

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HM Inspectors addressing educational aspects of the proposal by East Renfrewshire Council to establish Gaelic Medium Education at Thornliebank Primary School from August 2023. This will have the council's boundary as the Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) school's defined delineated catchment area, overlaying that of the English medium primary schools. The proposal also sets admission arrangements.

October 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of East Renfrewshire Council's proposal to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) at Thornliebank Primary School from August 2023. This will have the council's boundary as the Gaelic Medium Education school's defined delineated catchment area, overlaying the catchment areas for English medium primary schools. The proposal also sets admission arrangements. Section two of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section three of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section four summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the 2010 Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school; 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 meeting held on 15 September 2022 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
- discussions with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 East Renfrewshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 17 August 2022 until midnight on 3 October 2022. The proposal paper was available for inspection online, and as a hard copy at the school, schools impacted and at multiple council's Head Office. The council's social media platforms were used to advertise the consultation and raise awareness. A public meeting was held in St Cadoc's Primary School. Elected members and council senior officers were present to discuss the proposal to 15 people who were in attendance. Attendees raised a number of questions at the public meeting. These included how places in Gaelic Medium Education would be allocated, and how resources,

such as staffing, would be allocated. Representatives from the local authority also held a meeting with Thornliebank Primary School's Parent Council to discuss the proposal. East Renfrewshire Council's website had a dedicated area, with information, the proposal paper and an opportunity to respond to the statutory consultation.

2.3 The council's Education Department undertook a consultation exercise with all pupils at Thornliebank Primary School. Children were invited to give their views on establishing Gaelic Medium Education at the school. House and vice captains managed the consultation exercise, supported by school staff and an independent consultant from the local authority education department. A summary report was prepared of pupils' views. The majority of pupils at Thornliebank Primary School agreed with the proposal.

2.4 The council received 80 online responses to the consultation. The council's staff views were sought. The majority of the respondents (61%), including Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant, support the proposal. These Gaelic organisations were supportive of the proposal as they believe it will provide children with the benefits of Gaelic in education, bilingualism and encourage cultural diversity. All respondents to the consultation agreed with the proposed catchment area to encompass the full geographical area of East Renfrewshire Council. Respondees agreed that access to Gaelic Medium Education would be in accordance with the council's school admissions and placing request policies.

2.5 A minority (39%) did not agree with the proposal. A number of these respondents misunderstood the purpose of the consultation and gave their views on Gaelic Medium Education. The statutory consultation was about the location of a new provision for Gaelic. The education authority is taking forward a duty to promote and support Gaelic Education. They should continue to work on promoting an understanding of Gaelic Medium Education.

2.6 A substantial number of consultees' concerns centred on issues in implementing Gaelic Medium Education. A few felt the proposal may exacerbate current traffic arrangements at the school. The council should produce a risk assessment of the potential impact of their proposal on traffic management and safety, particularly as enrolments increase. A number of respondents expressed a view to HM Inspectors that any changes to the school's accommodation and resources should benefit children in both English Medium and Gaelic Medium classes.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council has produced a clear educational statement on the resulting benefits from their proposal. The council does not currently provide Gaelic Medium Education. At present, families who wish Gaelic Medium Education access this in neighbouring local authorities. The council's full assessment of the demand for Gaelic Medium Education demonstrated sufficient interest to establish this type of education. The proposal, if agreed, will provide access to Gaelic Medium Education at the primary stages at Thornliebank Primary School, East Renfrewshire. This supports Gaelic language, equity, equality and inclusion outcomes at the primary stages through the medium of Gaelic.

3.2 In setting up of the provision for Gaelic Medium Education through total immersion, the council will contribute towards developing and sustaining the Gaelic language for its residents. The council plan to consider Gaelic language within their 1+2 Languages strategy. This would increase further and deepen the educational benefits from this proposal, as well as assist the council in meeting national outcomes for Gaelic Education and the objectives of their local authority Gaelic Language Plan.

3.3 The majority of children who expressed their views through the school survey, or spoke directly to HM Inspectors, agree with the proposal. They believe that children at Thornliebank

Primary School will benefit from learners in Gaelic Medium Education attending their school. Most parents requesting Gaelic Medium Education, or as future users, welcome the proposal. In finalising the proposal, and in preparing and publishing its final consultation report, the council should continue to communicate with staff and parents at Thornliebank Primary School. This should aim to develop a more consistent, shared understanding of Gaelic Medium Education, the implications for all of this new option and to support transition arrangements into the school.

3.4 HM Inspectors welcome that the council are, in the future, planning Gaelic Medium Education as a progressive 3 to 18 experience. At this juncture, their plans meet the legislative duty to establish Gaelic Medium Education at P1. It is important that the intended outcomes of the free early learning and childcare are available to users of Gaelic Medium Education. A few respondees have referenced challenges in recruiting and retaining staff. This is also detailed in the council's proposal paper. A few respondees have raised a question on how total immersion will be delivered, while ensuring teachers' non-contact time and the resultant impact on educational benefits.

3.5 HM Inspectors agree with the council's plan to undertake a children's rights, fairness and equality impact assessment on the proposal. This information would be referenced when making a final decision. The council, staff and pupils have made a positive start to discussing the implications of having the authority's first provision for Gaelic Medium Education. They should continue, as planned, to reflect this in their school's vision, values, aims and rationale for the curriculum to increase even further the high-quality benefits and outcomes of their proposal. This should include having well-informed attitudes that demonstrate equity, equality and inclusion for all learners.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors evaluated East Renfrewshire Council's proposal to establish Gaelic Medium Education at Thornliebank Primary School from August 2023 and beyond; set up a delineated catchment area for GMPE; and set admission arrangements. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has potential to result in educational benefits. In taking forward the proposal, the council should continue to involve stakeholders in their plans for the provision. In its final report, the council should, as planned, complete a risk assessment for road safety and consider carefully plans for traffic management. They should also consider the few points raised by stakeholders, as detailed in section three, to ensure the best possible equity and equality outcomes for learners.

HM Inspectors
October 2022