

Amendment by the Green Group

Education, Children & Families Committee

City of Edinburgh Council

28 May 2021

Item 4.1: Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh – Statutory Consultation

This Committee;

1. Recognises the rising school roll at James Gillespies High School (JGHS), where children from the Gaelic primary school at Taobh na Pairce currently move up to, means that pressure on school capacity is unsustainable and that this Committee and the JGHS Parent Council are rightly seeking a timely solution to this issue;
2. Notes the Council's estimates of capacity at JGHS in this report show that there is currently an overcapacity at JGHS of 110 pupils; that with the introduction of around 450 spaces at the Darroch GME annex next year, this overcapacity is eliminated; however with a rising roll, is once more at overcapacity by 13 pupils by 2025-26 and increasing to 89 pupils overcapacity by 2029-30;
3. Therefore understands that with continued rising rolls in the longer term, that even with the Darroch annex, JGHS will not have capacity to host both GME and EME pupils and therefore that a Gaelic High School must be brought forward timeously to address overcapacity at JGHS;
4. Welcomes the very significant work undertaken by Council education officers to develop proposals for a Gaelic High School within council resources, including the recent informal consultation with parents and other stakeholders about a co-located GME facility at the new Liberton High School;
5. However, notes the result of a survey undertaken by Comann nam Parant, the Gaelic parent body, which found that 51% of parents did not support co-location at Liberton, with 34% uncertain and only 15% in support;
6. Further, notes academic research concluding that a standalone GME school, rather than a school co-located with English Medium Education, is the most effective for Gaelic language development in children;
7. Notes the success of the Gaelic primary at Taobh na Pairce with an in-take of around 60 children into P1 last year and strikingly that the in-take is now very predominantly from families living near to the school (around 90%);

8. Notes that the proposed joint-campus at Liberton is as far as 5 miles from the Gaelic primary school Taobh na Pairce (TnP) in Leith and that most children at TnP and their families would face a journeys of around two hours each day on public transport between their homes and the proposed location at Liberton;
9. Therefore recognises that locating a Gaelic High School this far from the existing Gaelic primary school may discourage families from continuing with, or joining, Gaelic medium education and that this may significantly undermine the current growth of Gaelic in Edinburgh;
10. Therefore believes that a more central location for the new Gaelic high school would maintain a stronger connection with the existing successful Gaelic primary, any new future Gaelic primary capacity in the South and West of Edinburgh and also be better placed to support a Gaelic community hub for the wider City;
11. Therefore, welcomes the SNP Holyrood election manifesto commitment on 15 April 2021 which states:

*‘To ensure that the GME experience is truly immersive we will have a general presumption **against co-locating GME schools with English medium schools.***

*‘We will support the development of additional GME primary schools in Edinburgh and the Lothians as an important step towards the creation of **a standalone GME secondary school in central Edinburgh.** A central location is necessary to ensure it is accessible from major public transport hubs to allow the new standalone school to serve the wider Lothian region.*

*‘Edinburgh City Council has taken forward important engagement on GME provision, but **we will ensure that this is now incorporated within a new national strategic approach.** This is essential if we are to see the faster rates of progress we seek for Gaelic.’*
12. Notes that the Council’s draft consultation on co-locating a GME High School at Liberton, appended to this report, was drafted before this SNP commitment was published, and does not offer parents any clear choice between a co-located GME high school at Liberton on the periphery of the city and **‘a standalone GME secondary school in central Edinburgh’** as promised in the SNP manifesto;
13. Recognises that the Council consultation as drafted is therefore fundamentally skewed in favour of co-locating a GME high school at Liberton because parents and other stakeholders may believe that this is the only possible option and way forward for GME and for JGHS and therefore agrees not to proceed with the consultation on this basis;

14. Therefore requests that the Education Convenor and Deputy convenor write to the Scottish Government to confirm that it will commit to deliver on its manifesto promise for **'a standalone GME secondary school in central Edinburgh'** in order to provide a clear choice for parents in the forthcoming Council consultation on GME secondary education before proceeding with this consultation and also in time to address pressures of overcapacity at James Gillespie's High School.

Moved by Councillor Steve Burgess

Seconded by Councillor Mary Campbell