

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Glasgow City Council to open a new Gaelic Medium Education (GME) primary school in the south west of the city and to define new catchment areas for primary-aged children attending Glasgow Gaelic School/Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu and Glendale Gaelic School/Bunsgoil Ghàidhlig Ghleann Dail and the new school.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by 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 Glasgow City Council's proposal to open a new GME primary school in the south west of the city. This includes defining new catchment areas for primary-aged children attending Glasgow Gaelic School/Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu and Glendale Gaelic School/Bunsgoil Ghàidhlig Ghleann Dail and the new 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 of Glasgow Gaelic School/Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu and Glendale Gaelic School/Bunsgoil Ghàidhlig Ghleann Dail; 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:

- attendance at the public meetings held on 20 June 2017 and 17 August 2017 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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- visits to the sites of Glasgow Gaelic School/Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu and Glendale Gaelic School/Bunsgoil Ghàidhlig Ghleann Dail, including discussion with relevant consultees. HM Inspectors also visited the proposed new site at Gowanbank Primary School.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Glasgow City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal 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 22 May 2017 to 3 September 2017. During this period, the council held public meetings at Glasgow Gaelic School/Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu, Glendale Gaelic School/Bunsgoil Ghàidhlig Ghleann Dail and the proposed new site at Gowanbank Primary School. Over 100 stakeholders and other interested parties attended, with several attending more than one of the meetings. Statutory consultees, including parents/carers, children and staff of the schools directly involved were informed of the consultation. Consultation documentation was published on the council's website and papers were distributed to a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties, including Bòrd na Gaidhlig, as statutory consultees, and Comann nam Pàrant. Suitable arrangements were in place to enable interested parties to respond to the proposal electronically and in writing. The council received over 200 responses. Many responses indicated a strong level of support for the aspect of the proposal which would potentially enhance GME provision. This includes the response from Bòrd na Gaidhlig who support the proposal. Overall though, most responses opposed the proposal, with several concerns raised over the proposed new site and catchment areas, including access with regard to travelling distance and time by car and by public transport.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 This proposal involves the establishment of a new GME primary school, and its associated catchment area, in the south west of Glasgow. As a consequence, the proposal also defines new catchment areas for the two existing GME primary schools in the city. Demand for GME has increased considerably in recent years and neither of the two existing GME primary schools has the capacity to sustain increased intakes into P1.

3.2 The proposal has the potential to significantly increase the capacity for GME at the primary stages across the city of Glasgow and to reduce the possibility of future overcrowding or capping of intakes at the two existing GME primary schools. In addition, the proposal would also provide opportunities for the GME secondary school at the Berkeley Street campus to expand in line with expected increases to the roll at the secondary stages. As a result, the proposal offers educational benefits to children and young people attending existing GME schools and more widely across the authority.

3.3 Almost all parents and staff who met with HM Inspectors provided qualified support for the proposal to the extent that it offered the potential to enhance the capacity for GME provision in Glasgow. These stakeholders articulated a range of reasonable concerns, including those outlined below, about several aspects of the proposal. In taking its proposal forward, the council needs to continue to engage with stakeholders and other interested parties to clarify aspects of the proposal and to address these concerns.

3.4 The majority of stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors have concerns over the proposed location of the new school and its catchment area. Many parents, including those living north of the River Clyde, view the proposed location in the south west of the city to be unsuitable due to its distance from their homes and the associated difficulties of travel, especially at busier times. Parents have concerns over bus links and had doubts over whether their children could travel to school within a reasonable time. Several parents also outlined their fears that the school's proposed location would impact adversely on how families from across the catchment area would be able to engage with the school for after-school events and family learning activities.

3.5 Parents would welcome greater clarity about what, exactly, the proposed site at Gowanbank Primary School would offer in terms of increased capacity for GME.

3.6 The proposal paper does not itself provide detail over how the council would consider the issue of siblings who might be scheduled for different primary schools as a consequence of the proposal and the changed catchment areas of schools. This issue was raised at public meetings and, in line with the response given at these meetings, the council should now ensure that all parents are clear about how it will address this issue.

3.7 Several stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors spoke very positively about their commitment to GME and about their support for extending this provision across the city. These stakeholders would welcome proposals such as this to be considered within a clear, strategic plan for the expansion of sustainable GME provision across the authority. They would very much like to continue to work with the council to develop and share plans for the extension of GME provision within a framework that meets parental demand for GME.

4. Summary

Glasgow City Council's proposal to open a new GME primary school has the potential to increase the capacity for GME across the city and to reduce the possibility of demand exceeding capacity at the two existing GME schools. Overall, the proposal has the potential to provide educational benefit for children currently attending the two existing GME schools and those across the city. Almost all stakeholders support the extension of GME across the city. Most stakeholders, however, have concerns about important aspects of the proposal. These include the location and accessibility of the proposed new site and arrangements which the council would make for siblings who may, as a result of the proposal, be zoned for different primary schools. Several stakeholders would also appreciate a greater understanding about the council's overall strategic plans for GME across the city and about the added capacity which this proposal would bring. In taking its proposal forward, the council should set out how it would address these concerns. It should continue to engage with its many committed stakeholders and other interested parties in planning to enhance its capacity for GME and satisfactorily meet the growing demand for GME.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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