

GME Secondary School

Parents' Priorities

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann)

June 2019

Introduction

This paper is intended to summarise the views of parents and carers of children in Gaelic-medium education in Edinburgh regarding the future direction of secondary education in the city, as expressed to Comann nam Pàrant Dùn Èideann & Lodainn ("CnP Dùn Èideann").

CnP Dùn Èideann is a voluntary association which aims to promote and support Gaelic-medium education ("GME") in Edinburgh and the Lothians. It is the representative body for parents with children in GME.

The views and opinions expressed within this paper are based upon:

- CnP's Dùn Èideann's vision for secondary GME, created in 2015 following a number of open meetings and endorsed at numerous parental meetings since then, and specifically at a well-attended meeting on 20th March 2019 to examine the subject of this paper.
- Previous papers produced following consultation with Parents and carers. ([paper on secondary development](#) and [vision for secondary GME in Edinburgh](#))
- Verbal and written views of parents expressed to members of the CnP Dùn Èideann committee.
- The experience gained in the years 2010 and 2011 when CnP Dùn Èideann campaigned simultaneously for a Gaelic-medium primary school and against the move of secondary GME to a new location.

The specific purpose of this paper is to examine parents' priorities to assist in evaluating the suitability of future locations for GME secondary provision.

We do not intend this to be used as part of a future Statutory Consultation, but as an aid to assist Edinburgh Council in deciding which location(s) they might wish to bring forward to a Statutory Consultation. A location which meets the criteria prioritised by parents is likely to be favoured in consultation responses.

This paper should be considered in the context of the document, "*Advice on Gaelic Education*" ("the Advice") published in February 2015 by Education Scotland. The

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Advice provides a very useful examination of best practice in the delivery of GME. The secondary stages of GME are covered in section 9 of the Advice.

The key messages from the Advice relating specifically to secondary GME include the following points:

- The secondary level GME curriculum should remain one based on the principles of immersion.
- Schools need to aim to deliver a sufficient proportion of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic.

It is helpful to the understanding of the context of GME delivery to read the whole of the Advice.

The views expressed in this paper should be considered alongside the paper [*Comann nam Pàrant \(Dùn Èideann\) paper on secondary development October 2015*](#).

Vision for Secondary GME

Following a number of open meetings CnP Dùn Èideann produced an overall development vision for secondary GME in November 2015.

This document states that parents have agreed on the following statements:

1. Parents share the vision of a much enhanced and improved Gaelic-medium experience for our children at secondary school. This would include a greater percentage of the timetable to be delivered through the medium of Gaelic.
2. Parents share the vision of a growing Gaelic-medium community at secondary school, and the vision of this community staying together in one school.

These statements are the basis for developing a long term vision for secondary GME in Edinburgh. They have been put forward and endorsed by consensus at several open meetings since 2015.

[This vision is available here.](#)

Evaluating Secondary Locations

An open meeting was held for GME parents and carers at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce on 20th March 2019. The meeting was well attended and addressed two questions:

1. **What does a “successful” Gaelic secondary school look like?**
2. **What criteria could be used to assess the proposals for the location and design of Edinburgh's Gaelic secondary school that will be put to us by the City of Edinburgh Council over the next year?**

These questions were circulated to all parents and carers in advance of that meeting, and were then examined by those present in breakout discussion groups. Collated feedback from the meeting was made available to all parents and carers and email responses from those unable to attend have been included in the drafting of this paper.

1. **What does a “successful” Gaelic secondary school look like?**

Parents’ key priorities in response to this question can be summarised as:

- A **high quality education** in a well-managed school, with a broad range of subjects and extra-curricular activities offered, along with full support for learning.
- An **enhanced Gaelic immersion experience** as part of the above, with an aim to produce confident and fluent adult Gaelic speakers.

High Quality Education

Some of the areas discussed with regard to **high quality education** include delivering a wide educational experience; encompassing all the areas expected in a high school such as drama, media, music, art and sport. Pupils should have access to good facilities for a range of learning experiences. Pupils have the right to access learning support for all subjects and high quality pastoral care.

Quality of education will be dependent on the head teacher and management team being able to provide leadership that will give parents and staff confidence in the educational pathway.

Staff should be supported by access to professional development opportunities, including an understanding that extra time may be required to allow them to develop their own language skills and time to develop resource materials for their subjects.

Enhanced Gaelic Immersion Experience

An **enhanced Gaelic immersion experience** should mean a continuing increase in the number of subjects offered through the medium of Gaelic. All learning should be supported by Support for Learning in Gaelic and English. Learning should be supported with high quality Gaelic resources.

There is a widely held view that a stand-alone school would allow a better Gaelic immersion experience and prevent GME pupils from being seen as “other” and lacking in parity with EME. Parents are concerned about GME pupils being considered as a minority within a wider EME campus.

Enhancing the GME experience needs an enrichment of the secondary school years which will include community involvement in extra-curricular activities, and a link with the aspirations of the Gaelic Language Plan.

2. What criteria could be used to assess the proposals for the location and design of Edinburgh's Gaelic secondary school that will be put to us by the City of Edinburgh Council over the next year?

The themes which emerged from parents’ discussions around this question were:

- That any location should **support the educational aims** of high quality education within a Gaelic immersion environment, and should provide a permanent home for GME secondary.
- In terms of geography, the specific needs of a **city-wide catchment** need to be carefully considered.
- **Design and environment** play a large part in successful education, and this should be fully considered; alongside considerations of impact on wider environment.

Supporting Educational Aims

A location which **supports the educational aims** of a successful Gaelic school is clearly a key priority for parents. While parents show a willingness to fully consider all the available options, they are clear that the school must have a distinct Gaelic ethos and its location must support full immersion. There should be no barriers to the positive promotion of Gaelic within the school environment.

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The location should be supported by a full assessment of future capacity needs, to ensure that it can meet the needs of GME in Edinburgh for the long term.

There is an overall view that all locations suggested must demonstrably support the key priorities of high quality education and enhanced Gaelic immersion experience.

City-Wide Catchment

Due to the school's **city-wide catchment**, consideration must be given to centrality of location, transport links, and practical travel time. Parents are enthusiastic about supporting active travel to school (walking and cycling) and links with these networks would be well received.

Consideration should be given to the expected future expansion of GME primary provision in Edinburgh and how this will also link with a new secondary location.

Parents want the new Gaelic school to be a fully integrated part of the Edinburgh school estate, with links with other Edinburgh schools and colleges. We hope also to forge links with other GME schools around Scotland, and other minority language schools internationally.

Design And Environment

Parents expect that the **design and environment** of the new school will be to the best technical standards, and will promote healthy learning. Good acoustics and visibility in inside spaces should be supported by green spaces and access to the outdoors. We know that our children are very concerned about climate change, and we trust that this will be a school they can be proud of.

Parents also hope that the school will have the ability to host Gaelic cultural and sporting events, and will become another Gaelic hub for Edinburgh.

Conclusion

CnP Dùn Èideann looks forward to working closely with Edinburgh Council during this exciting period of growth and expansion for GME in Edinburgh. GME parents are committed to taking a collaborative approach towards dealing with challenges which may arise in establishing a new secondary site, and during the transition period.

Throughout this process, the quality of education for pupils remains the key priority.

We expect Edinburgh Council to present a plan to GME parents which demonstrates how each proposed location will enhance the **quality of education** and the **Gaelic immersion experience** for GME pupils.