



Glasgow City Council

Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee

Report by Executive Director of Education Services

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Item 2

18th August 2022

**FULL ASSESSMENT OF A PARENTAL REQUEST FOR GAELIC MEDIUM
PRIMARY EDUCATION (GMPE) IN GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL**

Purpose of Report:

To update Committee on the outcome of the full assessment for Gaelic Medium Primary Education following a parental request.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and the outcome of the statutory assessment for GME.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

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1 Background

- 1.1 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 establish a process by which parents can request Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) from their education authority.
- 1.2 Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) takes the form of immersion i.e. children experience all their learning in the early years of primary school (P1 to P3) through the Gaelic language. Thereafter, immersion continues but in P4 to P7 English is introduced, while Gaelic remains the predominant language of the classroom.
- 1.3 At present Glasgow City Council(GCC) has comprehensive and extensive provision in GMPE and has consistently developed this provision over several years.
- 1.4 Statutory guidance issued by *Bòrd Na Gàidhlig* came into force on 1 February 2017, Part 1 of which sets out the actions education authorities must take to assess demand on receipt of a request for GMPE.
- 1.5 Under the legislation (which is further explained in the statutory guidance) parents of children under school age and who have not yet started primary school have the right to request an assessment of the need for GMPE from the education authority in which the family resides. Any request must be accompanied by evidence of demand for GMPE from parents of other children, resident in the same education authority who will begin primary school in the same year as the specified child. The initial assessment of demand must be completed within 6 weeks of receipt of the request and a full assessment within 10 weeks following the outcome decision of the initial assessment. The local authority must produce a report on the exercise and communicate the findings of their report appropriately.
- 1.6 When an education authority receives a parental request made under the 2016 Act, it must designate the geographical area within which it will undertake the assessment of need for GMPE referred to as a 'GMPE assessment area'.
- 1.7 The threshold for an obligatory full assessment under the 2016 Act is that the education authority is satisfied that there is demand in the identified GMPE assessment area from the parents of at least five children – including the specified child - who are all resident in the identified assessment area and who are all in the same year group as the specified child.

2 Initial assessment

- 2.1 On 25th February 2022 Glasgow City Council Education Services received a request from a parent resident in Glasgow seeking an assessment of the demand for GMPE in Glasgow for her child, known as the lead child, who is due to start primary school in August 2022. Included as part of the request were the names of a further four children whose parents had also expressed a desire for GMPE for their children for August 2022.
- 2.2 GCC further determined that the area identified for the initial assessment was be the entire Council area. We arrived at this decision given that the initial request came from parents of five children living in two of the existing four catchment areas for primary GME (three from the existing north west catchment and two from the existing south east catchment), allied to the fact that we already have information on the level of demand across all four existing GMPE catchment areas of the city.
- 2.3 Where any education authority determines that there is a potential need for GMPE in the GMPE assessment area, it has two possible options, it can:
 - carry out a full assessment of the need for GMPE in the 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.
- 2.4 Following an initial assessment of demand, Education Services finally decided on 8th April, to carry out a full assessment of the need for GMPE. The statutory guidance states that: *'when carrying out a full assessment an education authority must have regard to a list of mandatory matters and must decide to secure provision in the GMPE assessment area unless it would be unreasonable to do so'*.
- 2.5 The reason for moving to a full assessment is based on the fact that there are five or more children in the same year group looking to enrol in GMPE for August 2022, which led to the determination that there is a potential need for GMPE in the assessment area. Furthermore, over the last two sessions, the number of families initially registering for enrolment for a place in primary GMPE, has exceeded the number of places available across the now four GMPE primary establishments. However, the number of children being registered for enrolment in GMPE remains at a broadly similar level at the same point as last year.
- 2.6 Education Services wrote to all parents whose names were provided as part of the initial request to indicate that they were carrying out a full assessment. They also posted the outcome of the initial assessment on the Council website as per the statutory guidance.

3 Initial assessment information

- 3.1 Our initial assessment information highlights that while at the time of conclusion of the initial assessment on 08 April 2022, numbers for August 2022 entry across the GMPE estate stood at 178 for the 140 places. The position has changed to one whereas of 16 June 2022 there are now only 157 children currently looking for a place. Several children in the intervening period have been able to secure places at independent schools, GMPE in other adjacent authorities or made a decision to enrol at their local school. This pattern mirrors that of 2021. While the position back in August 2021 meant that all children who sought entry to Berkley Street were able to be accommodated, this was not the case at Glendale PS where there remains a waiting list of nine children. We acknowledge that this is counter to the factual position that was outlined earlier in the letters to statutory consultees and we trust that this now clarifies the record and rectifies our initial error.
- 3.2 It is worthy of note that with less than 20% of children coming into GMPE from households where Gaelic is spoken as a first language, it is not possible to predict future numbers with any degree of accuracy.

4 Existing provision

- 4.1 Glasgow currently benefits from extensive GME provision which constitutes the largest provision of any other authority out with the Western Isles and Highland. Current provision includes early years provision across five sites, three council and two funded providers - Rowena in the north west, Berkley Street in the north west, Lyoncross in Pollok in the south, with funded providers operating at Seudan Beaga and Oganon both in the south of the city; current primary school provision exists across three sites – Bunsgoil Glasgow Gaelic (Berkley Street), Bunsgoil Ghàidhlig Ghleann Dail (Glendale Gaelic), Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Bhaile a' Ghobhainn (Govan Gaelic) PSs and a secondary provision at *Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu*, Glasgow Gaelic Secondary School (Ard sgoil - Berkley Street Campus). Numbers currently enrolled are significant, and provision has grown over the past few years. As at September census 2021, pupil numbers across the primary estate totalled 828 and 411 across the secondary provision. It is worth noting that Glasgow has more primary pupils enrolled in GMPE than the Western Isles and at 1.9% of the population has the largest proportion of the population enrolled behind Highland, Western Isles and Argyll and Bute Councils. At secondary stages Glasgow has more pupils enrolled than any other council except Highland. At 1.4% of the population, again, Glasgow has a higher proportion enrolled than any other council except Western Isles, Highland and Argyll and Bute.

- 4.2 Plans are underway to extend provision by opening a unit at the new North Kelvinside PS campus in August 2022, which will transfer into the new north east provision in the current St James PS building from August 2024. Further planning is underway to find a new site for another primary provision in the north west of the city which will support the plans to decant the current primary and early years provision from Berkley Street, to create the much-needed additional space to expand the number of places available across the GME estate. We hope to have the new provision open by August 2027. This will allow us to increase the number of places at secondary stages and therefore P1 intake numbers across the GME estate from the current 140 each year to a total intake of 180.

5 Full assessment – consideration of mandatory factors.

5.1 Mandatory factors considered included:

- Views provided by statutory consultees
- Initial assessment information in relation to demand
- Existing provision
- Existing provision in neighbouring authorities and the availability of access
- Access to GMPE in Glasgow from children in other local authorities
- Accommodation
- Teachers
- Costs
- The Glasgow City Council Gaelic Language Plan

- 5.2 The detail of our consideration of each of the mandatory factors including a summary of the statutory consultees responses can be found at the link to the full report below.

<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=25852>

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 While we accept that current demand for GME outstrips our ability to provide places, we do believe that as a result of the challenges we currently face in both lack of space in the secondary provision and in the recruitment and retention of staff, particularly Gaelic speakers into promoted posts, that it is unreasonable at this juncture to provide any additional provision beyond that which we have already committed to in our long-term planning.
- 6.2 We have further concerns that should our GME provision extend beyond that which we have already planned to provide, this may well carry a risk of provision which is GME in name only, further exacerbating our challenges around staffing. Currently much of young people's secondary experience is not actually provided through Gaelic language, because of a lack of fluent Gaelic speakers as teaching staff and where young people's broad general education BGE experience is compromised as a result. Our plan would be to strengthen the quality of what we already have planned to provide, by recruiting high quality teaching staff who are

fluent Gaelic speakers to support the delivery of a rich and fully immersive learning experience across the entire curriculum before we extend the offer further beyond our existing strategic plan. We believe that children who are unable to secure provision GMPE within Glasgow could access provision in neighbouring authorities as an interim arrangement, until the point at which Glasgow is in the position to further increase the number of places available.

- 6.3 In recent months we have advertised for principal teacher positions and been in some instances unable to appoint. We were in the recent past unable to recruit an acting headteacher to a maternity cover post and we have had a very poor response from teachers to an offer of leadership development training fully funded by us as an authority.
- 6.4 We therefore believe that it is unreasonable for us to extend provision further at this juncture. We reject wholeheartedly the view that we are stifling demand for GMPE by the introduction of a cap on numbers. In fact, the evidence runs to counter to this claim in that demand has continued to rise despite the cap being place for several years. The rationale for having a cap, similar to many other schools across the city, is to carefully manage the secondary school numbers and ensure that we can actually guarantee provision and progression for all young people currently enrolled or enrolling through to S6, should that be their intention and avoid creating an expectation that we may well not be able to deliver. We believe this to be not only prudent but also importantly, both responsible and fair.
- 6.5 We note that *Bòrd Na Gàidhlig* mention on their website that '*Glasgow continues to deliver steady growth with its largest ever intake of P1 pupils into GMPE*'. It would be our view that we may well put this steady growth at risk by diluting the quality of what is delivered as part of the GMPE experience and recognise that this could well happen should we move beyond what has already been planned for, in terms of existing capacity and staffing across the GME estate.
- 6.6 We would maintain that meeting the demand of our current GMPE provision should remain our priority as it continues to present us with significant challenges both from a statutory responsibility and from our key position of maintaining high quality service delivery.

7 Education Services Recommendation

- 7.1 That GCC Education Services do not progress with alternative plans at this point in time, to extend the range of GME provision beyond that which they have already planned for, as we consider it unreasonable to do so, because of staffing challenges combined with lack of space in the secondary GME estate. We believe these to be fundamental obstacles to securing further provision. We will however continue to monitor the situation and strategically plan for extending provision in light of a future sustained increase in demand. We believe we have taken a thorough and reasoned approach to detailing the balance arrived at in this full assessment. We further believe that we have and continue to comply very well with our statutory duty to secure GMPE provision across the city of Glasgow.

8 Next Steps

8.1 We will proceed with our existing GME strategic working group and will look to secure additional funding to build our new GME primary in the north west of the city. This will support our plans to decant the exiting primary school and nursery from the Berkley Street building thereby allowing us to increase the intake from the existing 140 places each year to a sustainable increased intake of 180 places. We will ensure that the group continues to review the city wide GME provision and will endeavour to work with other West Partnership (WP) authorities to secure additional secondary provision for GME across the WP areas.

- Continue with plans to open a unit for GME in NKPS and to grow the new St James PS, our next GME provision in the north east of the city
- Continue to progress plans for a new primary school in the north west of the city
- Continue with our longer-term strategic plan of decanting the Berkley Street building to create additional spaces for the raising of secondary student intake numbers
- Continue to support leadership development training across all staff in all our GME provisions
- Continue to do all that we can to attract and retain GME teachers
- Continue to support the ongoing work of the GME strategic working group.

9 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: N/A

Legal: N/A

Personnel: N/A

Procurement: N/A

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify. N/A

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report? No significant impact

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage. N/A

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify: N/A

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal? N/A

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target? N/A

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts: N/A

10 Recommendations

10.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.