

EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL: EDUCATION SERVICE

**CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE CATCHMENT AREA FOR GAELIC
MEDIUM EDUCATION**

Consultation Report

23 February 2018

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SECTION 1 – BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 placed a duty on local authorities to promote and support Gaelic Education. Gaelic Medium Primary Education in East Dunbartonshire is currently provided in Meadowburn Primary School. In order to ensure this duty is met, the Council is considering proposals to alter the catchment area arrangements for pupils accessing GME.
- 2.0** These proposals will take effect from school session 2018/19.

SECTION 2 - CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 2.1** This proposal considers alternations to the catchment area arrangements for pupils accessing Gaelic Medium Education (GME) As such, a consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 is required. A process for consultation was established and a proposal document was developed that included information on:

- The proposal;
- The consultation process;
- The public meeting;
- Educational benefits; and
- Issues anticipated in the proposal.

The document also included information on how to respond to the consultation. The consultation document is attached as **Appendix 1**.

- 2.2** The proposal document was sent to all consultees identified (see section 2.9). The pack included a consultation document and a letter from the Chief Education Officer explaining the process and how to respond.
- 2.3** The proposal documentation was also issued to the Head Teacher and the Parent Council of Meadowburn Primary School.
- 2.4** The proposal information was also circulated to Elected Members, the Chief Executive and the senior management team.
- 2.5** The consultation period commenced on Wednesday 1st November 2017 and concluded on Wednesday 13th December 2017. This provided 31 school days for consultation. The proposal information was distributed by email on the 1st November 2017 and information was available on the website for that date. See **Appendix 2** for a consultation timeline.

- 2.6 Details of the proposal were made available on a dedicated section of the Council's website (www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/consultations).
- 2.7 A public meeting was held in Meadowburn Primary School on Wednesday 29th November 2017. (see section 3.4).
- 2.8 Pupils who attend Meadowburn Primary School were consulted and their views were gathered and recorded. (see section 3.5).

2.9 **Consultees**

Consultees were identified according to Schedule 1 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, under the schedule for 'Admission Arrangements'. The consultees contacted included:

2.10 **Parent Council**

Parent Council of Meadowburn Primary School.

2.11 **Parents of pupils at affected schools**

Main contact details for pupils within Meadowburn Primary School were collated using information provided by the relevant school office.

2.12 **Parents of any children expected by the education authority to attend affected schools within two years**

Main contact details for pupils within Meadowburn Nursery were collated using information provided by the relevant school office.

2.13 **Staff at affected schools**

All staff within Meadowburn Primary School were notified of the proposal.

2.14 **Any body which has been established by a local authority, whether formally or informally, for the purpose of assisting it in carrying out its functions under Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2003**

Members of the Community Planning Partnership Board.

2.15 **Any other education authority that the education authority considers relevant**

N/A

2.16 **Any other users of any affected school that the education authority considers relevant**

Frequent users of the schools were contacted using the letting information held by the Council.

2.17 **Community Councils**

Bishopbriggs Community Council was contacted directly.

2.18 **Trade Unions**

All relevant Trade Union Convenors were consulted.

2.19 **Pupils**

A consultation was held within Meadowburn Primary School, see section 3.5 for details.

SECTION 3 – RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION

3.1 Consultation information was sent to 535 stakeholders and 35 representations received.

3.2 There were 35 representations received.

3.3 Of the 35 respondents, 34 agreed with the proposal, and one disagreed. The most commonly raised issues were:

- Capacity of the current school building;
- Increase in numbers; and
- Increased traffic concerns.

3.4 **Public meeting**

A public meeting was held on Wednesday 29th November 2017 in Meadowburn Primary School. A presentation was given introducing the proposal, and a question and answer session was held.

The presentation and a note of the issues discussed at the meeting are attached as **Appendix 3**.

3.5 **Pupil consultation**

In accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, East Dunbartonshire Council planned and engaged in a consultation with the pupils affected by this proposal within Meadowburn Primary School.

The consultation process for pupils involved the completion of a response form offering all pupils the chance to indicate if they agreed or disagreed with the proposal and with a comment box for use as appropriate.

SECTION 4 – EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by East Dunbartonshire Council to make changes to the catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of East Dunbartonshire Council's proposal to make changes to the catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education from the beginning of the academic session 2018. The council's Gaelic Medium Primary Education provision is currently at Meadowburn Primary School. The proposal will define the whole of East Dunbartonshire as the catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Meadowburn Primary School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people currently in Gaelic Medium Education; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;

- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to Meadowburn Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees. This included representatives of Comann nam Pàrant, the national organisation for parents of those in Gaelic Medium Education.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 East Dunbartonshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The consultation process ran from 1 November 2017 to 13 December 2017. During that time, the council held a public meeting at Meadowburn Primary School. Almost all statutory consultees, including parents/carers, children and staff were informed of the consultation. The council have not sought the formal view of Bòrd na Gàidhlig as a statutory consultee. The council published documentation for the consultation on its website. They also distributed papers to a full range of stakeholders and interested parties. The council put in place suitable arrangements to enable interested parties to respond to the proposal, whether that be electronically or in writing. Thirty-five written responses were received. Almost all of these responses received supported the proposal. The council undertook a consultation with pupils to ensure their views were sought. Overall, consultees supported the council's proposal to establish the catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Meadowburn Primary School as the whole of East Dunbartonshire Council. A few concerns were expressed.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 East Dunbartonshire Council is responding to the *Education (Scotland) Act 2016* to support and promote Gaelic by setting a catchment area for the Gaelic Medium Education provision at Meadowburn Primary School. The council has secured strong support for its proposal. The consultees appreciate that the process for securing a place in Gaelic Medium Education will be more straightforward. In particular, parents welcome that their request for Gaelic Medium Education will no longer be subject to a placing request if they reside outwith the English medium catchment for Meadowburn Primary School. Parents have

justifiable concerns about a few aspects of the proposal. In taking its proposal forward, the council needs to engage with stakeholders to address these concerns as outlined in this report.

3.2 Stakeholders raised concern that the council's paper refers to Gaelic Medium Education within the council as only being available at the primary stages. The council is not recognising that the provision for Gaelic Medium Education in the Sgoil Àraich (nursery), and at Bishopbriggs Academy, constitutes Gaelic Medium Education. Parents feel that this has been a missed opportunity to have a catchment which reflects current provision for Gaelic Medium Education. The council should continue to work with parents to support and promote continuity and progression in Gaelic Medium Education.

3.3 Staff at Meadowburn Primary School felt that the proposal would help them plan better the curriculum for Gaelic Medium Education, particularly for transitions. In the final report, it would be beneficial for there to be a more comprehensive statement of such educational benefits. Many stakeholders felt that the proposal had potential to increase parental interest in enrolling their children in Gaelic Medium Education. If this was to be the case, parents have important, pragmatic issues that should be taken forward by the council. These include ensuring that there are safe traffic arrangements at the school. For others, it was crucial that the impact on capacity in English medium provision was not reduced at the expense of Gaelic Medium Education. Parents request that the council continues to plan strategically with them in taking forward Gaelic Medium Education.

4. Summary

East Dunbartonshire Council's proposal to set a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education has potential to increase parental confidence in the Gaelic sector. Almost all stakeholders support and recognise that the proposal is taking forward a duty to support and promote Gaelic Medium Education. In finalising its report, the council should be clearer that it is setting a catchment area at the primary stages of Gaelic Medium Education. The council should also use the definitions for Gaelic Medium Education as set out in the Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017. In finalising its report, the council should fulfil its statutory duty to consult with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and take forward, as appropriate, any views that they may have.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
February 2018**

SECTION 5 – SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED

- 5.1 While the response to the proposal from parents was overwhelmingly positive, a number of issues were raised. These issues were also considered by Education Scotland in their report.
- 5.2 **Concern over access to Gaelic Medium Education at nursery and secondary level.**

Both parents and Education Scotland noted that the proposals to vary the catchment area apply only to the GME at the primary level. Parents are keen to ensure that families wishing to access GME can be confident that they will be able to secure a place.

Gaelic Medium Education is provided within East Dunbartonshire Council in Meadowburn Primary and Bishopbriggs Academy.

EDC recognises that the consultation only covers Gaelic Medium Education at the primary stages, as described in the consultation proposal. The proposal is to alter the catchment area of Meadowburn Primary School for admission to Gaelic Medium Education only. It does not affect the catchment area of the mainstream Meadowburn Primary School.

In relation to the provision within early years, there is a Gaelic Medium Nursery within Meadowburn Primary. There is no defined catchment area for this establishment and parents from across East Dunbartonshire can apply for a place for their child.

In relation to the provision at Bishopbriggs Academy, EDC recognise that Bishopbriggs Academy provides Gaelic Medium Secondary Education as defined in the Statutory Guidance. Pupils have the opportunity to continue to study Gaelic and to gain qualifications.

The Council will review the priorities for admission to Bishopbriggs Academy. Under the EDC priorities for admission, any pupil who attends Meadowburn Primary and lives in East Dunbartonshire, receives a high priority for a placing request place. In recent years, no pupil who lives in East Dunbartonshire, and requests a place at Bishopbriggs Academy to access GME, has been refused.

Proposed action – to monitor the enrolment at Bishopbriggs Academy in terms of those attending the Gaelic Medium Primary Education Unit at Meadowburn Primary and review the priorities for admission to Bishopbriggs Academy if required.

5.3 Capacity at Meadowburn Primary School

Concern has been raised that the proposal could increase the number of pupils at the school, and affect provision in both Gaelic and English medium education.

EDC monitors capacity and occupancy carefully at all schools, and has a statutory duty to ensure that the school estate is effectively managed. To do this, roll projections are regularly reviewed, and capacity planning considered on a school by school basis. The aim of this proposal is to improve access for parents within East Dunbartonshire, who wish their child to attend a Gaelic Medium Primary Education unit at the primary stages.

The proposal put forward by EDC would mean that the catchment area of the school matches the Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) assessment area for East Dunbartonshire, which is defined as the whole authority area. The GMPE assessment is a process laid out in legislation for an education authority to assess if new or more GMPE provision is required. If enrolment was to increase at Meadowburn, EDC would use the GMPE assessment process to consider if additional capacity, or potentially more than one GMPE provision, was required.

Proposed action – to monitor GMPE enrolment and the roll projections within Meadowburn Primary and take appropriate action in the event of pressures on capacity.

5.4 Traffic at Meadowburn Primary School

As noted above, it is not expected that this proposal will significantly increase the numbers of pupils at Meadowburn Primary School. In addition, the proposal will ensure that all GMPE learners will be eligible for free school transport. At present, pupils making placing requests to the school are not eligible for free transport. It could be considered that the proposal has the potential to reduce the number of private cars coming to the school. Meadowburn Primary is working with parents and EDC to address traffic issues through school travel planning, and EDC will continue to support this work.

5.5 Statement of educational benefit

Education Scotland found that: *“Staff at Meadowburn Primary School felt that the proposal would help them plan better the curriculum for Gaelic Medium Education, particularly for transitions. In the final report, it would be beneficial for there to be a more comprehensive statement of such educational benefits.”*

Proposed action – The educational benefits of the proposal are more clearly described in support of the proposal.

SECTION 6 – ALLEGED OMISSIONS OR INACCURACIES

6.1 Education Scotland noted the following omissions or inaccuracies:

6.2 Consultation with Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

EDC has invited the Bòrd na Gàidhlig to comment on the consultation. The Bòrd's response is attached below.

Schools Consultation by East Dunbartonshire Council

Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcome the decision by East Dunbartonshire Council to establish a new catchment area for Gaelic medium at Meadowburn Primary. By extending the catchment area for admission to include the whole of East Dunbartonshire demonstrates an overarching desire to support promote GME in East Dunbartonshire Council.

It is encouraging that East Dunbartonshire Council having previously a specified catchment area for GME, are mindful that this change will provide transparency for parents in respect of entitlement to GME.

In conclusion, East Dunbartonshire Council have stated that this proposal will not have any impact on existing English medium provision. This is most welcome as working jointly with other stakeholders is central to the success of GME in the local area.

Mona Wilson

Stiùiriche Foghlam na Gàidhlig | Director of Gaelic Education

Bòrd na Gàidhlig / Taigh a' Ghlinne Mhòir / Rathad na Leacainn / Inbhir Nis / IV3 8NW

6.3 Definition of GME in Bishopbriggs Academy

Provision within the secondary sector is defined in the Statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education as follows:

Gaelic medium secondary education (GMSE) is also available in a number of secondary schools in Scotland. In these schools, Gaelic is typically offered as a subject, with some schools delivering a further proportion of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic. Gaelic learner education (GLE) is distinct from GME in that it is delivered to those who are in English medium education as an additional language.

In line with these definitions, Bishopbriggs Academy should be considered to be providing Gaelic Medium Secondary Education

SECTION 7 – FINDINGS AND REVIEW OF CONSULTATION

7.1 The overwhelming majority of consultees agree with the proposal, and Education Scotland find that “*Almost all stakeholders support and recognise that the proposal is taking forward a duty to support and promote Gaelic Medium Education.*”

7.2 Concerns were raised in a number of areas, and the following actions were identified:

Action 1 To monitor the enrolment at Bishopbriggs Academy in terms of those attending the Gaelic Medium Primary Education Unit at Meadowburn Primary and review the priorities for admission to Bishopbriggs Academy if required.

Action 2 To monitor GMPE enrolment and the roll projections within Meadowburn Primary and take appropriate action in the event of pressures on capacity.

Action 3 The educational benefits of the proposal are more clearly described in support of the proposal. **Refer to Section 7.4.**

7.3 If these actions are taken, no barriers have been identified to implementation of the proposal.

7.4 **Educational Benefits statement (updated)**

This proposal will ensure that children in the primary stages in East Dunbartonshire are able to access Gaelic medium primary education without the barrier of having to submit a placing request. This will support the delivery of the Council’s statutory duties, and will help to meet parents’ right to request Gaelic Medium Primary Education.

The proposal will provide greater certainty for parents, pupils and staff around transition from early years to primary, and will allow for improved continuity for young children. Parents will be able to enrol their child in the Gaelic Nursery and know that they will be able to apply for their child to attend the Gaelic Medium Primary Unit within Meadowburn Primary, without having to make a placing request. This will improve transition planning and ensure improved curriculum planning.

Pupils attending Meadowburn Primary GME provision will be entitled to free school transport, and this has the potential to reduce the numbers of private cars attending the school, improving congestion and safety.

SECTION 8 – LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Proposal Document
- Appendix 2 Consultation Timeline
- Appendix 3 Public Meeting