



**Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)**

Summary of responses to  
Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)'s survey  
of Gaelic Medium Education families  
on The City of Edinburgh Council's proposals  
for GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh

January 2022

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## **Summary of responses to Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)'s (CnP) survey of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) families on The City of Edinburgh Council's ('the Council') proposals for GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh – January 2022.**

### **Executive Summary**

- On 1 December 2021, the Council shared its updated proposals on GME secondary school consultation, including two additional sites for consideration, and indicated its aim to commence a statutory consultation in January 2022. In order to inform discussions about these proposals that were due to take place between CnP and the Council on 14 December 2021, CnP conducted a survey of families in GME. We were already aware that many parents felt that they did not have enough information from the Council and a new survey provided the opportunity for us to further understand from them the areas of crucial information they found unclear or absent from the proposals.
- The initial findings from the survey were used in CnP's discussions with the Council on 14 December 2021. The summary below presents further detail of the information that was gathered using the survey.
- The survey received 125 individual responses, incorporating almost every current GME year group. Year groups that would be most affected by the proposals, ie C3, C4 and C5, were particularly well-represented. This summary outlines the results of the survey and provides recommendations based on its current findings.
- Across each of 12 topics relating to the proposals, a majority of respondents indicated that they required further information about 11 of the 12 topics. 81% of respondents indicated that they require further information on the topic of Curriculum. The topics with the next highest proportion of respondents indicating a requirement for further information were Location (76%), Timescales (73%), Staffing (70%) and Transitions (69%).
- Detailed breakdowns of the frequency with which important themes were mentioned are provided for each topic, as well as examples of particular questions raised by respondents.
- The results of this survey strongly indicate that the vast majority of GME families continue to lack sufficiently detailed information on almost all aspects of the Council's proposals to allow them to meaningfully appraise the options. It is also clear that the majority of GME families do not believe that the Council has carried out sufficient meaningful engagement with the GME community in order to garner confidence in its ability or motivation to deliver a successful outcome to this important project for young learners.

## 1. Background

On 1 December 2021 the Council shared a report on updated proposals for GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh. The report described two new potential sites (the former Royal Victoria Hospital and the former Castlebrae High School) for consideration in addition to the site that was described in the Council's informal consultation (which took place in December 2020). The report also includes copies of correspondence between the Council and the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills in relation to potential sites for GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh and the SNP's May 2020 election manifesto on this topic. The Council indicated that the report would be presented at a meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee on 7 December 2021 and that, at that meeting, approval would be sought to present a draft statutory consultation report to a special meeting of the Committee in January, with the intention of commencing a statutory consultation on 31 January 2022.

CnP submitted a written deputation to the Committee meeting highlighting - as it has on previous occasions - the longstanding concerns and unanswered questions of GME families relating to the Council's proposals.<sup>1</sup> CnP's deputation recommended that, rather than bring a draft statutory consultation report to a Committee meeting in January 2022, that the Council take the time to prepare and present detailed pre-consultation information, to communicate and engage with families, and to fully address the concerns raised by CnP in the past year.

At the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting on 7 December 2021, the Committee voted for the motion to present a draft statutory consultation report to a special meeting of the Committee in January, despite proposed amendments from the Scottish Green Party and the objections raised in CnP's deputation. Committee members stated its belief that the GME community had sufficient information about the proposals and, as such, the Committee felt it appropriate to progress towards a statutory consultation.

On 2 December 2021, members of CnP, along with the Chairs of the Parent Councils for Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce (TnP) and James Gillespie's High School (JGHS), were invited to attend a meeting with the Council representatives, to take place on 14 December. Despite written requests from the Chair of JGHS Parent Council, the format of this meeting was not clear. Nor was it clear whether this meeting formed the entirety of the informal consultation with the GME community proposed in the Council's recent report, scheduled to take place 'during the remainder of December'<sup>2</sup>.

Given the short timescale between the release of the updated proposals and the potential commencement of a statutory consultation, as well as the lack of clarity around the extent of any informal consultation in advance of a statutory consultation, CnP agreed to carry out a survey of GME families in order to inform its contribution to the meeting on 14 December. The purpose of the survey was to find out from GME families whether there were aspects of the updated proposals on which families required further information, and to provide examples of such information gaps, so that these could be reflected by CnP in the meeting with the Council.

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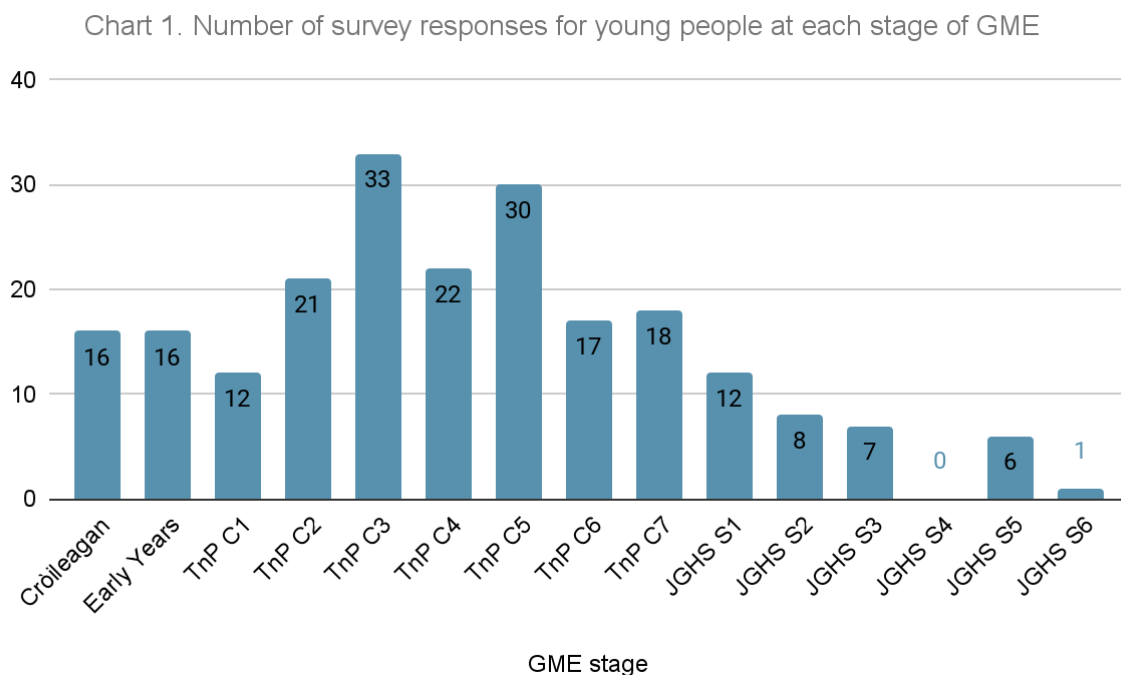
<sup>1</sup> [Comann nam Pàrant \(Dùn Èideann is Lodainn\) Written Deputation to Education, Children and Families Committee Tuesday 7 December 2021 at 10am](#)

<sup>2</sup> [City of Edinburgh Council, Update on Gaelic Medium Education Statutory Consultation](#)

The survey was conducted using Google Forms. It was launched on 8 December 2021 and was advertised through CnP’s mailing list, Classlist, various TnP/JGHS class-specific WhatsApp groups as well as CnP and TnP’s Facebook pages. The survey ran until 12 December. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix 1.

## 2. Responses to Survey

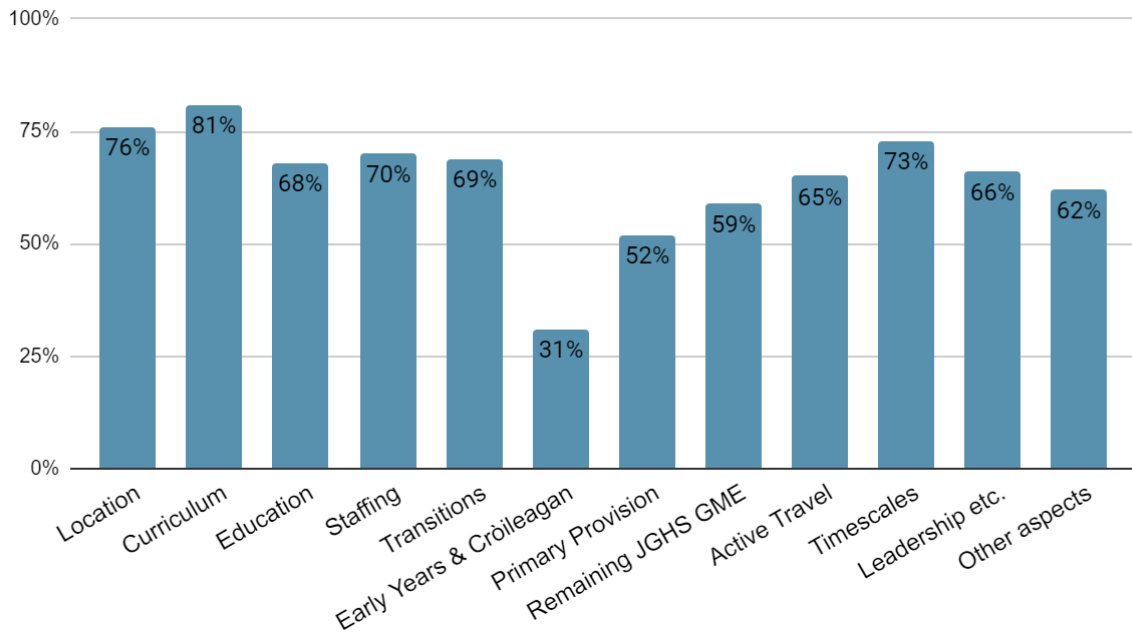
A total of 125 individuals responded to the survey. Responses were received from families with children at almost every stage of GME from Cròileagan (0-3 years) to JGHS S6. The year groups that would be most affected by the proposals for GME secondary provision, ie C3, C4 and C5, are particularly well-represented. See Chart 1 below of the numbers of survey responses for children and young people at each stage of GME.



Each respondent was asked whether they required further information (in addition to that contained in the Council’s report) on a range of topics. See Chart 2 below for the proportions of responses indicating that further information is required on each topic.

The majority of respondents indicated that they required further information on all but one of the topics (impact of proposals on early years and cròileagan). 81% of respondents indicated that they require further information about the curriculum at the proposed options for GME secondary school provision. The topics with the next highest proportion of respondents indicating a requirement for further information were Location (76%), Timescales (73%), Staffing (70%) and Transitions (69%).

Chart 2. Proportion of responses indicating further information required on each topic



The following sections 2.1 to 2.12 provide further detail as to the type of information that respondents feel is required from the Council in order to meaningfully appraise its proposals for GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh. Comments and questions in the responses for each topic were grouped into themes. The frequency with which each theme arose is reflected in the table for each question.

## 2.1 Information Required about Location(s) of proposed options for GME secondary provision

Theme	Frequency
Location Assessment	44
Standalone/Co-located	15
Council's Criteria	12
Support a Gaelic Community Purpose	9
Design and Facilities	9
Scottish Government/SNP Manifesto Commitment	8
Centrality	8
Dropout Risk (due to excessive travel times)	6
Role of JGHS Rising Rolls	5
Shuttle Buses	3
Climate Impact	3

A detailed **Location Assessment** is still sought for each proposal, including illustration of the impact on travel times and methods, characteristics of each site, suitability for a city-wide catchment, and ability to serve the Lothians. Questions in this theme centred around the lack of detail to support the suitability of any location. Responses also asked for justification of locations with respect to the existing GME primary school and, more broadly, how it would support a community purpose specific to Gaelic. Parents would like more clarity on why earlier site options were discounted. Questions and comments included:

- *'I would like an impact assessment of locations against the council's own 20 minute neighbourhood principles, taking into account where the children of Edinburgh live.'*
- *'How much capacity for growth is there at any location?'*
- *'How well does the location support active travel?'*
- *'How well does it support children arriving in Edinburgh by train?'*

Questions related to the nature of a **Standalone/Co-located** campus included requests for the rationale for choosing one model over the other, how would the the quality of Gaelic immersion differ, would the quality of education change, how would each option enable the delivery of broad general education and a full curriculum, and what would the nature of the relationship with local EME schools be in terms of curriculum delivery. Questions and comments included:

- *'What are all the options both for a standalone school or a shared campus? We have heard about Liberton shared campus. But now there are the possibilities of a stand-alone school at the Royal Victoria site and Castlebrae.'*
- *'What will the differences be if [the]campus is on its own site compared to a joint campus?'*

Parents sought information on the **Council's Criteria** that are driving the timescales and the preferred location, and asked questions such as *'why would the Council progress to statutory consultation while so much uncertainty remained?'* Parents also wanted to understand if lowest cost was the driving criterion, and why the upcoming Council elections should be a factor in making a decision on educational benefit.

A recurring theme was how any location would **Support a Gaelic Community Purpose**. Responses focused on how easy it would be for any site to maintain links between primaries and secondary, and how the Gaelic community would be embedded in the local community of any location.

- *'How do each of these locations support the idea of a Gaelic hub, or community, or Gaelic speaking? Having more Gaelic being spoken in a neighbourhood is the most educationally effective way of ensuring the continuation and growth of a minority language. Diluting the language by spreading the locations far apart is not in the best interest of sustaining a minority language.'*

**Design and Facilities** questions relate to the nature of the design process, for example, if the school would be a new building, what facilities would exist in each location. In a shared campus model, parents sought greater clarification on the nature of the shared resources and shared areas.

- *'Would any site include a new GME primary and what is the intended capacity of the primary and secondary?'*

Parents wanted to understand how any location was compatible with the **Scottish Government/SNP Manifesto Commitment** to a standalone, centrally-located site. Respondents also wanted to know what was required to develop this option and if the Council would take the time to develop this and work with the Scottish Government on this outcome.

- *'Would any site include a new GME primary and what is the intended capacity of the primary and secondary?'*

Parents' responses concerning **Centrality** requested more information on the central locations proposed and also clarity on how sites in seemingly peripheral locations were categorised as central by the Council.

**Dropout Risk** was raised, and questions centred on whether the Council acknowledged the risks of families withdrawing from GME if a location which introduced excessive travel times was progressed.

Respondents would like to understand why the **JGHS Rising Rolls** is used as a factor by the Council, and several requested that this not be used as a factor in determining timescales.

Respondents asked questions on the offer of **Shuttle Buses** linking primary and secondary sites, and how long this commitment would continue.

**Climate Impact** was raised in relation to **Location Assessment**, but there were also specific questions regarding the impact on climate of any location with respect to increased needs for transport by car and bus.



## 2.2 Information Required about Curriculum at proposed options for GME secondary provision

Theme	Frequency
Breadth of curriculum	28
Curriculum through Gaelic	27
Staffing and Recruitment	20
Curriculum Delivery/Relationship to Surrounding Schools	15
Plan for Curriculum Growth	8
Educational Benefit	8
Breadth of curriculum - Non Academic	6
Transition of Staff	5
Darroch Curriculum	5
Staff Professional Development	3
Travel to other sites	2
Transition of Pupils	2
Impact on Immersive Curriculum at Co-located Campus	2
Comparison to Glasgow	2

Parents raised significant concerns around the **deliverability** of the **breadth of curriculum** in a new high school, whether co-located or standalone.

- *‘How will the offer be equitable or better than the current offer?’*
- *‘How many subjects will be offered in the new school?’*
- *‘What will the reliance on EME be to ensure breadth of offer?’*
- *‘What examination model will be followed?’*
- *‘What subjects will be offered?’*
- *‘Will there be a full choice?’*
- *How will our young people not be disadvantaged given the smaller numbers initially?’.*

There was also a significant amount of questions and responses around the breadth of the curriculum.

Alongside this were questions around the **delivery of the curriculum in Gaelic**, including multiple comments linked to ability of staff and **subject choices**. There were many observations about a lack of staff who could teach in Gaelic and queries around plans to ensure there were increases to **teacher numbers**. With regards to GME, there were a number of parents who raised questions around the SQA exams and delivery of examination subjects in Gaelic and English, as well as questions about extracurricular activities, and what

would be offered and how would this be in line with other offers in high school.

- *'How much of the timetable would be in Gaelic?'*
- *'What model of examination would be followed?'*
- *'What about facilities and the deliverability of arts and non academic subjects?'*

Following this were several comments around what the **options for the curriculum** would be in the different locations and its structure which are proposed for statutory consultation. Resources, such as the library and a full support staff, were also raised.

- *'How would the offer differ between sites?'*
- *'Would our young people be travelling between sites for subjects?'*

**Transition** during the change to a GME high school was also raised as an area for consideration, as well as asking the Council if they had consulted with the Glasgow City local authority.

Parents asked to understand fully the **options for the education and curriculum** of the different sites proposed and how these curriculum models would be delivered in the different scenarios. Parents wanted to know how the Council would ensure that what was offered was **equitable to the current offer**.

### 2.3 Information Required about Educational Benefits associated with proposed options for GME secondary provision

Theme	Frequency
Educational Benefits of Co-location	26
Educational Benefits of Standalone	22
Educational Benefits Specific to Gaelic	11
Comparison to JGHS	7
Consideration of Minority Language Best Practice Research	7
Educational Benefits Statement and Criteria	6
Plan to achieve a Beneficial State	3
Impact on Educational Benefits due to Travel	3
Extra Curricular Activities	3
Outside Expertise	2
Educational Benefits for initial cohort	2
Conflation with Rising Rolls	2

Under several sub-themes, responses from parents to this question emphatically illustrate the need for detailed and clear information, including an **Educational Benefits statement for both a co-located and standalone option** to understand the criteria against which the educational benefits of the options are being measured and assessed. It was further recommended that the educational benefit analysis should be undertaken by a third party with experience in this area.

Parents frequently requested further information as to the **Educational Benefits of Co-location** and justification as to why this is the Council's preferred option. Parents also requested a more complete exploration of the **Educational Benefits of Standalone**, which many parents see as preferable. Parents frequently commented on the need for clearer statements around the educational benefits of the two sites and the ways in which they differ.

- *'How does a stand alone site compare to a shared campus?'*
- *'What are the differences in the educational benefits between all the options, particularly stand-alone compared to a shared campus?'*

Parents queried how the educational benefits could be the same at each site (as the Council have claimed is the case) given that a stand-alone school provides clear benefits specifically to GME and the Gaelic community. Parents also sought clarity around the curriculum offer, noting that the curriculum subjects delivered in EME would differ depending on the EME school with which the new GME school was linked.

Parents are seeking further information on the **educational benefits specifically in relation to GME**, something they feel the Council has not articulated to date. It was also noted that, in order for there to be a shared understanding of the educational benefits, the Council must undertake significant engagement with the GME community.

Parents requested a **comparison between the benefits of the tabled options and the existing JGHS provision** to demonstrate the Council's assertion that a new co-located school would indeed be better than the current provision at JGHS. On a similar theme, parents asked for more clarity about what constitutes an educational benefit in the Council's appraisal, and also what criteria will be applied to measure this Educational Benefits Statement and Criteria. Parents asked for a **Plan** as to how such a **Beneficial State** would be **achieved** and also voiced concerns that the educational benefits were assertions rather than being based on a clear plan of action or evidence of actions already taken.

Parents asked how the Council is applying **Minority Language Best Practice Research** and how these benefits would apply to a shared location and standalone location. A number of parents were interested in the provision of more research and evidence to back up the Council's proposals. Parents keen to understand what consideration has been given to this area by the Council and how it has informed its decision-making. Parents feel the Council must provide evidence around best practices to support its preferred option of Liberton and that the Council has to date failed to do so.

- *'How would [the Council] safeguard against watering down immersion on a co-located campus as has been empirically demonstrated happens in other minority linguistic contexts?'*
- *'What analysis of existing academic surveys of success of co-located schools where one school is a dedicated language school the Council has undertaken when planning Liberton; any evidence of best practice in devising national language schools?'*

Parents reiterated that the offer from the Council must be **demonstrably better** than current GME provision at James Gillespie's High School / GME provision at Darroch. To some, the co-located option seems to provide no greater educational benefit than is currently available to GME pupils and it was noted that any difference must be articulated. Elsewhere, there was support for a co-located school, citing access to a potentially wider range of facilities.

Information on access to facilities, **extra-curricular activities** and social aspects also need to be considered in parents' views. There was concern around extra-curricular activities; specifically in relation to **travel** and the impact this might have on accessing after-school activities if the school is not centrally-located. Travel was also cited in relation to the perceived toll and educational detriment of long travel times on pupils. Parents additionally expressed the feeling that external issues, such as **rising rolls** at James Gillespie's, financing and timescales, were being placed above/prioritised over educational benefit when determining the outcome of the new GME high school.

## 2.4 Information about at proposed options for GME secondary provision

Theme	Frequency
Recruitment plans for GME teachers	44
Fragility of GME Provision at JGHS	9
Staff required to deliver Breadth of Curriculum GME and EME	8
GME Staff Numbers	7
Transition of GME Staff from JGHS	6
Staffing levels for each option	5
Specific Strategies for Recruitment and Retention in Edinburgh	5
Robustness of plans	4
Pupil Teacher Ratio	3
Best practice from external agencies	3
Staff required to deliver Breadth of Curriculum in GME	2
Protection of GME Immersion	2
Additional Support Needs Staffing	2

Parental concerns in this area focused significantly on the ability of the Council to deliver **sufficient staffing** for a GME High School. The concerns were around training and finding new teachers, immersion, curriculum choices, number of teachers, confidence in the level of Gaelic of the teaching staff, and queries around where these new teachers will come from.

Parents' concerns were significant with regards to the steps being taken by the Council to **train and recruit more teachers** for GME. There was a real concern around the over-reliance on a 'Grow Your Own' model. Parents noted that there are already issues around training and recruitment with one fully-immersive GME primary school and questioned how the Council will provide sufficient teachers across three primary schools and a high school. Parents asked if there will be incentives for new teachers. They also raised the possibility of an impact from Fife Council developing its GME offering, especially when considering that the cost of housing is cheaper in Fife.

- *'Where are these teachers coming from?'*
- *'Where are they now?'*
- *'If there are insufficient teachers how will this be addressed?'*
- *'Is work being undertaken to recruit from other areas?'*

In addition to seeking more detail on what additional steps will be employed to recruit teachers, many sought clarity not just on the steps for finding new teachers, but how recruitment and retention would work.

- *'How is the quality and expertise of teaching being assessed?'*
- *'How will we ensure that the school attracts the highest calibre of teaching?'*

Parents were interested in staffing levels for the different options provided and what this meant in terms of **breadth and depth of curriculum** and subject specialism. Some parents were keen to ensure that subject specialists were used to teach curriculum areas and that expertise in a subject should come before ability to speak in Gaelic.

**GME immersion** was the next theme of concern and what that might mean for the new high school. This area of concern tied into the lack of confidence parents had in there being sufficient fluent Gaelic speakers to deliver a GME high school.

- *'Will all staff be fluent in Gaelic?'*
- *'How will this be supported?'*

Other areas that were highlighted include how staffing will work in the new school and whether there will be a higher staff/pupil ratio to allow for a wider breadth of curriculum in the early stages. Parents asked when the new Headteacher and Depute Headteacher would be appointed, and shared thoughts on the current GME staff at JGHS, for example whether staff would move to the new school. Parents queried how teaching would work across two different sites. This concern also extended to options of co-location and impact on staffing.

## 2.5 Information Required about Transition of GME between JGHS, Darroch and proposed options for GME secondary school provision

Theme	Frequency
Year Groups and Transition Phases	16
Role of Darroch	14
General Uncertainty	13
Sibling Guarantee	7
Anxiety for Small Initial Cohort	7
Capacity of Darroch	5
Transition for each option	4
GME Staffing through transition	4
Conflation with Rising Rolls	4
Concern/Opposition to P6/P7 Enhanced Transitions	4
Impact on S3 and above at JGHS post transition	3
Travel	2
Equity at Darroch	2
Educational Benefit	2
Additional Support Needs	2

The **impact** of **uncertainty** around proposals and the **disruption**, educationally and emotionally, on children (and their parents) featured heavily in responses to this section of the survey.

- *‘Appalling to expect children to transition mid-school career, especially given uncertainty of timings. How can this be justified?’*
- *‘How will disruption be managed?’*
- *‘What about the needs of pupils with ASN who do not deal well with transitions?’*

The most frequently occurring theme under the topic of Transition was that parents have significant concerns about the potential impact of the proposals on the children who would be most affected. For example, a child that is currently in Clas 5 could be expected to spend S1 as a JGHS pupil (but with their education split between two campuses) and then, in S2, transfer to a new site as part of a **small, young S1/S2 cohort** of GME pupils to ‘seed’ the first dedicated GME high school in Edinburgh without the benefit of **older GME peers/role models**.

- *‘How will the lack of senior mentors in the GME school be mitigated when it is just a small roll of S1-S2s in a big campus (especially in the case of a joint campus where the majority at the EME school have grown up together)?’*

Parents queried whether the suggestion that the 2025 Clas 7 pupils would transfer to a new site in order to bolster a small, young S1/S2 cohort would be in the best interests of the **Clas 7** pupils or indeed have any benefit to the S1/S2s, and whether any impact assessment of this proposal had been undertaken. It was cited as an example of the Council proposing

inadequate and inappropriate 'mitigations' in order to **retrofit** a flawed initial concept.

- *'Previously, we have heard suggestions that primary 7 pupils from Taobh na Pairce would be moved to the Liberton site to populate the building. Can the Council provide any clarification on this? Would this move be optional?'*
- *'Absolutely no primary school children should be making the transition until they naturally move to S1.'*

Confusion and consternation about the **role of the Darroch Annexe** was a feature of survey responses on this topic. Many parents highlighted that the Darroch refurbishment was originally intended to be a stepping stone towards a dedicated GME high school and then as a second GME primary school for Edinburgh. Parents indicated that there had been little transparency as to why the plan for Darroch has changed. Parents queried why there appears to be a rush to remove GME from JGHS, since Darroch has been refurbished with Gaelic-specific funding from the Scottish Government, and has sufficient capacity to accommodate the projected number of GME learners for many years. Parents wanted clearer information about the projected rolls at JGHS (including GME) and the capacity of Darroch, in order to evaluate the rationale for the removal of GME from JGHS within the timescales indicated in the proposals. It was clear from responses on this topic that many parents would see value in building on the success of GME at JGHS by using Darroch over a longer period of time to develop a broad GME curriculum supported by a dedicated GME leadership team. Once established, GME would be in a position to move to a dedicated GME high school.

- *'How does the council justify using Gaelic-specific funding on Darroch, and then seemingly abandon Darroch as an option during this transition phase due to JGHS numbers?'*
- *'My understanding is that the Darroch annexe was refurbished, using Scottish Government Gaelic Specific funding on the basis that it would be used as GME secondary provision and then used as a 2nd GME primary. It now appears that Darroch will be used as a general overspill for JGHS for the next 10-15 years. How was this decision arrived at?'*
- *'Why can't the GME kids stay at Darroch whilst staffing is increased and a standalone site is developed?'*

A frequently-raised issue on this topic was the subject of **siblings**. Parents indicated that they are concerned that the proposals would have the effect of splitting families, and that this is a concern for a wide range of reasons. Other issues cited included the disproportionate impact on family logistics and the potential diluting of parental engagement across schools. A number of parents indicated that they would expect a 'sibling guarantee' as part of the proposals. The issue of siblings came up in relation to primary schools too, i.e. where an older sibling attends Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce but lives in a catchment for a newly-designated GME unit.

- *'Why are the Council not offering a sibling guarantee, where this is offered in almost every other scenario?'*
- *'If, at the opening of a new GME secondary, a family has children in the upper years at JGHS (who will not move) and younger children due to start secondary school, does the Council have a policy to accommodate families who want their children to attend the same school?'*

A further concern frequently aired in responses on this topic is how the Council will ensure that S1 and S2 GME pupils who are to be largely based at Darroch from August 2022 will receive a **high-quality educational experience, equitable** both to the GME pupils in older



years who went before them, and to their S1 and S2 English Medium Education (EME) counterparts. For example, parents were concerned that being based at the annexe will disproportionately reduce access to library facilities, sports facilities, additional support for learning resources, lunch clubs etc for GME pupils compared to EME pupils. Parents also indicated that GME pupils at Darroch could miss out on socialisation opportunities usually associated with transition to high school, where pupils transitioning from a number of primary schools to a single high school would normally have the opportunity to meet new friends, broaden their horizons and move away from any long-standing negative relationship dynamics.

- *‘How are the council planning to monitor the Darroch transition and ensure that children in GME have the same opportunity as children at the Warrender Park campus?’*
- *‘I want to understand my child's educational experience at the different stages of the transition - Please can the Council identify any negative effects from the transition phase and identify what they will be implementing to mitigate any negative effects of being educated in this interim period?’*

Parents asked how the Council's obligation to apply [GIRFEC](#) principles and the importance of **additional support for learning provisions**, irrespective of GME or EME, would be addressed in the proposals.

- *‘How will the individual's needs be met and ensure that GIRFEC is in place for each young person involved?’*
- *‘What about those with additional needs? How will transition and change be handled for them? How will their needs be considered?’*

## 2.6 Information Required about the impact of proposals on early years and 0-3 years (Cròileagan) GME provision

Theme	Frequency
Increased Sgoil-Àraich provision	8
Increased Cròileagan provision	6
Importance of early language acquisition	3
Detailed plans	2
Staffing plans	2
Location of Sgoil-Àraich provision	2
Location of Cròileagan provision	2

Parents are keen to see detailed plans for how the Council expects to expand the **number of early years GME places**. Although the newly-implemented 1,140 hours early years education is broadly welcome, it has reduced the overall number of Sgoil-Àraich places available and has had a negative impact in terms of the number of families who are able to access early years GME education for their children. Parents queried how further early years GME provision would be **staffed**.

- *'Will there be early years provision at each of the 3 proposed primary school sites? And a cròileagan?'*
- *'How will nursery provision be increased across the city?'*
- *'Will more early years places be made available to meet demand, in what timescale?'*
- *'What staffing plans are there to run these sessions for each location option?'*
- *'How will any new pre-school and primary sites across the city will be staffed?'*

Parents would like to see **the Council (and neighbouring local authorities) expand the locations at which early years GME provision is available**. All early years GME education currently takes place at the Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce site (between Sgoil-Àraich and Òganan), requiring significant journey times for GME families with very young children.

- *'Policy needs to change to allow people all across the Lothians to access preschool GME - this was acknowledged as a problem years ago but still is unresolved. What is the first action the council needs to take and when will it be taken?'*
- *'Croileagan should be available for all children, why are the Lothians not included?'*

Parents would like the Council to demonstrate its understanding of the **importance of early years language acquisition**, especially in relation to GME.

- *'Language acquisition from 0-3 is crucial.'*
- *'GME is important at early stages.'*

## 2.7 Information Required about the impact of proposals on GME primary school - what questions do you have?

Theme	Frequency
Location assessment	9
Staffing plans	8
Increased GME primary provision	7
Concern about not opening primary schools well in advance of GME high school	6
Concern about GME units rather than GME schools	5
Transitions	4
0/3-18 GME provision	3
Early transition of P7s	3
Connections between primary school and high school	3

When asked what else they wanted to know, parents asked for much more detailed information about how **locations** of proposed GME units, and issues raised within this topic covered the assessment of **catchments, population served and transport issues**.

- *'How has the Council determined the catchments for the three proposed units/schools?'*
- *'How many children will each catchment address?'*
- *'What travel assessment has been carried out for the new proposed units?'*
- *'In the Liberton option, how have the Council assessed the plan for a colocated primary school on the same site as two secondary schools for educational benefit and feasibility?'*

Parents asked for more detailed information about how **projected growth at GME primary level** has been forecasted. Parents also asked how the Council is planning for new primary schools/units to be staffed considering **current staffing challenges**. They also asked whether there will be a through-school for **0/3-18 year GME provision**.

- *'How will these schools be staffed?'*
- *'Staffing it would be an issue as it is challenging to recruit and retain staff for one GME school.'*
- *'How will each location impact the staffing at the current primary school?'*
- *'A second gme primary has been proposed. Will this be colocated with any proposed site?'*
- *'Is the idea to have a through school still in discussions? I really liked that idea.'*

Parents were keen to have more detailed information about **transition**, such as a unit in EME primary, a through-school, and socialisation opportunities for GME children moving to high school. Parents are keen to understand the rationale for **GME units in EME schools vs new GME schools**.

- *'Given the clear preference from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Government for dedicated Gaelic schools rather than units, why is the Council proposing to open new primary units rather than dedicated primary schools?'*
- *'Why would people choose hubs over Taobh na Pàirce?'*

There were also queries around the **rationale** for the timescales around the openings, asking why the plan was not to **open new primaries first**.

- *'TnP is at capacity now, should a second primary school not be a priority?'*
- *'Would there be any movement on building new GME primaries before a new secondary was completed?'*

## 2.8 Information Required about the impact of proposals on GME pupils remaining at JGHS after delivery of proposed GME secondary school provision

Theme	Frequency
Staffing	12
GME curriculum	11
Detailed plans	7
Uncertainty	5
Stretched resources	4
Maintaining Quality of GME at JGHS	4
Disruption	2
Fragmentation of GME community	2

Parents want to know what will be the impact of GME moving to a new location on already stretched **GME staff levels and resources at JGHS** in terms of travel time between two distant sites, resources, etc.

- *'How will the few GME teachers there be able to teach the older GME kids?'*
- *'This is the thing I am most frightened about. We already don't have enough teachers in GME.'*
- *'Where will the teachers come from to support 2 Gaelic high schools?'*
- *'How will this get better once staff move to a new site?'*

Parents want to know how the Council will ensure that S3-S6 GME pupils remaining in JGHS are supported with their **Gaelic fluency, and GME curriculum options** (for example, would they be expected to travel to a distant campus to take GME qualifications) and would like the Council to make sure pupils are **not isolated** from the GME community. Parents also asked how educational **disruption** to the GME pupils remaining at JGHS can be minimised.

- *'How would younger GME pupils at the new location have older GME **role models**?'*
- *'What will be the impact of **fragmenting** the GME community?'*
- *'How will the **Darroch** annexe be used when GME leaves JGHS?'*
- 

Parents also asked how the Council will ensure that younger and older GME pupils are able to access an **equitable** secondary school provision, and parents sought greater clarity on which year groups will move and whether **older GME** students can move along with the S1/S2 cohort.

## 2.9 Information Required about Active travel to/from proposed options for GME secondary school provision

Themes	Frequency
Active Travel Options	50
Environmental Policies	6
New Cycle Paths	6
Safety	6
Public Transport	6
Mental Health Benefits	3
Distance of Travel	3

Parents want to understand what **active travel options** will be put in place for each site and a list of pros and cons for each option. Parents were concerned that initially there would be a large cohort coming from the north of the city, from which there is no direct travel route (based on the new school being in Liberton). Parents are very concerned about what routes will be in place to facilitate any potential sites. Parents are also keen to know about the active travel plans for each site from anywhere within the city, especially in the new catchment areas for the new primary school units as they open up and for those students outwith the Council boundaries. Many parents wanted to know if there would be new routes, if there would be a direct bus or if there would be provision of specific school buses.

Potential **new safer cycle paths** are also a key area of interest, with parents seeking information on the old railway lines at Powderhall, Abbeyhill and the line near Butterfly Way/Urban Eden.

- *'Will safer routes also incorporate the major transport hubs for those children coming outwith of the city?'*
- *'Will it be safe to walk/cycle/scoot to the new school?'*

Parents are also concerned that these proposed locations do not comply with the Council's **environmental policies**, vision statement or their active schools commitments. Parents are worried that schools which do not have active travel infrastructure will not be supported by the local communities the school could be in, by the parents themselves or by the Government locally or nationally. Schools and pupils have been looking at their environmental impact in the lead up to COP26 and beyond. Having a school further away from the majority of the cohort seems like a backwards step.

Parents want to know what the **public transport** options will be too. They are concerned with having no direct bus links, too many changes and long journey times.

Travelling by walking or cycling improves **mental health** as well as their physical health and parents feel if this option is not available to them it would be detrimental to their children's education. They also feel that journeys using public transport as it currently stands would

take too long and would have a damaging effect on their children's mental and physical health. Parents are further left questioning how **distance of travel** will affect their child's education and mental health.

## 2.10 Information Required about Timescales for proposed GME secondary provision options

Theme	Frequency
Develop a Strategic Plan	21
Prioritise Educational Benefit	13
Detailed Timescales	10
Darroch Medium-Term Plan	5
Contingency Planning	4
Detailed Timescales for Central Sites	3
Realistic Timescales	3
Develop the Primary Pipeline	2
Transition Cohorts	2

Respondents asked that time be taken to **Develop a Strategic Plan**, rather than rush to a conclusion at this stage. Parents would like to see the time taken to develop a strategic, ambitious plan for GME aligned to the SNP Manifesto/Scottish Government commitments to Gaelic.

- *'I believe it would be better for the City of Edinburgh Council to get this huge venture right rather than try to push it through in haste. The GME high school could be a huge success for the Council if viewed, and undertaken, by them with sufficient ambition for and commitment to Gaelic language and culture. Therefore, I think sufficient time should be allowed to ensure this is a success for its future pupils, for the community and for the city itself.'*

Parents would like to understand how the Council will **Prioritise Educational Benefit**, and would like to understand why constraints such as the upcoming local authority council elections and rising rolls are driving timescales when the focus should be on the Educational Benefit.

- *'Why should the upcoming council elections be a deciding factor in timescales for consultation?'*
- *'Priority should be what is best for GME, does Darroch not provide GME with sufficient capacity?'*

**Detailed Timescales** are sought for each option, including those for a more central location. Parents are looking for greater clarity and for timescales to be more detailed than simply an opening date for each. Parents are keen to understand how realistic any plans are, and what the impact of slippage would be. Certainty is sought to support children's well-being. Parents also asked for **Contingency Planning** to be included and reflected in the plan, appreciating the impact of delays on transition cohorts, and noting that delays have



previously been experienced at Darroch and Boroughmuir projects.

- *'Needs detailed timelines, with contingency - expecting young teenagers not to know where they will be attending school and for how long is nothing short of cruel.'*

In terms of **Darroch Medium-Term Plan**, respondents on this theme would like to understand why, given the capacity provided and the funding commitments specific to GME to develop Darroch, it could not be used for longer than currently planned in order to allow time for the strategy to develop and to build a more robust GME provision as a first step to a standalone school.

- *'Given the capacity uplift provided by Darroch, why is the council pursuing the establishment of a new GME high school [in] these timeframes?'*
- *'Why is there such a hurry to move Gaelic learners on from JGHS when Darroch has been funded as an ongoing centre of Gaelic learning?'*

Parents would like to understand how the Council can **Develop the Primary Pipeline** to support a fuller secondary school, and also how any different options can support this better with more time to ramp up.

Finally, parents want to understand what the impact of the different options and timescales on the Transition Cohorts will be and which secondary year groups will be will transition to the new school.

## 2.11 Leadership, deliverability and financial planning for holistic development of GME in Edinburgh

Theme	Frequency
Leadership	13
Budget	12
Uncertainty	11
Long term/strategic planning	10
Priorities	10
Parental engagement	6
Community facilities	5
Staffing	3
Risk of falling numbers	2
Engagement with Scottish Government	2

Parents queried the lack of **leadership** on this important project e.g. head teacher in place for GME high school and a corporate level GDO with educational remit. They question why the Council's **financial planning** for GME (e.g. pupil generation rate) has been absent despite the agreement to establish Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce over a decade ago.

- *'How will CEC ensure there is an experienced leadership team in place to support the transition to a new school, the development of a new school community, and the further growth of excellent GME educational provision?'*
- *Gaelic development positions at CEC staff level so that the needs are understood from within the Council?*
- *Who is leading this nationally significant project?*

Parents point out that there is much **uncertainty** in the deliverability of the proposals and that there appears to be a significant **lack of long term or strategic planning** for the holistic development of GME in Edinburgh. These issues leave parents questioning whether the Council's **priorities** truly lie with the development and improvement of GME in Edinburgh, rather than the stipulated requirement to address the rising rolls issue at JGHS.

- *'Need full options appraisal of all sites.'*
- *'We are entitled to expect a well thought-out plan for the best standard of education for our children.'*
- *'Can the council provide a 10 year plan?'*
- *'Where is the strategic thinking?'*
- *'Council proposals obsessed with location, bricks & mortar & not GME development & educational benefit to pupils.'*
- *'It seems that you are basing your preference of Liberton on the building cost of a new school as well as reducing the school roll at JGHS only.'*

- *'Why do CEC not recognise that every communication they release about GME demonstrates that their priority is reducing numbers at JGHS, and quickly, rather than indicating any desire for strategic, holistic growth in GME in Edinburgh?'*

Parents note that **engagement with the GME families** is seen as having been poor to date and that this lack of engagement increases the **risk of falling numbers of GME pupils** at any dedicated GME high school.

- *'What are contingencies for poor enrollment (given the ill-thought and inadequate planning by Edinburgh City Council)?'*
- *'Given the manifest inconvenience of the Liberton and Castlebrae options in relation to north and west Edinburgh, what strategies would the Council adopt to (1) attract families to GME in the first instance and (2) retain pupils at the primary-secondary transition?'*

Once again, parents point to the challenges of **staffing** a dedicated GME high school, on the basis of the current numbers of secondary GME teachers in Edinburgh and the ongoing recruitment and retention of GME staff.

Parents feel that any statutory consultation on proposals, in advance of concluding discussions with the **Scottish Government** as to the level of support it may be able to provide towards the establishment of a standalone, centrally located GME high school in Edinburgh, would be unacceptable.

- *'I am unclear why the consultation is being pushed ahead when the Scottish Government's position - picking up on their manifesto commitment - remains unclear. A consultation without knowledge of this stance seems very problematic.'*
- *'When CEC raised the predicted costs of the Royal Victoria site with the Cabinet Secretary, why weren't the financial plans more exhaustively developed? The Cabinet Secretary responded with a request for more detailed costings. Has CEC now provided these? If the Council doesn't make an effort to provide this, does that mean the request for support with the Royal Victoria site cannot be seriously considered by the Cabinet Secretary?'*

**2.12 What other information would you like to see included in any consultation (informal or statutory) on GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh?**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Evidence and transparency from Council supporting their proposal, such as impact assessments (including equality impact assessment) and published analysis	16
Engagement / listening to GME parents, including building trust	10
Teacher recruitment and retention	6
Timescale considerations and planning	5
Rising rolls at JGHS being separated out from GME discussions / plans	5
Parity between Gaelic and English	4
Impact of location	4
Engagement and communication from Comann nam Pàrant	4
Support for Gaelic outwith school, eg community	3
Financial planning and investment in GME	2
Expert advice and experience	2
Scottish Government commitments explored	2
Plans for promotion of GME and Gaelic	2
Plans for development of GME	2
Demonstrable leadership from the Council	2
Sibling guarantee and transfers	2

In terms of other information that families would like to see included in any consultation (informal or statutory) on GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh, the most commonly occurring theme from respondents was **evidence and transparency** from the Council. They seek the Council to provide evidence in support of any proposal that is made, including information such as impact assessments (including equality impact assessments) as well as the educational benefits of a co-located campus to be clearly articulated. They also seek transparency in the process, including published analysis, as well as detail on how each option is assessed (including in terms of the wider community purpose for the school). Respondents also noted they require clear and detailed information from the Council, and a proposal which demonstrates that the Council understands issues that are specific to GME provision.

- *'What evidence does the council have it knows better than parents?'*
- *'I would like detailed information on how the Council really understands the issues that are specific to GME provision as well as for them to have an understanding of the national, historical, social and cultural context surrounding this.'*
- *'I would like the Council to set out its plans for analysing consultation response in a fair and transparent way'*

The second most common theme was **engagement** with and **listening** to parents, including the building up of **trust** from the parent body. Included in this was the call for engagement with parents, staff, pupils and the GME community. There was also a wish for the statutory consultation itself to allow for full participation, for example through an inclusive approach with questions designed to enable people to answer them and to feel listened to. GME voices were felt to be key to the consultation and assurance was sought that the Council would not push through an option which does not have support from the GME community.

- *'I would like to see any consultation really asking questions that are designed to enable people to answer them and feel listened to?'*
- *'How do they plan to gain the trust and improve their communication with parents?'*
- *'Consultation questions should be agreed with GME community.'*

Another recurring theme was **teacher recruitment and retention**, in which respondents sought clear plans for 'grow your own' and teacher development, a staffing strategy and how the staff body would be grown over time. Timescales for the new GME high school were also a consideration with the general feeling that the process seemed rushed, that the proposal needed more time, and that it would be preferable to consider the long term benefits to delaying the process (such as sustainable growth and the development of early years provision).

**Rising rolls at James Gillespie's High School** was also a topic of interest. Respondents felt that the issue of rising rolls should be separate from the discussions about the new GME high school, and the general impression is that the timelines are to accommodate rising rolls rather than in the best interests of GME high school pupils.

- *I would like this consultation to be made in isolation from the question of the rising school role at JGHS.*

**Parity between Gaelic and English** was also a recurring theme. Respondents sought evidence that the Council welcomed GME, that they respect parents' choice to prioritise GME for their children, that the Council recognised Gaelic as equal to English, and the feeling that the proposals to date did not appear to show the valuing of GME or of Gaelic.

- *Will the council recognise Gàidhlig as equal to English?*
- *I would just like to see some behaviours from the council which demonstrated that GME was welcomed.*

The **impact of location** was also raised several times. Respondents asked the Council to consider what the likely impact location would have on the development of language in the City, and how each of the proposed locations might encourage or discourage families to join GME. There was also concern that the strong community at Taobh na Pàirce would be dispersed. There was also questioning as to what arrangements would be put in place to ensure access to the different options from East, West and Midlothian.

- *‘What is the likely impact of the location of the GME high school on the development of the language in the City? In what way might each of the proposed locations encourage or discourage families to join the Gaelic education stream and therefore the future of the language in the City?’*

Four respondents raised communication and engagement from **Comann nam Pàrant**, with the potential for an increase in surveys for parents, additional ways of voicing opinions and preferences, and processes which consider families who have less knowledge of the statutory consultation process and limited time to engage.

There were also calls for **support for Gaelic outwith the school setting**, for example in the **community**. Respondents asked what the Council plans to do to support the GME community, whether there are plans for a community hub so that Gaelic can be grown outwith 0-18 education, and whether the scope for using the new school as a base for Gaelic community activity will be assessed in each of the options included in the proposal.

- *‘What is the scope for using the school as a base for Gaelic community activity - which sites offer the best location for this possibility?’*

Additional topics raised (though to a lesser degree) were financial planning and investment in GME (including the note that the Council has not budgeted for GME), expert advice and experience (the call for advisers to be recruited into the process), Scottish Government commitments (the call for the statutory consultation to be delayed until options have been explored), the promotion of GME and Gaelic (that the Council be aware of the benefits that Gaelic language and culture bring to the city), the development of GME (such as a strategy for improving GME), demonstrable leadership from the Council, and sibling guarantee and transfers.

## Conclusion

The results of this survey reinforce the assertion that significant unanswered concerns remain, preventing families in GME from engaging meaningfully with the Statutory Consultation.

There are frequent cross-cutting themes, including, but not limited to:

- **Curriculum** - Parents repeatedly raise concerns regarding insufficient information on curriculum, through Gaelic and English, and how this will be delivered under each option and during transition states.
- **Staffing** - More clarity on plans and actions to achieve and retain adequate staffing at all levels, both now and in the future in order to support the growth implied, are mentioned in several contexts.
- **Locations** - Parents want to know how locations have been objectively assessed. There is also a need for greater clarity regarding the impact that locations and settings would have on curriculum, community, inclusion and well-being.
- **Transitions** - Parents have concerns that GME students at various educational stages may be negatively impacted in ways that have not been adequately identified and mitigated in the Council's proposals.
- **Timelines** - Parents feel that the Council's proposals are too hasty in their attempts to relocate GME secondary provision before fully developing the strength of provision at Darroch/JGHS and establishing increased early years and primary provision.

In addition, parents cite the issues of local elections and of rising rolls at JGHS having an unnecessary and unjustifiable impact on the timescales for a GME high school. Frequently in their responses, parents stress their expectation that the Council, through its actions, demonstrate that it is led by seeking to deliver an educational benefit, and to diligently and fully explore the support from the Scottish Government to deliver what is best for GME in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

The overarching message from parents is the need for the Council to take time to adequately develop their plans for GME, to properly consider the significant issues that are being raised and to address these comprehensively. In addition, parents look for much greater engagement from the Council. They seek a proposal which is informed by the needs of the GME community it seeks to serve.

The conclusion Comann nam Pàrant reaches from parental feedback and the responses to the survey is that a clear and demonstrable educational benefit for children in GME has yet to be presented.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Survey questions**

What stage(s) of GME is/are your child(ren) currently attending? Please select all that apply to your family.

1.a. Location(s) of proposed options for GME secondary provision. (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

1.b. Location(s) of proposed options for GME secondary provision - what questions do you have?

2.a. Curriculum at proposed options for GME secondary provision. (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

2.b Curriculum at proposed options for GME secondary provision - what questions do you have?

3.a. Educational benefits associated with proposed options for GME secondary provision. (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

3.b. Educational benefits associated with proposed options for GME secondary provision - what questions do you have?

4.a. Staffing at proposed options for GME secondary provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

4.b. Staffing at proposed options for GME secondary provision - what questions do you have?

5.a. Arrangements for transition of GME between JGHS, Darroch and proposed options for GME secondary school provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

5.b. Arrangements for transition of GME between JGHS, Darroch and proposed options for GME secondary school provision - what questions do you have?

6.a. Impact of proposals on early years and 0-3 years (Cròileagan) GME provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

6.b. Impact of proposals on early years and 0-3 years (Cròileagan) GME provision - what questions do you have?

7.a. Impact of proposals on GME primary school provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

7.b. Impact of proposals on GME primary school - what questions do you have?

8.a. Impact of proposals on GME pupils remaining at JGHS after delivery of proposed GME secondary school provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)



8.b. Impact of proposals on GME pupils remaining at JGHS after delivery of proposed GME secondary school provision - what questions do you have?

9.a. Active travel to/from proposed options for GME secondary school provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

9.b. Active travel to/from proposed options for GME secondary school provision - what questions do you have?

10.a. Timescales for proposed GME secondary provision options (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

10.b. Timescales for proposed GME secondary provision options - what questions do you have?

11.a. Leadership, deliverability and financial planning for holistic development of GME in Edinburgh (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

11.b. Leadership, deliverability and financial planning for holistic development of GME in Edinburgh - what questions do you have?

12. What other information would you like to see included in any consultation (informal or statutory) on GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh?