

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann): Secondary Group

Report to AGM: 22 May 2019

This is the report of the Secondary Group to the Comann nam Pàrant AGM on current position of Edinburgh Council proposals on secondary GME, the main issues which will have to be addressed over the coming months and years, and the questions that are and will be raised with the Council through the Gaelic Implementation Group (GIG) and in other forums for inclusion in the Council's planning process.

Secondary GME: current position and proposals

James Gillespie's High School (JGHS) is the GME secondary in Edinburgh, currently with 109 GME pupils at all stages on its roll. The GME intake into JGHS has been rising slowly over recent years, and is projected to rise more steeply in the near future as increases in year groups at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce (TnP) feed through into secondary. Figures for the projected intake into secondary GME from 2019 based on current TnP classes, and the resultant total secondary population is as follows:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
GME intake	28	45	61	50	55	76	63
Total GME secondary	131	163	207	235	262	315	350

JGHS is currently projected to exceed its capacity of 1300 by approximately 600 over the next 10 years if no other steps are taken, and Edinburgh Council has indicated that it aims to provide a solution both to rising rolls at JGHS and to the provision of secondary GME to a rising school population through a single scheme. The Council has indicated that:

- Temporary accommodation will be put in place on the JGHS campus for 2019-2021
- The Darroch building (Gillespie Street) will be refurbished and ready for use as additional JGHS accommodation from 2021, and as a second GME primary from 2024 (or earlier if accommodation can be shared)
- A new GME secondary on a separate site (yet to be decided) will be open from 2024

In order to implement this plan Edinburgh Council has to carry out a statutory consultation process under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. This will have to be completed by November 2020 in order for new arrangements to be in place before the August 2021 schools intake. As a statutory consultation process has a defined course – including a public consultation period, a public meeting, a report by the Education Inspectorate, publication of a report on the consultation outcome, the Council's decision, and an opportunity for the Government to 'call in' a decision – it will be necessary for the statutory consultation process to start, at the latest, in February 2020.

Arrangements up to 2024 and beyond

The Council's current preference is that all GME pupils who enter JGHS as secondary pupils from 2021 (i.e. those entering S1-S4 in 2024) will be transferred to the new GME secondary, meaning the removal from the JGHS roll of approximately 250 GME pupils. The actual grouping of children moving from JGHS at that time is still under discussion; however, whatever the final arrangements, a major change in GME schooling arrangements will take place in 2024.

It is envisaged that the period during which secondary GME provision will be transitioning to the new school will last at least until 2026, and the earliest departure of the last remaining GME pupil at JGHS. However, any delay in the building project, or any revision of the cohort transferring to the new GME secondary taking it below the S4 class, will mean this transition period will be extended. In addition, a second GME primary school at Darroch, with a new catchment area being put in place probably from 2021, would mean pupils from this school entering secondary from 2028. The Darroch building has a capacity for a two-stream primary of 400 - 500 pupils, could provide an intake of up to approximately 60 pupils per year for the new GME secondary.

The following is a brief overview of the main areas which will require consideration in achieving an effective transition to new secondary GME arrangements and the successful establishment of a new GME secondary school. It should be noted that this report does not deal directly with issues connected to the location of the new GME secondary, although this will clearly have an effect on transition and the future provision of secondary GME.

Curriculum and staffing

Subject offering

JGHS currently offers Gàidhlig as a subject for S1 – S6 classes. Other subjects provided (in part) through Gàidhlig to some pupils at S1 and S2 are Geography, History, Modern Studies, PE and Art. JGHS and Edinburgh Council recognise that it will be necessary for GME secondary staffing and curriculum to be significantly expanded between now and 2024 to create both a basis of personnel and a sufficiently wide curriculum offering through Gàidhlig for the successful establishment of a GME secondary.

JGHS has been increasing its GME staffing this year with the intention that, from 2019, over 50% of the S1 curriculum will be provided through Gàidhlig in S1 and S2 to include: Geography, History, Modern Studies, PE, Art, Drama/Media, Maths and Science. In addition, an S3 National 5 History class which will operate partly through Gàidhlig has been created.

Continued progress will need to be made to create both breadth and depth in GME provision, as most subjects are currently covered by only one teacher. As a means to introduce additional subjects through Gàidhlig, and to offer greater resilience in the system, the Council is also exploring options for subjects being offered at a distance, through 'e-sgoil'.

Along with Gàidhlig as a subject, the SQA offers exams in Cruinn-Eòlas (Geography), Eachdraidh (History), Matamataig (Maths) and Nuadh-Eòlas (Modern Studies) through Gàidhlig. SQA has indicated that further subject areas can be offered, if requested. As the Gàidhlig curriculum expands at JGHS, consideration will need to be given to when the school starts to offer SQA examinations through Gàidhlig.

Staffing

As mentioned above, there has been an increase in staff employed to deliver teaching through Gàidhlig at JGHS and this has been achieved in particular through the employment of a Curriculum Leader and a new social subjects teacher. Other staff are currently being trained in GME through the GIFT (Gaelic Immersion for Teachers) course and will be deployed as GME staff from 2019. In addition, a post with responsibility for Gaelic and Support for Learning has recently been created and filled. Up to this point there had been no GME Support for Learning provision at JGHS.

To create a body of teaching staff sufficient for the requirements of a new school and able to provide a broad-based curriculum delivered through Gàidhlig will clearly require a sustained, year-on-year growth in numbers and subject-area cover. In due course, promoted posts will have to be created and filled in preparation for transition. Along with growth in numbers, quality of provision both in subject areas and in Gàidhlig language must be maintained. A number of teaching staff who will be delivering courses through Gàidhlig have only recently come to GME teaching, often as learners of Gaelic, and they will need initial and on-going support in developing their skills in a school setting. Further, in many subject areas there is neither a curriculum nor resources in Gàidhlig, and staff will need time to create the necessary materials, and the opportunity to work with staff in other local authority areas also delivering secondary GME.

Curriculum Organisation

JGHS currently operates a 2:2:2 curricular system whereby pupils are in a broad general education (BGE) phase in S1/S2, and from S3 move into classes for National 4/5 examinations (with eight subject choices) which are taken in S4. Highers and Advanced Highers are taken in S5/6.

This differs from the 3:3 curricular organisation used across Scotland generally, and in Edinburgh in particular, where the BGE phase continues from S1 – S3, and in the senior phase subjects are chosen and studied for National 4/5, and thereafter Higher and Advanced Higher, only from S4 onwards.

A decision will have to be taken prior to the consultation on which curriculum arrangement will be used in the new GME secondary and, if it is not the system currently applied at JGHS, how transition from one system to another will be managed. JGHS have indicated that it is unlikely that the school would be able to run two different curriculum models concurrently in the period up to 2024.

Primary-Secondary transition

JGHS has traditionally offered a very limited range of subjects taught through Gàidhlig – at some points in time, only covering the language itself. This has meant that pupils typically went from a primary school setting with a broad educational input in Gàidhlig, to one where it was a very small part of largely English-medium curriculum. The expansion in GME staffing and curriculum now underway, and which will continue up to 2024 and beyond, means that Gàidhlig used across a range of subject areas should be the norm from 2019.

In recent years staffing difficulties have meant that pupils at the upper end of primary have not always received the whole, or even most, of their schooling through Gàidhlig. This potentially raises issues around the preparation of children at the upper end of primary school for coping with a significant level of Gàidhlig in the secondary curriculum. In addition, an enhanced level of support of Additional Learning Needs through Gàidhlig will be required both at secondary level and in the period of transition from primary to secondary. In recent months secondary staff have been deployed in the upper school at TnP with the aim of providing an enhanced transition to secondary and an additional Gàidhlig resource. It is currently envisaged that this arrangement will continue into the 2019/20 session.

JGHS-new GME secondary transition

In order to maximise the use of space at a new GME secondary – and to ease overcrowding at JGHS – the Council envisages that all GME pupils entering S1-S4 in 2024 will transfer to the new GME secondary. The educational repercussions of this approach need to be explored, so that the decision is not driven by space in school buildings alone and, in particular, that the needs of S4 students about to sit exams are considered. There is also the possibility that this will also involve a transition from one kind of curriculum organisation to another, which also needs to be taken into account.

In the only in other model of this sort of transition – Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu – transition was achieved by new S1s and those amongst the S2 cohort who chose to do so, so the approach currently being advocated has not been attempted elsewhere.

Whatever approach is taken, there will be a cohort of GME students who will remain at JGHS and who will require to continue to be taught by GME staff which will necessitate travel between two sites for the period until those students have left JGHS, which will be a period of at least two years.

Overview

From 2019 onwards there will be an evolving situation with regards to secondary GME provision. Numbers in secondary GME will rise significantly from just over 100 to approximately 350 and, at the same time, GME curriculum and staffing will be expanded significantly in preparation for the new GME secondary.

A significantly expanded GME curriculum in S1 and S2 is already being planned for the S1 cohorts entering JGHS in 2019 and 2020 (currently Cl. 6 and Cl. 7) and other subjects starting to be offered through Gàidhlig at National 4/5 level. Under any currently envisaged scheme, these two year group will continue at JGHS and will be in S5/6 in 2024 when the new GME secondary opens.

On the Council's current proposal, the class entering S1 in 2021 (current Cl. 5) will transfer to the new GME secondary in 2024 when they will be in S4. By this point it is envisaged that they will transfer with a coherent group of GME staff and will be studying at least some subjects through Gàidhlig from S3, having had the majority of the curriculum in S1/2 delivered through Gàidhlig.

The S1 cohorts in 2022 and 2023 (current Cl. 3 and Cl. 4) will be in a similar position to this class, and will transfer to the new school in 2024, when they will be the S2 and S3 classes.

The S1 cohort in 2024 will be the first group to attend the new school for their whole secondary education.

In addition to these groups, the GME classes which are currently S1-S5 in JGHS will see an evolving situation with regard to Gàidhlig provision at JGHS. For the upper school this will manifest itself through the expansion of GME staffing, meaning greater support for students – particularly in covering issues such as sickness and other absences – and the possibility of an expansion of extra-curricular activities. It is not currently planned to offer any additional GME class options to these year groups although Comann nam Pàrant has pushed for greater use of GME staff in providing compulsory courses (such as PE). For the class entering S3 in 2019 the school has created an additional History class, which will partly be taught through Gàidhlig. It is anticipated that arrangements of this sort will be continued and developed from 2020 onwards, including movement towards SQA examinations being taken in Gàidhlig in some subject areas.

Main issues

The Secondary Group identifies the following as the main questions which should be raised with Edinburgh Council, and addressed in the planning process prior to the commencement of the statutory consultation process:

- How will it be ensured that both GME staffing and curriculum provision continue to expand in the period until 2024 and, in particular, is there funding to achieve this aim? How will the Council aim to include staff within the Council area with Gaelic but not currently in GME posts, or support staff through GIFT?
- How will staff new to GME teaching be supported in their new role, and how will their language skills continue to be developed?
- How will Support for Learning for GME be developed, and what support will be provided to staff working in this area?
- What is the model for creating a GME 'unit' within JGHS which will allow transfer of pupils and staff to a new school, both with reference to timetabling, and to use of space (e.g. both within the main JGHS campus, and at the Darroch)? At the same time, how will GME pupils continue to be integrated within the wider JGHS community?
- How will the educational issues surrounding a decision on which cohort of children will transfer to the new GME secondary be taken, and who will be involved? How will this relate to the issue of the curriculum model for the new GME secondary?

- How is it planned for e-sgoil to be introduced and used in secondary GME?
- What use will be made of experience of secondary GME provision in other local authority areas, and in particular in relation to curriculum development? What planning is taking place with Stòrlann for provision of teaching materials?
- What planning and coordination will take place with other local authority areas regarding a move to SQA exams being taken through Gàidhlig?
- How will a decision be reached on a curriculum model for the new GME secondary, by whom, and in what timescale? What issues will be taken into account in this decision, and if there is a move to a new curriculum model, how will the transition be managed with JGHS?
- What is the timeline for the appointment of promoted posts for the new GME secondary following the consultation?
- What are the contingency plans for a delay in the building project for the new school?
- How will the period of dual provision of GME teaching at both the new school and JGHS be dealt with? How will this affect the GME curriculum offered to those continuing at JGHS?

Secondary Group

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