gaelic immersion education during periods when the Gaelic speaking teacher is not in class, such as during contractual non-class contact time or in times of absence. Furthermore, concerns were raised regarding the ability to recruit Gaelic speaking staff.

The Education Department's intention is to employ a promoted teacher, a Principal Teacher of GMPE, who with the support of the school's leadership team would lead on the development and delivery of GMPE in the school. It is hoped that this promoted post would attract the best candidates given the opportunity to lead on the development of this exciting new service. In addition the Education Department would allocate additional funding for the recruitment of 0.5 fte class teacher appropriately qualified for delivery of GMPE, who would support the Principal Teacher and ensure the ongoing delivery of education during the Principal Teacher's non-class contact time. A 1fte Pupil Support Assistant would also be allocated to the service, for which the department hopes to recruit a Gaelic speaker. This multi staffed approach to the service would ensure that children are experience their education entirely through the medium of Gaelic across the P1-P3 year stages.

However the Education Department does recognise the national difficulties in recruiting Gaelic speaking teachers and support assistants. Bòrd na Gàidhlig recognises these challenges also but is of the view that recruiting staff should be possible. The Bòrd has offered to assist the department in the recruitment process and the department will work with the Bòrd to that end. The Education Department would seek to advertise the posts at the earliest opportunity and will promote these opportunities.

e. Financial resources for GMPE and potential reduced resources for Thornliebank Primary School as a consequence. The resource being better used for other priorities.

Across all consultation forums a number of respondents noted concerns regarding the cost of the introduction of GMPE in relation to the projected small number of children who will take up the service. Furthermore these comments were extended with reference to other services which the Education Department previously provided but which had to be removed or reduced due to a lack of funding, with specific reference to additional support needs services such as those which support children at Isobel Mair School.

Local authorities in Scotland are supported by the Scottish Government in meeting the costs associated with the introduction and delivery of Gaelic medium education. Up to 75% of revenue costs can be applied for via the Scottish Government's Gaelic Specific Grant; this will support the additional costs of delivering GMPE with regards to such areas as staffing costs, purchasing learning and teaching resources and transport costs. The Education Department would submit a bid for 75% of revenue costs associated with GMPE.

In order to ensure that GMPE provision integrates with the school whilst maintaining the unique identity of both schools, there would be requirement for capital funding to make material changes to areas of the building and to purchase appropriate facilities for the additional learners. The Education Department has been in discussion with the Scottish Government's Gaelic and Scots Team of the Learning Directorate in order to access capital funding to support these requirements.

It is recognised that parents and carers of children who previously accessed fully funded services which have been reduced/removed as a consequence of budget constraints, are frustrated when they see other areas/services being developed by the Council. However as noted, it is anticipated that the majority of funding for the delivery of GMPE provision would be provided to the Council; this funding is ring fenced purely for this purpose and cannot be utilised in other ways.

The introduction of GMPE at the campus would have no impact on the allocated budgeted resources to Thornliebank Primary School.

56. Additionally, pertinent points and concerns which did not relate directly to the proposal are commented upon below.

- a. *Continuation of transport for those who will continue to attend GMPE in other local authorities.*

Parents/carers of children who currently attend GMPE provision in other local authorities raised concern regarding their ongoing right to funded transport to and from school each day.

Those children who currently receive funded transport to attend GMPE in another local authority would continue to receive this entitlement whilst they continue to attend GMPE, given that there would not be any provision available to them with the proposed service commencing with P1 pupils only. This would be in accordance with the department's school transport policy.

However where a parent/carer of a child submits a placing request for GMPE in another local authority when provision is available locally, the Council would not meet the costs of transport for such children.

b. Extension of Gaelic provision across the 3-18 age range

Responders to the public consultation and at the public meeting raised requests for the extension of Gaelic provision to the early years and secondary sectors; this would allow future children to commence their education in Gaelic, and would allow those who attend GMPE to progress in their learning in the language onto secondary education. This issue was also raised by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Education Scotland in their response to the full assessment of the demand for GMPE.

Whilst the Education Department is entirely focussed on ensuring an excellent experience for learners in GMPE, it does recognise that the introduction of GMPE is the first step in the wider delivery of education through the medium of Gaelic across the 3-18 age range. The identification of Thornliebank as an appropriate location for GMPE took cognisance of the demand and availability of places in both the Early Learning and Childcare and secondary sectors with consideration of future delivery in these sectors; details of this are contained in paragraphs 42 and 43 of the proposal paper, Appendix A.

The Education Department will revisit these considerations in future years.

c. How will places available at the GMPE provision be allocated?

The Education Department is planning for two composite class across the stages P1 to P3 and P4 to P7; composite classes can accommodate a maximum of 25 children. The department would plan for these places to meet the demands of its constituent applicants.

School admission and placing requests must be processed in accordance with relevant legislation. Should an East Renfrewshire parent/carer apply for a place at GMPE and one be available then the place would be allocated to that child. However with regards to the placing requests, the Education Department can determine a reasonable number of places as reserved places; these are places which can be held for future families who take up residence in the Council's areas at a later date and are regarded as allocated places for this purpose.

ALLEGED OMISSIONS AND INACCURACIES

57. The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended places a requirement on the Council to provide details of any inaccuracy or omission within the consultative document, which has been either discovered by the Education Department or suggested by any other person. The Education Department would then determine if relevant information has been omitted or if there has been an inaccuracy and then take appropriate action which may include the issue of a correction or the reissuing of the proposal paper or the revision of the timescale for the consultation period as

appropriate. In that event, relevant consultees and Education Scotland would be advised.

58. The consultation period was initially from Wednesday 17 August 2022 to midnight on Friday 30 September 2022. However, due to school closure related to an additional public holiday following the death of Her Majesty the Queen, the consultation was extended to midnight on Monday 3rd October. All relevant consultees and Education Scotland were advised.
59. Officers believe having considered the above, that they have complied with the 2010 Act and its 2014 amendments.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED BY EDUCATION SCOTLAND (HMIE) AND RESPONSES OFFERED

60. In accordance with the requirements of the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended, an independent and impartial report was provided by Education Scotland in relation to the proposal.
61. A full report submitted by Education Scotland with regard to the proposal is provided as Appendix D.
62. Within Education Scotland's report the department notes that *'HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has potential to result in educational benefits.'*
63. The Education Scotland report noted that the majority of pupils at the school (through responses to consultation and conversation with inspectors) were in favour of the proposal and that they identified the educational benefits. Comment was also made to the majority of parents and carers being in favour. Furthermore, agreement on the arrangements for admissions to the school was noted.
64. The report highlighted that a minority of parents were not in favour of the proposal and of those, a number misunderstood the proposal and provided a response in relation to general opinion of GMPE.
65. Similar areas of concerns raised by respondents which have been addressed in the discussion section of this paper were raised in the Education Scotland report, most notably: potential increase in traffic and need for risk assessment; both schools should have access to any improved facilities as a consequence of the introduction of GMPE; and staffing concerns with regards to recruitment and ensuring full Gaelic immersion at all times for P1-P3 learners.
66. The Education Scotland report notes that if the proposal is approved, *'This supports Gaelic language, equity, equality and inclusion outcomes at the primary stages through the medium of Gaelic.'*

EQUALITIES CONSIDERATIONS

67. In making this proposal an Equality Fairness and Rights Impact Assessment (EFRIA) has been carried out and is provided as Appendix E.

68. The Council is aware of the Public Sector Equality Duty articulated in the Equality Act 2010 scheme which came into force on 6 April 2011. This provision requires that the Council in exercising its functions has regard to the need to:

- a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

69. In summation the EFRIA evaluated the proposal as: having no adverse impacts; has the potential to advance equality and foster good relationships; and has the potential to advance children's rights. Paragraph 3.1 of the report by Education Scotland (Appendix D), also commented upon the introduction of GMPE supporting equity, equality and inclusion.

70. Consequently the EFRIA found that there are no changes required to the proposal.

PROCEDURES FOR MINISTERIAL CALL IN

71. Under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended this proposal is not subject to ministerial call-in. As such the final decision on the proposal will be taken by East Renfrewshire Council's Education Committee, having due regard to the view of stakeholders expressed through the consultation exercise.

CONCLUSION

72. Following the decision to introduce GMPE within East Renfrewshire Council in February 2022, there was clearly a need to identify an appropriately suitable location at one of the Council's current educational establishments to host the school.

73. It is accepted that Thornliebank Primary School has the lowest school roll of all primary schools across East Renfrewshire on the basis of the school's planning capacity. Furthermore it is accepted that a significant proportion of the school's roll attends the school by means of successful placing request. Furthermore there is projected to be a very small increase in the number of children who will become resident within the school's catchment area from new residential developments. The repurposing of a small number (two) of learning and teaching spaces to be devoted to GMPE is the most cost efficient, and effective use of the current educational estate.

74. It is expected that the number of parents/carers who will request GMPE provision for their children will increase as the establishment develops. It is accepted that the number of places devoted to GMPE at the school must not adversely impact on the learners at the English medium school, if any decision on increasing provision is required to be made at a later date.

75. It is accepted that the Council's current school admissions and placing request arrangements are applicable for the administration and allocation of places at the GMPE provision as described in paragraphs 68 to 71 of the proposal paper.
76. There is the potential to extend Gaelic provision to early years and to the secondary school in future years given the availability of places across the sectors within the community of educational establishments.
77. A majority of respondents to the proposal were in agreement. 66% of pupils at the affected school and who responded to the consultation were in agreement, whilst 61% of those who responded to the public consultation were also in agreement.
78. Almost three quarters (74%) of statutory consultees agreed with the proposal; 67% of parents/carers with children currently attending the school agreed. 86% of staff at an affected establishment were in agreement. Bòrd na Gàidhlig, also a statutory consultee, was in agreement with the proposal.
79. Two other groups, Gaelic at Eastwood House and Comann Nam Parant, responded positively in agreement with the proposal.
80. The largest proportion of responses which disagreed with the proposal was received from those respondents who classified themselves as resident within East Renfrewshire (this does not include those who declared as parents/carers, staff etc) who made up 68% of the entire disagreed group; 58% of those who regarded themselves as East Renfrewshire residents only, disagreed with the proposal. Of the 21 East Renfrewshire residents who disagreed with the proposal, the most common reason (15) for this related to the financial cost of implementing GMPE and that finances could be better used elsewhere.
81. During consultation respondents referred to concerns regarding increased traffic as a consequence of the GMPE school. The Education Department would undertake a risk assessment of the impact of the introduction of GMPE on the safety around the school and would work with colleagues in the Council's Roads Department to mitigate against any risks.
82. Respondents also commented upon a desire for the school's facilities/resources to be improved upon if GMPE is introduced at the campus; the Education Department will look to improve areas at the school whenever possible and make better use of communal areas accessible to all.
83. Taking full account of the views expressed during this consultation, the following recommendations are made.

RECOMMENDATIONS

84. It is recommended that the Education Committee adopts the proposal for Thornliebank Primary School Campus to be the location of Gaelic Medium Primary Education within East Renfrewshire Council from August 2023 and beyond.

85. In addition, request that the Director of Education continues to consider the extension of Gaelic provision to the early years and secondary sectors, in order to provide a 3-18 experience in the Gaelic medium.

Mark Ratter

Director of Education

November 2022