

Education (Scotland) Act 2016

Report by HM Inspectors of Schools to give an independent view of the determination for East Renfrewshire Council to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education from August 2023, unless it would be unreasonable to do so. East Renfrewshire Council has designated the assessment area for which, it will assess the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education, as the whole of the council.

January 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) (the 2016 Act). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial view of the determination to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education in East Renfrewshire Council from August 2023. This is based on a request received by the education authority from parents of children under section 7 of the 2016 Act. The request is, as required, from parents of children under school age, whose children have not yet started to attend a primary school. The education authority has designated the whole council as the assessment area for which it will assess the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education.

1.2 Section 2 of this report sets out brief details of the assessment process and HM inspectors' views on the determination for the education authority to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education. This is in accordance with Section 12 and 13 of the 2016 Act. This section sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of:

- the details received from the council on the parental request;
- other information received from the education authority that they, as required, took into account during the initial assessment about the demand for Gaelic Medium Primary Education;
- HM Inspectors of Education's national expertise to comment on the potential need for and possibility of securing Gaelic Medium Primary Education in the designated assessment area. This national expertise draws on the wider parental, Gaelic and educational context in Scotland; and
- mandatory factors that must be considered by the education authority in its determination of the potential need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education. This is in accordance with section 1.52 of the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education 2017.

1.3 Section 3 of this report summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the need to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education. Upon receipt of this report, the 2016 Act requires the education authority to have regard to it in preparing their report on the determination to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education. The education authority's report must include an explanation of how it has complied with its duty to secure the provision of Gaelic Medium Primary Education, unless it would be unreasonable to do so.

1.4 The education authority must publish its final report no later than ten weeks after deciding to carry out a full assessment. HM Inspectors will publish our report on our website at the same time as the education authority is publishing their final report.

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

- synthesis of all relevant documentation provided by the education authority in relation to the proposal;
- discussion with the local authority and relevant consultees; and
- review of the council's Gaelic Language Plan and other planning processes.

2. Assessment process and HM Inspectors' determination on establishing Gaelic Medium Primary Education

2.1 East Renfrewshire Council sent notification to HM Inspectors on 16 December 2021 that they had received a parental request for an assessment of the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education. This request is for Gaelic Medium Primary Education to be established within the education authority from August 2023. The education authority advised HM Inspectors that they

had undertaken an initial assessment of this request in November 2021. This evidenced that there is a demand for Gaelic Medium Primary Education. HM Inspectors agree that there is sufficient demand for establishing Gaelic Medium Primary Education from 2023. We therefore strongly recommend that the education authority proceed with establishing Gaelic Medium Primary Education in 2023. In our discussions with the education authority, they shared with us some of their initial positive planning towards a full assessment. We agreed with the education authority that their future approach is taken forward in strong collaboration with parents as part of a planned, strategic approach to developing progressive Gaelic Medium Education.

2.2 The information provided by the education authority shows parental interest in enrolling their children in Gaelic Medium Primary Education from 2023 and up to 2026. The education authority should continue to take forward its statutory duty to promote Gaelic Medium Education with the wider parental body as required by the 2016 Act. The availability of Gaelic Medium Education within the local authority would reduce the existing need for children to travel to a neighbouring authority for this option in Scottish education. This would make Gaelic Medium Education more attractive and could increase further the demand for Gaelic Medium Primary Education. The education authority should continue to promote and share the successes of Gaelic Medium Education within Scottish education. This promotion should include the resultant benefits of bilingualism and how being a speaker of Gaelic is part of Scotland's identity, culture and heritage.

2.3 The education authority has a statutory Gaelic Language Plan, 2017-22. This has a supportive statement about making available Gaelic Medium and Learner Education to pupils within the education authority. The Gaelic Language Plan gives a commitment to “actively seek and promote opportunities for children and young people from 3-18 to learn Gaelic in our schools and centres. We will ensure access to information about East Renfrewshire Council's Gaelic educational provision is available to parents and the public. We will give consideration to the inclusion of Gaelic within our 1+2 Languages strategy as part of our ongoing monitoring and evaluation of this strategy.” The education authority's initial assessment of parental demand for Gaelic Medium Primary Education identifies sufficient demand to now set up local provision. This also offers the education authority an opportunity to show further impact towards achieving statutory national targets for Gaelic. Additionally, it improves all young people's access to local-based Gaelic Medium Education in pursuit of excellence, equity and equality in Scottish education.

2.4 The education authority has designated the whole of the council for the assessment area, for which it will assess the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education. HM Inspectors are of the view that parents should be consulted on the best available location of the proposed Gaelic Medium Education service. This should make Gaelic Medium Education an attractive option that results in year-on-year growth in enrolments. In 2017, Bòrd na Gàidhlig published Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education asking that catchment areas, placing guidelines, and guidelines on enrolment and admissions be established for Gaelic Medium Education. The education authority should take forward these duties to enable equal and equitable access to Gaelic Medium Education. They should have a clear policy on how they will support equity through the provision of free transport to their Gaelic Medium Education provision. This is particularly pertinent should there only be one Gaelic Medium provision within the education authority. It would be important for the education authority to complete Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments.

2.5 The education authority is aware of the high-quality and distinctive approaches to Gaelic Medium Education detailed in the [Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017](#), and best practice identified through inspections. The education authority should strategically plan towards a 3-18 continuum of learning that overtakes all the statutory requirements of Gaelic Medium Education. It would be well-judged to plan also for three to five early learning and childcare to

reduce any potential equity gap, raise attainment and enable children to access the Curriculum for Excellence from aged three. In taking this forward, the education authority may benefit from receipt of dedicated funding from Scottish Government. They may also benefit from Bòrd na Gàidhlig's support in setting up a provision, which includes appropriate staffing. It is recognised that the children who would enrol in Gaelic Medium Primary Education in 2023 will not necessarily benefit from early learning and childcare through total immersion.

2.6 The education authority's Gaelic Language Plan, 2017-2022 states that East Renfrewshire Council uses the Gaelic Medium Education services of two neighbouring education authorities to satisfy parental demand. These education authorities use two different delivery models for Gaelic Medium Education. One model delivers through total immersion in all Gaelic schools. The other model delivers through total immersion in dual medium schools, with learning through Gaelic and English occurring in the same school under the leadership of the same headteacher. The education authority should be clear, in consulting with parents, of their preferred future delivery model of high-quality immersion in East Renfrewshire Council.

2.7 One of the mandatory factors to be considered in full assessments is existing Gaelic Medium Primary Education provision. HM Inspectors, in taking forward duties for the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, have reported on the growing demand for Gaelic Medium Education in Glasgow City Council. This has led to Glasgow City Council advising that they no longer can provide Gaelic Medium Education services to those out with their own authority. This is a further consideration for the education authority in meeting their statutory duty to provide Gaelic Medium Education.

3. Summary

3.1 HM Inspectors have assessed and commented on East Renfrewshire Council's determination of the potential need for securing Gaelic Medium Primary Education within the education authority from August 2023. We have drawn on our national expertise to comment on the potential need and possibility of securing Gaelic Medium Primary Education. This has taken account of the wider parental, Gaelic and educational context in Scotland. HM Inspectors are of the view that Gaelic Medium Primary Education needs to be set up in East Renfrewshire Council from August 2023. This will support the education authority's ambition to advance excellence and equity for all learners. We have summarised our views on a number of mandatory factors for the education authority to consider for successful implementation of Gaelic Medium Education.

HM Inspectors
January 2022