

Consultation proposal by Glasgow City Council

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal to define a catchment area for primary aged children attending Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu (Glasgow Gaelic School) and the new Gaelic Medium Primary School to be built as part of the Glendale campus.

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the 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 it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

1. Introduction

1.1 Glasgow City Council proposes to define a catchment area for primary aged children attending Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu (Glasgow Gaelic School) and the proposed new Gaelic Medium Primary School to be built as part of the Glendale campus. Currently all the young people learning through the medium of Gaelic attend Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu. A new Gaelic Medium primary school is to be built in the south of the city. Two options have been presented for defining the catchment area for primary provision. The council has also invited stakeholders to propose alternative options for the catchment area.

1.2 Option 1 defines the catchment area using the River Clyde as a divide. Option 2 defines the catchment area broadly using the M8 and M77 motorways as the divide.

1.3 There are no changes to the catchment area for the secondary provision at Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu. The catchment area will continue to be the entire city.

1.4 The report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.5 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 21 August 2013 in connection with the council's proposals;

- 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 the catchment area associated with the proposed site of the new Gaelic Medium primary provision at Glendale campus, including telephone conversations with relevant consultees.

1.6 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people choosing Gaelic Medium Education across the city; children and young people of Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu; 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
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Glasgow City Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

2.2 The consultation proposal document was distributed to a wide range of stakeholders, including parents, stakeholders at Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu, Glendale Primary School, and Lyoncross and Rowena Nurseries. It was also distributed to education authorities whose parents make a placing request at Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu. The consultation included invitations to submit written submissions. The written submissions favoured Option 1 by a small margin in which the catchment area would be defined by using the River Clyde as a natural divide.

2.3 A public meeting was held which provided an appropriate forum for the expression of a range of views. The council officers provided reassurances that they were inviting further engagement and discussion with parents. They expressed a strong interest in setting up a group with parents to ensure close working in achieving a consensus on catchment areas. The council also held two additional meetings with parents. However, not all parents felt that the purpose of those meetings was clear which impacted on their attendance.

2.4 All those consulted by HM Inspectors valued that children had opportunities to benefit from Gaelic Medium Education. They were very positive about the successes of Gaelic Medium Education in Glasgow City Council and the potential

increased uptake that may result from this proposal. Those consulted, particularly parents, were looking for reassurances that the proposed defining of catchment areas would maintain and extend these successes.

2.5 In addition to considering the responses of all parents who responded to the consultation, HM Inspectors also met with parents including the Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu Parent Council and Comann nam Pàrant. Overall, parents did not have a clear view on the best option for defining the catchment areas. Some expressed concern at what they perceived as a low response and engagement with the consultation.

2.6 Parents living in the proximity of the new Gaelic Medium primary school felt that the school's location would be much more convenient. Others on the boundary of a catchment area felt that their children's travel time may be increased unnecessarily. They did not wish to accrue additional transport costs to have their children educated through the medium of Gaelic in their preferred catchment area.

2.7 Some parents considered the proposal from the perspective of the current cohort of pupils in Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu. Their concerns centred on the interruption that may arise from their children having to move to the new primary provision as the council enforced catchment areas. They were particularly concerned that siblings could be in two different schools and saw this as having challenges for travel.

2.8 Another group of parents did not feel that the consultation on the catchment areas was contextualised well enough within a future long-term plan for Gaelic Medium Education for the city. They felt that a better overall strategy should firstly be put in place, with the defining of catchment areas part of this. Others felt that the catchment areas did not present parity in Gaelic medium provision. Principally those living in the catchment of Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu would benefit from learning in a 3-18 Gaelic Medium school. Those in the catchment of the new Gaelic Medium primary would have to move establishments for pre-school, primary and then secondary provision. There were also a few concerns that children may be less likely to be hearing and using Gaelic outwith the classroom in the shared primary campus.

2.9 It was important to parents that the wider community of Glendale campus had an understanding and empathy to Gaelic Medium Education. This was to enable an inclusive environment to be embedded within the campus.

2.10 A few parents proposed another way of dividing the catchment areas. They now need to present this proposal to the council. In taking forward the proposal, the council should consider the viability of this option.

2.11 Children were very pragmatic about defining the catchment areas for the city. They recognised that the proposal represented a natural expansion in Gaelic Medium Education of which they were very proud. Children welcomed the opportunity for extending their friendship groups but, at the same time, did not wish to be separated from existing friends. Overall of those children who were consulted,

their preferred option was having the River Clyde as a natural divide in deciding on catchment areas.

2.12 Staff in Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu believe that the proposal presents a commitment to determining the long-term future of Gaelic Medium Education. They feel that their school is close to maximum capacity and that this proposal is necessary and affords them greater flexibility in the use of accommodation. Their preference between options would be informed by parents' wishes.

2.13 All the consultees connected to the catchment area of the new Gaelic Medium provision at Glendale campus supported the proposals. They did not view the proposal as having any adverse effects.

2.14 Bòrd na Gàidhlig is not listed by the education authority as a consultee on the proposals. Under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* Statutory Guidance and, in taking forward the proposal, the education authority needs to consider Bòrd na Gàidhlig's view on defining the catchment areas for Gaelic Medium primary provision.

2.15 No community users of the premises were identified as likely to be affected by the proposal.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu is well established in providing 3-18 Gaelic Medium Education for the city of Glasgow. It also receives placing requests from parents in other education authorities. The council's proposal is based on its commitment to Gaelic Medium Education and meeting an increase in demand.

3.2 The council's papers refer to educational benefits arising from its proposals. These proposals take cognisance of the aims of the National Plan for Gaelic in helping to secure an increase in the number of speakers of Gaelic in Scotland. The interest and uptake for Gaelic Medium Education in Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu has necessitated an increase in provision. This proposal would provide opportunities for more children to learn through the medium of Gaelic within defined catchment areas. It would also assist with alleviating pressures on accommodation in Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu. It would be more convenient for parents of children who reside in the Glendale campus area to attend a Gaelic Medium primary school within their local community.

3.3 The council takes a positive view of the quality of education provided by Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu based on its knowledge of the school. Their proposal describes how staff will plan together to ensure that the curricula of both primary provisions are closely aligned. They now need to extend the detail of this to help parents be more informed of how a quality Gaelic Medium experience will be maintained. This includes a clearer focus on the early curriculum level with Gaelic Medium nurseries. It would also be useful to include how well children will be supported in hearing and using Gaelic in and beyond the classroom in the proposed Gaelic Medium primary shared campus. Additionally, the planning of the curricula

across the shared Glendale campus needs to lead to a shared understanding of Gaelic language and culture amongst all stakeholders.

3.4 The council's educational benefits statement has given commitments for the council to work closely with parents in taking forward the proposal. Despite this commitment, the parents consulted are looking for greater detail about how this will be achieved. The council, in its final report needs to be clear in how the issues identified in this report will be addressed with parents. These include outlining interim arrangements associated with the initial defining of the catchment areas.

4. Summary

The proposal from Glasgow City Council to define catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education for primary aged children presents clear benefits for increasing provision. It will, for some children, reduce travel time and offer Gaelic Medium Education in the local community. The council needs to include more specific detail in its final consultation report on the issues detailed in this report which are all legitimate and still concern parents. These include more detail of the transitional arrangements for children who will be in P2–P5 at the time that the new primary provision will open. More communication and clarity is also required on how the catchment areas will be defined and pupils allocated to these. The council needs to explore with parents the viability of alternative options for defining the catchment areas. The council also needs to continue with its strategic plans for ongoing communication and involvement of stakeholders in planning to continue the confidence that has been achieved in Gaelic Medium Education. Before finalising the consultation, the council needs to ensure it has fulfilled its statutory duty to consult with Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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