

# GME Families' Representatives Report From City of Edinburgh Council Gaelic Implementation Group Meeting

## City Chambers

### 12/06/19

#### **In attendance:**

Cllr Alison Dickie (Chair)  
Cllr Steven Burgess  
Cllr Calum Laidlaw  
Beth Hall (officer strategy and Insight)  
Bethan Owen (QIO GME education and families)  
Crawford McGhie (Acting Head of Estates)  
Joyce Nesbit (officer Comms)  
Jo Navarro (officer culture)  
Jim Galloway (officer Economic Development)  
Frances Rice (Youth Music Initiative coordinator)  
Donald Macdonald (Head Teacher JGHS)  
Anne MacPhail (Head Teacher TnP)  
Natalie Cameron (Young person representative)  
Alasdair Cameron (Òganan)  
Gillian Turner (Newbattle Abbey College)  
Brian Thunder (Comann nam Pàrant GIG representative)  
Ailsa Macintosh (JGHS PC Chair)  
Calum Carlyle (TnP PC GIG representative)

#### **Apologies:**

Jennifer Gilmore (Cròileagan)  
Kevin Leetion (Convenor Comann nam Pàrant)

#### **Introduction**

Representatives from Comann nam Pàrant (Dun Èideann) and the Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce Parent Council attended Edinburgh Council's Gaelic Implementation Group (GIG) at City Chambers. GIG is the body which oversees the implementation of Edinburgh Council's Gaelic Language Plan (GLP). It consists of councillors, council officers and relevant stakeholders.

#### **Edinburgh Council meeting with JGHS pupils**

Natalie Cameron, Alison Dickie and Crawford McGhie reported on a meeting they had with pupils from James Gillespie's High School (JGHS) on the subject of the future of GME secondary education. A selection of students across all year groups at JGHS took part and expressed a variety of views. The students recognised the importance of continuing to deliver Gaelic immersion through S1 to S3, but had concerns regarding consistency of language within a subject, and some lacked the confidence/fluency to sit the exams in Gaelic.

Students also expressed concerns about opportunities which may be available to Gaelic speakers. Many students would like to keep speaking Gaelic after school but do not feel they are aware of what opportunities might be open to them to allow them to do this. Suggestions were made to explore options to make pupils aware of the career opportunities that are available to Gaelic speakers.

It was suggested that while canvassing the view of GME pupils at JGHS was welcome and worthwhile it would be useful to examine the views of other GME pupils and in particular pupils at Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu. Donald Macdonald (Head Teacher at JGHS) confirmed that these connections are in place and will be strengthened in future. Proposals for a peer to peer meeting of GME pupils in Edinburgh and Glasgow will be explored.

## Education

Bethan Owen gave an update on Education developments.

Work is ongoing to ensure Early Years can continue to cope with growing demand for GME, while also incorporating the increase of Early Years provision from 600 hours to 1140 hours per child from August 2020. Options include offering longer sessions for Early Years, including longer opening times for Sgoil Araich, as well as the possibility of keeping Early Years open during school holidays. Anne MacPhail confirmed that there would be no reduction in places available as a result of changes to Early Years provision.

Bethan Owen confirmed there are strengthening working arrangements being made between JGHS and Taobh na Pàirce, (TnP) with more secondary teachers now working with the primary school, though this could be expanded further to provide primary teachers more opportunities to work within JGHS as well. There is also the possibility for staff and students to work more closely with Newbattle Abbey College which provides a range of training in Gaelic.

Donald Macdonald confirmed there are now ten teachers at JGHS who can teach through the medium of Gaelic, and this will be utilised from August to deliver a more comprehensive degree of GME immersion to new S1 students, however he made the case that staffing changes and projected expansion of GME mean that recruiting should continue to happen ahead of need. In order to grow a “school within a school” with a view to creating a GME High School, JGHS must be resourced to achieve this, and recruiting would need to continue, as well as encouraging GME students to consider a career in GME teaching. There was also some discussion about how this strategy ties in nationally, and whether strategies are affecting the availability of GME teachers across the country.

He asked that consideration be given to the specific need to fund this expansion project and that it could not come simply from a school’s budget but would require additional finance.

Anne MacPhail reported that interviews were taking place and she expected that TnP would have a full teaching staff from August 2019. She added that not all members of staff would be fluent Gaelic speakers. Brian Thunder raised a concern from parents about the degree of immersion being provided within TnP, and whether this is being delivered consistently to each class within each year group. Anne MacPhail responded that while full immersion was not currently possible, P1 to P3 classes do receive almost full immersion, and where there are Gaelic learner teachers

leading a class, these are supported by fluent Gaelic speaking teachers, and these are rotated to give equivalent immersion provision across the classes.

When asked what measures could be taken to alleviate this situation Anne MacPhail suggested that incentives could be offered to attract more Gaelic speakers from outside Edinburgh to teach in the city.

Bethan Owen stated that having been working closely with GME staff her team recognised the dedication and extra workload that GME staff take on board.

Beth Hall presented the updated GLP Implementation plan which shows work which is underway and proposed to meet the GLP *strategic priority 2 – Confident “Our communities are supported to be fluent and confident Gaelic speakers”*

Education at all levels including adult education is covered in this section of the GLP implementation plan.

### **Gaelic Development Officer**

Beth Hall reported that applications for the post of Corporate Gaelic Development Officer (GDO) have now closed and they had received a positive response to the advertisement which had been shared widely. She expected that interviews for the post could be conducted by the end of June or early July. She expected that the interview panel would have representatives from within the council from both Education and Strategy and Insight and would also include an individual who could assess fluency in Gàidhlig.

### **CEC Meeting With GME Families**

Documents presented to GIG were not considered in detail as officers have asked for additional time to prepare responses which will be presented at a meeting with GME families in August. This meeting will examine proposal for future GME secondary provision and we expect that the priorities of parents will be included in this presentation.

Consequently the meeting proposed for 20<sup>th</sup> June has now been cancelled and Edinburgh Council will propose a date for a rearranged meeting in August. Assurances were given that the date for this meeting would be made known before the summer holidays.