

## Comann nam Pàrant Dùn Èideann

August 2018

### Written Submission to Gaelic Implementation Group (GIG)

This submission is made on behalf of Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann), the representative organisation for families with children in all stages of Gaelic-medium education in Edinburgh; and on behalf of Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce Parent Council.

Our representatives will continue to work with Councillors and Council officers to finalise a strategic plan for the future of GME in our city. At this stage, we expect to see a Council produced draft educational strategy covering 0-18, and including the following specifics:

- Evidence that the strategy has the **principle of immersion** as its underlying foundation, as set out in Education Scotland's *Advice on Gaelic Education*.<sup>1</sup> The principle of immersion should be applied throughout the period of broad general education, from Sgoil-àraich (nursery) until the end of S2 or S3.
- A proposed timeline for opening a new Gaelic secondary and recruitment plan - specifically the number of permanent posts.
- Corresponding funding streams.
- A proposed timeline for opening a new GME primary and recruitment plan - specifically the number of permanent posts.
- The strategy to manage rising rolls in the interim at both primary and secondary level.

Once this plan has been established and funding streams identified, we expect to be able to establish criteria with which to assess the suitability of potential physical sites.

We anticipate any transition to a new secondary site to take a minimum of five years to complete.

We believe it is timely to set out some clarifications with regard to the principles of equal respect, and funding of Gaelic education, particularly with regard to GME at secondary level.

### The Principle of Equal Respect

Edinburgh Council's Gaelic Language Plan ("the GLP") includes as part of its overarching principles that: ***we want to inspire equal respect, ensuring that the Gaelic language is delivered to an equal standard to that of English.*** (GLP p9) We see this as a fundamental principle that requires collective support from all parties.

A Gaelic Language Plan must reflect the vision of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 to secure *"the status of the Gaelic Language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language."*

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<sup>1</sup> [https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/Gael3-Advice-on-Gaelic-Education-Eng\\_.pdf](https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/Gael3-Advice-on-Gaelic-Education-Eng_.pdf)

We note that the GLP states that: ***in our role as Corporate Parent we need to ensure that our looked after children can access the same opportunities in Gaelic as those with other languages.*** (GLP p9)

We support these commitments made by Edinburgh Council to provide a high quality education for every child in the city; regardless of their social background, ethnicity, gender, academic ability, or language of instruction.

### **Vision for Secondary GME**

Our vision for secondary GME has remained consistent for years. We want to see an increase in subjects delivered through Gaelic at secondary and an enhancement of Gaelic-medium provision, while keeping our GME community together in one school. We have explained many times that classroom space is not as important as staff and subjects, and building up provision at James Gillespie's is something which must take place prior to any move.

GME children are not a convenient number of bodies available to be shifted around the city to fill up empty classrooms. They have a right to equal status with English-medium children in the local authority system and their educational needs must be central to any decision about their future.

We have consistently asked for a secondary strategy that gives GME families the certainty of educational pathway that most children in EME can take for granted.

### **Five Year Transition Plan**

In late March 2018 we produced a strategy summary (Appendix 1) to set out what we consider some of the realistic milestones to be met in advance of transitioning GME secondary children to a new site. We consider a five year transition period to be the minimum requirement.

As none of the milestones have been met to date, including the appointment of a lead teacher or a lead Council officer, it is our view that at this stage the earliest possible transition date is 2024.

### **GME Funding**

We believe it is important for all parties to acknowledge that the education of GME children in Edinburgh is the responsibility of the local authority. GME parents are city residents and council tax payers and should not be expected to find funding for teachers. It is entirely the responsibility of the local authority to provide a high quality education for every child in the city.

The City of Edinburgh Council is in the fortunate position of being able to access significant grant funding from Scottish Government to support the development of Gaelic education.

This funding is available only because Edinburgh Council continues to develop and grow the number of Gaelic speakers. It is a direct additional subsidy available because of the existence of GME.

	£
Gaelic Specific Grant 2017-18 (annual)	300,000
Additional Funding 2017-18 (2 x £30k)	60,000
Stòrlann resources (approx. annual value, excluding value of special projects)	33,788
<b>Total</b>	<hr/> 393,788
Number of GME pupils (primary and secondary)	487
<b>Subsidy per GME pupil (annual)</b>	<hr/> <b>£809</b>

In addition to this direct funding from Scottish Government, Edinburgh Council will also receive over £100,000 in 2018-19 from Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF):

- for teachers employed by CEC to complete the Gaelic Immersion for Teachers (GIFT) course (circa £80,000),
- partial costs of a Community Development Officer (circa £20,000),
- Gaelic classes for CEC officers (circa £7,000).

Alongside this significant annual revenue subsidy, Edinburgh Council has received Scottish Government capital grants as follows:

	£
2011-12 Taobh na Pàirce building refurbishment	1,400,000
2012-13 Taobh na Pàirce building refurbishment	400,000
2013-14 Taobh na Pàirce building refurbishment	56,000
2013-14 Upgrading works for Taobh na Pàirce	20,000
2014-15 Upgrading works for Taobh na Pàirce	30,000
2017-18 Upgrading works for Taobh na Pàirce	17,000
2017-18 IT equipment for Taobh na Pàirce and JGHS	20,810
<b>Total capital input 2011-18</b>	<hr/> <b>1,943,810</b>

The growth and development of GME attracts additional funding for the Edinburgh school estate that would not be otherwise available. Presenting GME as a “drain on EME resources” is misleading and can result in defamatory comments about GME and Gaelic speakers in Edinburgh.

It should however be noted that there is a statutory framework for this Scottish Government funding and that it remains available **only** if Edinburgh Council can demonstrate a commitment to continuing growth and development of the language.

### **Additional Investment at secondary**

We acknowledge that investment will be required to build up the level of provision of GME at James Gillespie's in advance of a transition. However we note the following points:

- Capital investment will be required at James Gillespie's even without taking GME into consideration, due to rising rolls in EME. The existence of GME allows the possibility of capital investment by Scottish Government.
- A transition plan that demonstrates a real commitment to growth and development may attract further Scottish Government revenue funding.

**It is the responsibility of Edinburgh Council to provide a high quality education for all children at James Gillespie's regardless of their language of instruction. This includes the provision of an appropriate number of staff to teach subjects and provide whatever learning support is required.**

If a transition is to take place, Edinburgh Council must begin to view the cohort of GME pupils at James Gillespie's as the foundation of a school. There are currently only two teachers who are able to teach entirely through the medium of Gaelic, although under current ratio regulations the GME children are entitled to eight teachers. This unsatisfactory situation must be rectified immediately in order to develop this foundation into a real standalone school.

We understand that by the measure of other secondary schools, the current roll of **109** GME pupils at secondary represents a small school.

However, a comparison with Scottish Government's Education Directorate's school statistics<sup>2</sup> indicates that in 2017 there were 20 secondary schools in Scotland with a smaller role than the number of GME pupils currently at James Gillespie's. The 21<sup>st</sup> smallest school in Scotland was City of Edinburgh's Castlebrae Community High School with a role of 137.

**Drummond Community High School** also features high on the list with a role of **333**. According to the school's own website, there are currently 63 staff members at DCHS as follows:

Head	Teaching staff (37) – each Faculty has a CL who is also a teacher (included in number below)
DHT x 2	English and Modern Languages x 6
Business Manager	Expressive Arts x 4
Pupils Support Leaders x 3	Health and Wellbeing x 6
Clerical Support x 7	Maths x 4
Librarian	Science x 4
Technicians x 2	Social Subjects x 5
Pupils Support Assistants x 9	Support for Learning x 4
	Technology x 4

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/RollsByStage/PupilNumbers2017>

The comparison with Drummond is very relevant because:

- By 2024 we project a number of GME secondary pupils that will significantly exceed 333. The current roll at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce is **378**. To provide a new GME secondary with a comparable level of staffing with DCHS would require 61 additional GME staff members by 2024.
- The pupils at Taobh na Pàirce have backgrounds from across the whole social spectrum, comparable with other diverse schools in the city and similar to the pupils of DCHS. Many of Edinburgh's GME pupils live in the same areas as pupils at DCHS.
- In March 2018 there was much uncertainty over the future of both DCHS and the GME pupils transitioning to JGHS. At that stage, pupils at DCHS were given an unqualified commitment about the future of their education at Drummond. GME pupils have the right to equality of support from the local authority.

We are very pleased that Edinburgh Council has committed its unqualified ongoing support to Drummond Community High School, and has put the educational needs of the children of Drummond above financial concerns which may surround an under-capacity school. The law requires that Edinburgh's GME pupils are granted equal status with their EME peers, and given the same solid educational commitments.

### **GME Attainment Levels – Value for Money**

Statistics gathered regarding the attainment of pupils being educated through the medium of Gaelic have consistently shown that they perform at least as well as those receiving an English medium education, and in many areas, they perform better than their EME peers.

Although data regarding attainment can be difficult to collate, we can point to a study referenced in a document we produced for Councillors in 2010, which demonstrates the value for money received from GME in terms of attainment:

<https://cnpduneideannblog.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/cnp-finance-paper-12-nov.pdf>

We would also reference the data collated by Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu regarding their own 2017 performance.<sup>3</sup> The lowest, middle, and highest attaining pupils all performed much better than their Virtual Comparator (learners with same profile nationally as SGG learners), better than Glasgow City, and better than pupils nationally.

GME pupils come from a very diverse range of backgrounds from all across the city, reach high attainment levels, and attract a Scottish Government subsidy; all factors which contribute to making GME good value for money for Edinburgh Council.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.glasgowgaelic.glasgow.sch.uk/PlainText/PlainText.aspx?SectionId=c081f032-87e3-4524-890d-d1198053cb27>

## **Conclusion**

There remains a need for a proper strategic plan for GME. This strategic plan, and solid evidence of progress, are not simply part of a theoretical exercise. There are more than 750 children in GME in Edinburgh, and they are depending on us to get it right for their education, not in theory over a five year plan, but in practice in their places of education today. Without a proper plan and a real commitment to timely implementation, Edinburgh Council is failing our children.

We ask for clear confirmation from GIG members that at a minimum:

- There is acknowledgement and understanding of the legal status of the Gaelic Language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language.
- There is acknowledgement that Edinburgh Council is responsible for sourcing staff members and fully funding the education of GME pupils. Scottish Government grant funding is an extra subsidy.
- There is a standing agenda item for each GIG meeting for an update on progress made towards meeting agreed GME staffing requirements and an audit of that progress is formally minuted.
- There is public recognition of GME pupils as commanding equal status with their GME peers, and a confirmation that they will receive a high quality education along with all of Edinburgh's children.
- There is an unqualified ongoing support for GME in Edinburgh, and a commitment to keep GME open to all families who wish it for their children.

We look forward to reviewing the Council's draft 0-18 educational strategy for Gaelic education, and to offering our assistance in its implementation.