



The Scottish
Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

CONSULTATION ON GAELIC
MEDIUM EDUCATION BILL

Analysis of written responses

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EDUCATION BILL**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Scottish Government is committed to examining how best to introduce an entitlement to Gaelic medium education (GME). GME is seen as an important route to increasing the number of Gaelic speakers, and thus strengthening Gaelic in Scotland, but provision is patchy across Scottish local authorities at present.

1.2 It is proposed that a clear, transparent and consistent process be put in place for authorities to access parental requests for GME. New legislation would also encompass a duty on the Scottish Government to prepare guidance defining the arrangements under which GME should operate in schools and be managed by local authorities.

1.3 A consultation paper was published on 2 July 2014 to seek views on these proposals. The responses will help inform the development of the policies, the guidance and draft legislation. 79 responses to the consultation were received, just over half (53%) from individuals, the remainder from organisations. 13 local authority bodies were amongst the respondents.

1.4 A summary of views contained in the consultation responses follows.

Gaelic medium education

1.5 There was widespread support for GME with many respondents viewing GME as having a key role in securing Gaelic in Scotland for the future. The most commonly perceived benefits of GME were its contribution to promoting cultural awareness; its wider cognitive performance-enhancing attributes; and better employment prospects for those educated through this medium.

1.6 Despite strong support for GME from most respondents, some raised concerns about its operation and potential, with particular worries focusing on a perceived lack of suitably qualified GME teachers.

Handling parental requests for GME

1.7 Four out of every five respondents who commented agreed that a legislative process should be put in place for local authorities on how they respond to parental requests for provision or expansion of GME. Supporters perceived the proposal as aiding consistency in approach between local authorities in how they handle such requests, although calls were made for flexibility in the process to allow for local circumstances.

1.8 Respondents highlighted that communication between local authority and parent is paramount at the stage of the local authority receiving a request for GME, with prompt acknowledgement of the request, notification of a timeframe

for proceedings and identification of a named contact for direct liaison, all important aspects of this.

1.9 Repeated calls were made for parental requests not to be viewed in isolation, but to be joined up with others in order to identify a critical mass of demand across an area. Respondents recommended that when considering requests, local authorities should consider not only their own GME resources, but those of neighbouring authorities too, with joint provision and working to be encouraged.

1.10 Some respondents suggested that if a request is refused, the local authority should be required to set out in writing the reasons for this, with information provided to parents on the appeals process.

GME schools

1.11 There was much support for the concept of Gaelic medium schools which many viewed as a natural progression from Gaelic medium units to a whole school approach.

1.12 The most common argument in favour of Gaelic medium schools was that these provide a more effective approach to learning Gaelic, through more complete immersion in the language, not just in the classroom, but re-enforced in every contact and experience in the school.

1.13 A common concern was that there may not always be sufficient teachers to staff Gaelic medium schools, particularly at short notice, for example when supply staff are needed or maternity cover is required.

1.14 Another recurring concern was over the standard of teaching at such schools with some respondents expressing their worries over consistency in quality of teaching and coverage of curriculum.

1.15 Many respondents considered that the lack of a clear definition of what constitutes Gaelic medium schools hampers the promotion of such institutions and contributes to the perceived lack of standardisation across schools.

1.16 In circumstances where parents request a move from a two stream primary to a stand-alone Gaelic medium school, respondents recommended that local authorities' considerations are underpinned by consultation with interested parties; are informed by available staffing resources; and take into account a cost-benefit analysis and best value principles.

Guidance on the operation and management of GME

1.17 90% of those who responded believed that guidance from central government is necessary in order to create a common understanding and expectation of the arrangements under which GME should operate.

1.18 Some respondents recommended that the Scottish Government develop such guidance in conjunction with local authorities, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and other relevant stakeholders.

1.19 Views were divided on whether the guidance should be statutory or simply provide a broad framework with scope for local flexibility and variation.

1.20 The items most commonly identified for coverage in the guidance were: the definition of GME and the different models of delivery of Gaelic; staff training, qualifications and CPD; and consultation and communication with parents, including the role of parents in supporting the Gaelic medium.

Role of GME in the future of Gaelic and promotion of its growth

1.21 An overarching view was that GME has a key role to play in the future of Gaelic, but not in isolation. Most respondents considered that to enhance its role, GME needs to be supported by wider family and community Gaelic use, to make it routine, normal, and accepted as a language of peers and social media.

1.22 The importance of providing opportunities for adult learners through family and community activities, and through open and flexible learning was emphasised.

1.23 Respondents' two main recommendations to encourage and promote the growth of GME were: recruit, train and support more teaching staff who can deliver GME; and promote and publicise GME in a more comprehensive and structured manner at both national and local level. The notion of local GME ambassadors was suggested by a few respondents in this respect.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Gaelic medium education (GME) is generally held in high regard, with previous research¹ identifying a range of benefits in terms of high attainment and the good quality of education provision, and also strong support for improving access to it. GME can be described as bilingual education, although the presumption is that the language of the classroom will primarily be Gaelic.

2.2 14 local authorities in Scotland currently provide GME and there are 93 Gaelic medium parent and toddler groups currently operating with most employing a Gaelic language assistant or play leader. Despite such provision, however, the growth of GME remains patchy across Scotland.

2.3 The Scottish Government made a manifesto commitment to “examine how we can introduce an entitlement to Gaelic medium education”. It considers that a key route to increasing the numbers of those using the language, and thus strengthening Gaelic in Scotland, is through GME. The Scottish Government believes that it is important to enhance not only the existence and availability of GME but also to promote the growth of this education.

2.4 To further this aim, the Scottish Government proposes that a clear, transparent and consistent process be put in place whereby authorities can assess parental requests for GME. New legislation is proposed to enable this change which encompasses a duty on the Scottish Government to prepare guidance which defines the arrangements under which GME should operate in schools and be managed by local authorities.

2.5 A consultation paper was published on 2 July 2014 in Gaelic and English, seeking views by 10 September on these policy proposals. The responses to the consultation will help inform the development of policies, the guidance and the draft legislation which is to be prepared in Autumn 2014.

2.6 This report presents the analysis of views contained in the responses to the consultation. These responses have been made publicly available on the Scottish Government website unless the respondent has specifically requested otherwise.

Consultation responses

2.7 The Scottish Government received 79 responses to the consultation. Table 2.1 overleaf shows the distribution of responses by category of respondent. A full list of the organisations who responded is in Annex 1.

¹ For example, O’Hanlon F, McLeod W and Paterson, L, “Gaelic-medium Education in Scotland: choice and attainment at the primary and early secondary school stages” (2010).

Table 2.1: Distribution of responses by category of respondent

Category	No.	%
Local authority bodies	13	16
Parent Councils	6	8
Representative bodies	5	6
Academic bodies	3	4
Voluntary/Community groups	3	4
Childcare organisations	2	3
Non-Departmental Public Bodies	2	3
Other organisations	3	4
Individuals	42	53
Total	79	100

NB Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

2.8 Just over half of all respondents were individuals. Of these, it was clear in at least 16 of the responses that the respondent was a parent; in one case it was clear that the respondent was a GME teacher. The largest organisation sector to respond was local authority bodies which accounted for 16% of all respondents.

2.9 74 respondents provided details of their location. Table 2.2 below shows the distribution of respondents by geographical location (this excludes the 11 respondents from national organisations based at national headquarters).

Table 2.2: Distribution of respondents by geographical location

Geographical location	No.	%
Edinburgh/Greater Glasgow and the central belt	23	37
Highlands (mainland)	16	25
Islands	10	16
Argyll and Bute	7	11
Aberdeen and Perth	5	8
Other	2	3
Total	63	100

2.10 Responses were submitted electronically with most respondents using the response pro-forma provided, although a few submitted views in free-text format. Most responses were submitted in English, however, 12 respondents (15% of all respondents) provided their response in Gaelic.

2.11 The views contained in all submissions were amalgamated into one electronic spreadsheet to aid analysis. The consultation paper posed ten questions, two of which were closed and used a yes/no format, with the remainder inviting open response. The final question invited any additional comments.

Report of findings

2.12 The findings are presented in the following 6 chapters. **Chapter 3** reports views on GME. In **Chapter 4**, views are documented on handling parental requests for the provision or expansion of GME, and in particular whether a legislative process should be in place for local authorities on how they respond to such requests, and the steps they should take on receipt of a request from parents for GME. **Chapter 5** examines respondents' views on Gaelic medium schools and the issues which a local authority should consider when parents have requested a transition from a Gaelic medium in a two stream primary, to a stand-alone Gaelic medium school. In **Chapter 6** views are analysed on the necessity of guidance from central government on how GME should operate. **Chapter 7** focuses on views on the broad issues of the role that GME has to play in the future of Gaelic and the steps which could be taken to encourage and promote the growth of GME in Scotland. Other significant comments over and above those raised specifically on the questions posed in the consultation are summarised in **Chapter 8**.

2.13 Respondent categories have been abbreviated in the report as follows:

Local Authority bodies	LA
Parent Councils	PC
Representative bodies	Rep
Academic bodies	Acad
Community/Voluntary groups	Vol
Childcare organisations	CC
Non-Departmental Public Bodies	NDPB
Other organisations	Oth
Individuals	Ind

3. GAELIC MEDIUM EDUCATION

Background

The Scottish Government's aim is to create a secure future for Gaelic in Scotland. It believes that this will be achieved only by an increase in the numbers of those learning, speaking and using the language. GME is seen as making an important contribution to this, both in terms of young people's language learning but also in terms of the effects this can have on language in home, community and work-place.

Despite the 2011 Census recording an increase in the proportion of young people speaking Gaelic compared with 2001, the language generally remains in a fragile and precarious position and the numbers coming through GME, although recently encouraging, are not yet sufficient to reverse the long-term decline of the language in Scotland.

The Scottish Government believes that it is vital not just to support the existence and availability of GME but to promote the growth of GME. Whilst there has been significant development of GME in some areas of Scotland, in other places this has been slow with challenges including the recruitment and education of teachers of Gaelic.

Question 1: What are your views on GME?

3.1 73 respondents (92% of all those who responded to the consultation) addressed this question. There was almost universal support amongst respondents for GME, with some respondents recommending that Gaelic be given equal status to English medium education in Scotland. A few respondents perceived GME to be "a right" and "an entitlement". 22 respondents from a wide range of categories viewed GME as having a key role in securing Gaelic in Scotland for the future.

3.2 In contrast, one local authority argued that in locations where Gaelic is neither native nor widespread, resources should be focused on areas of greatest priority and educational need. One individual respondent opposed GME, stating that they did not see there to be any rationale for spending public money on Gaelic which, according to them, was never a national language of Scotland.

Perceived benefits of GME

3.3 Many respondents specified what they perceived to be the main benefits of GME. These are listed below in order of the number of times they were identified.

Promotion of cultural awareness in addition to language acquisition (23 mentions)

3.4 Respondents from a wide range of categories considered that GME has the added benefit of helping to promote an understanding of culture, shared heritage and identity. Comments included:

“GME provides them with an education rich in cultural knowledge and experiences that will stay with them, they will value and share with future generations” (Ind).

“....GME exposes children to a richness of cultural experiences which extends their grasp of what it means to be part of a complex, modern, interconnected world where confidence in one’s own culture, and appreciation of and respect for cultural difference, are crucial to mutual understanding” (Ind).

Wider cognitive benefits (21 mentions)

3.5 A common view across a wide range of respondent categories was that GME has wider benefits in terms of promoting greater performances in other subjects, with maths and other languages being highlighted. One respondent commented:

“Bilingualism leads to greater mental flexibility and is a lifelong investment. A bilingual child is better at managing conflicting information and selecting what is most relevant” (The Gaelic Arts Council).

Better employment opportunities (12 mentions)

3.6 12 respondents from five different categories highlighted improved employment opportunities as a benefit arising from GME, with the media, arts, education, public authorities and linguistic services referred to in this respect.

Effective and efficient way of learning another language (10 mentions)

3.7 Respondents from a wide range of sectors commented that GME provides a highly effective and efficient means of learning another language, particularly where the language is also spoken outwith the school.

Other advantages associated with GME

3.8 A small number of respondents identified a few more benefits which they associated with GME:

- Provides an opportunity for children of non-Gaelic speaking parents to become proficient Gaelic speakers (2 mentions).
- Can help children with specific conditions such as Asperger’s or those with particular learning needs (2 mentions).
- Puts Scottish children on the same footing as their counterparts in other countries where multi-culturalism is the norm (2 mentions).
- Children gain a sense of community within their school where GME teachers become like family (1 mention).

Concerns raised about GME

3.9 Despite strong support for GME, many respondents raised concerns about its operation and potential. The most frequently raised concerns are outlined below.

Lack of resources/teaching staff (22 mentions)

3.10 Much concern was expressed about the lack of GME teachers, particularly at secondary level, along with other Gaelic speaking staff such as those in early years, support, local authority personnel and additional support needs. Limited teaching staff and GME resources were seen as threats to the immersion approach, which according to many, could lead to dilution of the impact of GME.

Lack of wider context for GME (10 mentions)

3.11 There was some concern across a range of sectors, that despite the best efforts of GME, if the approach is not backed up at home and in the wider school and community contexts, then its effectiveness will be curtailed. One academic remarked that GME is not a “fix all”, but just one part of the mosaic of revitalisation of the Gaelic language. A local authority argued:

“...crucial that Gaelic does not only exist within a GME/GLE setting but continues to grow as a visible, vital element across a diverse range of circumstances in Scottish public life” (Glasgow City Council).

More pragmatism required in approach (8 mentions)

3.12 Respondents from four different categories expressed concern at what they perceived to be a lack of an objective, strategic approach to promoting GME. A key issue raised was over the quality of GME which some felt was overlooked at times, in pursuit of quantity. One respondent called for:

“...joined-up, strategic, proactive approach, not reactive” (Comann nam Pàrant Edinburgh and Lothians).

Reduced provision for GME at secondary school (6 mentions)

3.13 Six respondents from five different respondent categories highlighted what they perceived to be a concerning drop-off in provision for GME from primary to secondary school. It was felt that there should be greater focus on the transition between the two school stages in terms of GME. One respondent commented:

“These important years are critical to sustaining Gaelic into adulthood which is essential to grow the number of Gaelic speakers to sustain the next generation” (Parent Council, Sgoil Ghaidhlig Ghlaschu).

Commitment for parents (5 mentions)

3.14 Three parent councils and two individuals remarked that for GME to be successful, parents need to be made aware of the huge commitment they, as parents, will have to make to support their children through this approach.

Other comments

3.15 A few other substantive comments were made in response to this question. Some respondents considered that not enough parents are aware of what GME is, and may associate this with the Highlands of Scotland or something that takes place in private schools only. Two local authorities recommended that Scotland should continue to learn from other countries, including Wales, to examine how minority languages are taught and supported elsewhere. One individual felt that some local authorities in Scotland were not aware of the funding sources available to them to contribute to GME, and that these should be promoted more widely.

4. HANDLING PARENTAL REQUESTS FOR GME

Background

The Scottish Government proposes that there should be a statutory process in place to enable authorities to assess and respond to parental requests for GME within a reasonable timescale. It is also proposed that statutory guidance should be prepared on arrangements for the delivery of GME in schools. These proposals are seen as having the potential to strengthen GME.

At present there is no statutory process in place that provides authorities with a clear and agreed set of considerations for assessing a request from parents for GME and that provides parents with the confidence that their requests for GME will be given detailed and open consideration and responded to within a reasonable time period.

Question 2: Do you agree that a legislative process should be in place for local authorities on how they respond to parental requests for provision or expansion of GME? (Yes/No/DK)

4.1 71 respondents (90% of all respondents) provided a response to this question. Of these, 57 (80%) agreed with the proposal that a legislative process should be in place for local authorities on how they respond to parental requests for provision or expansion of GME. Responses by category are shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Views on whether a legislative process should be in place for local authorities to respond to parental requests for GME

Category	Yes	No	Mixed views	None of the options	DK	Total
Local authority bodies	6	6	1	-	-	13
Parent Councils	5	1	-	-	-	6
Representative bodies	3	-	-	-	2	5
Academic bodies	2	-	-	-	-	2
Voluntary/Community groups	3	-	-	-	-	3
Childcare organisations	2	-	-	-	-	2
Non-Departmental Public Bodies	2	-	-	-	-	2
Other organisations	2	-	-	-	-	2
Individuals	32	1	-	1	1	35
Total	57	8	1	1	3	71

4.2 Local authority bodies were most divided in view, with six respondents agreeing that a legislative process should be established, six disagreeing, and one having mixed views.

4.3 Although the consultation did not specifically invite additional comments to support the closed question, 14 respondents provided commentary. The proposal was viewed as having the potential to achieve consistency between local authorities in how requests are handled, which in turn, would aid parents who at present may have varying experiences depending in which local authority they place their request. A few respondents urged that local flexibility is built into the arrangements so that local circumstances such as geography or demography can be taken into account.

4.4 One local authority stipulated that the legislative process should be clear; efficient; non-bureaucratic; proportionate; and affordable.

4.5 Five respondents recommended that a right to receive GME, where there is reasonable demand, should accompany the legislative process.

4.6 Two local authorities provided their respective reasons for opposing the proposal. One considered that it would not add any value to the current arrangements. Another felt that local authorities should be free to make their own arrangements for responding to such requests, based on their capacity for providing GME and the demand for GME.

Question 3: What steps do you think should be taken when a local authority receives a request from parents for GME?

4.7 65 respondents addressed this question (82% of all respondents). Responses tended to refer to broad approaches rather than specific steps, with several respondents noting that the question did not make clear whether it related to requests for individual children, or requests from groups of parents for GME classes or schools. Others remarked that protocol will vary depending on whether authorities have provision already and the request relates to extending this, or whether new provision would be required.

4.8 A recurring recommendation was for the process of submitting a request and the steps which the local authority should take on receipt of this request, to be clear and well publicised.

4.9 On receipt of a request, various respondents emphasised the importance of the local authority:

- acknowledging receipt of the request
- alerting the parent to the timeframe for response
- identifying a named contact at the local authority for direct liaison with the parent.

4.10 Communication with the parent(s) was viewed as paramount at this stage, with calls made for wider consultation with parents and other community

members regarding overall demand. This aligned with another repeated recommendation that individual requests from parents should not be viewed by the local authority in isolation, but joined up with other parents' requests (perhaps using electronic means – and perhaps across local government jurisdictions) to gain a fuller picture of areas of potential critical mass of demand.

4.11 Calls were made by a few respondents for a clear indication by local authorities of a threshold for numbers of requests, beyond which they would take action. However, there was disagreement on whether reaching the threshold would trigger consideration of the request, or the requirement to fulfil the request.

4.12 A key step outlined in many responses was for the local authority to consider their own GME resource provision and that of neighbouring authorities. Some respondents recommended that Gaelic agencies be involved in this process, with the Scottish Government contacted to identify financial support availability. Several individual respondents were amongst those emphasising the need for local authorities to consider future provision in addition to current provision, in order to ensure any request granted now can still be met throughout the child's school life.

4.13 A few respondents highlighted the importance of considering the location of the requester, and establishing with them what constituted reasonable travelling distance to access GME.

4.14 Other considerations identified were the priority of the request when compared with other such requests, for example, for the provision of Polish medium education.

4.15 Repeated calls were made for local authorities to work in conjunction with Bord na Gàidhlig in assessing requests. Three parent councils recommended that local authorities report annually to Bord na Gàidhlig, providing it with information on how many requests they received and how they dealt with these.

4.16 A theme running through many responses was that of maintaining communication with the parent requester and providing them with information of relevance and perhaps putting them in touch with families with previous experience of GME and schools delivering this. One local authority suggested "taster" sessions for families who make requests, so that they can experience GME for a short period before making a more informed decision on whether to pursue the request.

4.17 A broad next stage was identified as assessing provision and whether the request and wider demand can be met within existing resources. One local authority requested that guidance is provided on what steps to take if the current provision of GME is not sufficient to meet the demand. A few respondents urged that reasons for refusal need to be very strong, with refusal not automatically based simply on financial implications or the area not already having GME.

4.18 Several respondents recommended that should the request be refused, the local authority should have to set out clearly in writing the reasons behind the decision, with information also given to parents about the appeals process. It was suggested by one representative body that local authorities should be protected by law from repeated requests from the same parties within given timescales.

4.19 A few respondents commented that the broad process should be no different to that undertaken by local authorities in response to any requests for specific educational provision, with emphasis on communication with parents, assessment of the educational benefit of the request, within the context of needing to secure best value.

5. GME SCHOOLS

Background

At present there are three GME schools in Scotland, Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu (Glasgow), Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis (Inverness) and Taobh na Pàirce (Edinburgh). A further three GME primary schools are expected to open during the lifetime of the current Parliament (2011-16). These will be in Fort William, Glasgow and Portree.

There are currently about 14 primary schools where GME and English medium education provision operate alongside each other and which now have more children learning through the medium of Gaelic than English.

Question 4: What are your views on Gaelic medium schools?

5.1 69 respondents (87% of all respondents) provided a response to this question. Overall, there was much support for the concept of Gaelic medium schools which many viewed as a natural progression from Gaelic medium units to a whole school approach.

5.2 The existence of GME and English medium education running alongside each other in some areas of Scotland attracted a small number of specific comments, mostly detrimental on account of perceptions that this model could dilute the use of Gaelic, with English still dominating as the default language in such schools.

Views in favour of Gaelic medium schools

5.3 The most common argument in favour of Gaelic medium schools was that these provided a more effective approach to learning Gaelic, through more complete immersion in the language, not just in the classroom, but re-enforced in every contact and experience throughout the school. 22 respondents from a wide range of respondent categories made this argument explicitly, with some commenting that a head-teacher fluent in Gaelic also provided a strong contribution to the status and ethos of Gaelic within the school and wider community. Typical comments included:

“Immersion is more complete, more activities and socialising takes place in Gaelic rather than it being confined to the classroom” (Ind).

“Gaelic schools can create an environment which is more supportive of the language. In these schools, Gaelic is the language of the school; in schools where there are two languages, Gaelic and English, English will have the upper hand, except in Gaelic classes, because English is the language of the majority. In a GME school, Gaelic will be heard much more often outside the classroom situation strengthening both the children’s linguistic skills and their understanding of the fact that Gaelic is a useful ordinary language.

Through all of that, GME makes the children more skilled and capable in the language and more comfortable, and it encourages the children to use the language” (Ind).

5.4 Seven respondents from a range of sectors remarked that Gaelic medium schools generated a wider, community awareness of the importance and value of Gaelic. Five considered them to be crucial in helping to secure the future of Gaelic in Scotland. Six respondents recommended that this model of education provision should be routine, as evidenced in best practice internationally, rather than a special provision which parents had to fight for. It was noted (Acad) that parental demand for Gaelic medium schooling increased following the opening of the three dedicated Gaelic medium schools in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness.

5.5 Four respondents argued that the effectiveness of Gaelic medium schools could be enhanced by creating strong links with early years feeder systems and pre-school provision.

5.6 Other advantages to Gaelic medium schools were put forward by one or two respondents:

- attractive to Gaelic medium teachers
- helpful where intergenerational transmission rates are weak
- acquisition of the language is placed in a clear, cultural context
- Gaelic medium schools can act as learning and training centres for teachers and the schools could become Centres of Excellence.

Concerns regarding Gaelic medium schools

5.7 Several concerns about Gaelic medium schools were raised by respondents across most sectors. A common concern was that there may **not always be sufficient teachers** to staff Gaelic medium schools, for example, when supply staff are needed or maternity cover is required. Some respondents cautioned that gaps in use of Gaelic at school could threaten children’s fluency in the language.

5.8 Another recurring concern was over the **quality of teaching** at such schools. Some respondents expressed their worries over consistency in standards and the extent to which curriculum is being delivered across subjects. One local authority advocated new research aimed at evaluating the academic achievements and Gaelic-speaking fluency of pupils emerging from Gaelic medium schools. The Scottish Qualifications Authority, responding to the consultation, noted that at present, of the 15 secondary schools in Scotland which teach subjects through the medium of Gaelic, ten have no certified learning in subjects other than Gaelic.

5.9 One further repeated theme emerging from responses was that the **lack of clear definition** of what constitutes a Gaelic medium school hampers the promotion of these institutions and contributes to lack of standardisation.

5.10 Other concerns were highlighted by only a few respondents:

- Exposure to Gaelic speaking away from the classroom is essential to support the work done in Gaelic medium schools (5 mentions).
- There needs to be a high critical mass of demand to justify establishing a Gaelic medium school. This can be hard to achieve (3 mentions).
- Gaelic medium schools can be inefficient in terms of staffing and resources if they are under-populated which can happen if other schools in the vicinity open up smaller GME classes or units (2 mentions).
- These schools are not necessary in all areas, for example areas where there has been no history of Gaelic-speaking or where people are interested in Gaelic culture but do not think it is necessary to speak the language too (2 mentions).
- Some parents assume that Gaelic medium schooling equates to small class sizes – this is not necessarily correct (1 mention).
- Some parents think that as their child is in a Gaelic medium school, they will not need to make the effort to learn and speak Gaelic at home (1 mention).
- Pursuing the route of setting up Gaelic medium schools requires an in-depth re-think of national strategy relating to issues of, for example, catchment areas, concentration of resources, CPD for staff and so on (1 mention).
- Such schools could promote divisions amongst local, rural populations, where some children speak Gaelic and others do not (1 mention).

Question 5: What are the necessary considerations for a local authority when the transition from Gaelic medium in a two stream primary to a stand-alone Gaelic medium school has been requested by parents?

5.11 60 respondents (76% of all respondents) addressed this question. Responses were pragmatic in general, several containing lists of proposed issues which the respective respondents considered important in making decisions about changes in school status from a two stream primary to a stand-alone Gaelic medium school. Three issues for consideration dominated responses and are detailed below.

5.12 A cross-sector, prevailing view was that such decision-making should be underpinned by **consultation with interested parties**, including parents, Gaelic community representatives and agencies, pupils and staff. In this way, demand for the change could be assessed properly and the implications of the decision identified and considered.

5.13 Another dominant view was that the **staffing resources** required by a stand-alone Gaelic medium school would need to be examined to ensure sufficient teaching and support staff were available, including, for some, a Gaelic speaking head teacher and additional learning support resources.

5.14 Respondents representing most sectors, and including five of the local authority bodies, identified a **cost-benefit analysis** as important when considering changing from a two stream primary to a stand-alone Gaelic medium school. Best value principles were highlighted, and potential refurbishment costs were also envisaged by some as considerations.

5.15 Other issues raised by respondents as issues to taken into account were:

- Projected school roll – sustainability of pupil numbers (10 mentions).
- Quality of education; implications for Curriculum of Excellence outcomes (10 mentions).
- Feeder arrangements including early years/nursery provision, after school provision and secondary school provision (8 mentions).
- Location of school, potential use of redundant school, impact on nearby schools (8 mentions).
- Transport costs and issues (7 mentions).
- Continuity of education for English medium educated pupils (7 mentions).
- Social impact particularly in rural area – need to maintain community cohesion and address possible divisions (3 mentions).
- Infrastructure capacity of new school to accommodate potential increase in demand (2 mentions).
- Continuity of employment for staff from the old school (2 mentions).
- Previous best practice from elsewhere – learn from others (1 mention).

6. GUIDANCE ON THE OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF GME

Background

The Scottish Government proposes that new legislation will include a duty on the Scottish Government to prepare guidance which defines the arrangements under which Gaelic medium education should operate in a school and be managed by an authority.

The focus on access to Gaelic medium education and the promotion of Gaelic medium education as a continuous experience from early years to primary and onto secondary is viewed as having the potential to lead to questions of definition and how Gaelic medium education should be managed and delivered by authorities. It is proposed that the preparation of guidance would assist parents and authorities in terms of their expectations and obligations of Gaelic medium education delivery.

Question 6: Do you believe guidance from central government is necessary in order to create a common understanding and expectation of the arrangements under which GME should operate? (Yes/No/DK)

6.1 67 respondents (85% of all respondents) provided a response to this question. Of these, 60 (90%) believed that guidance from central government is necessary. Table 6.1 below summarises views by respondent category.

Table 6.1: Views on whether guidance from central government is necessary to create a common understanding and expectation of the arrangements under which Gaelic medium education should operate

Category	Yes	No	DK	Total
Local authority bodies	11	2	-	13
Parent Councils	5	1	-	6
Representative bodies	4	1	-	5
Academic bodies	2	-	-	2
Voluntary/Community groups	3	-	-	3
Childcare organisations	2	-	-	2
Non-Departmental Public Bodies	2	-	-	2
Other organisations	1	-	-	1
Individuals	30	1	2	33
Total	60	5	2	67

Question 7: What issues should be covered in such guidance?

6.2 62 respondents (78% of all respondents) addressed this question. Some respondents recommended that the Scottish Government develop the guidance in conjunction with local authorities, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and other relevant stakeholders, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists being mentioned in this regard. It was considered that guidance would help to promote consistency in approach across Scotland, with many respondents envisaging a wide-ranging and practical document informed by best practice elsewhere.

6.3 There was a divergence in view over whether the guidance should be statutory or simply provide a broad framework with scope for local flexibility and variation. Amongst the 13 respondents who raised this, individuals and childcare organisations tended to favour the former with local authorities and representative bodies more supportive of the latter. Four respondents recommended that guidance be prepared specifically for parents on Gaelic medium education to help them to understand what they can expect from GME and their role in supporting this.

6.4 The most issue which was raised most often by respondents for coverage in the guidance (25 mentions) was **the definition of GME** and all of the different models of delivery including Gaelic units, stand alone Gaelic schools, and so on. Other commonly raised suggestions were for coverage of **staff training, qualifications, CPD** (12 mentions), and **consultation and communication with parents** including the role of the parent in supporting the Gaelic medium (10 mentions).

6.5 Many other recommendations were made by fewer than ten respondents for inclusion in the guidance. These are listed below:

- Research evidence demonstrating GME to have beneficial outcomes (8 mentions.)
- Advice on what constitutes reasonable levels of demand; triggers for action (8 mentions).
- Examples of best practice and previous experience of GME (7 mentions).
- Timeframes (e.g. for responding to requests; for implementation of provision) (7 mentions).
- Clarity on the funding available towards implementation of GME (6 mentions).
- Links with feeder systems including early years provision (5 mentions).
- Provision of extra-curricular activities within GME (4 mentions).
- Support groups for parents (4 mentions).
- Promotion of GME (4 mentions).
- Role of the head teacher in GME schools (4 mentions).
- Role of Parent Councils on Gaelic issues (3 mentions).
- Recruitment of teachers; procedures for recruitment (3 mentions).

- Clarity on the presumption in favour of GME if there is demand (3 mentions).
- How schools should cope with rising demands for GME (2 mentions).
- Advice on reasonable travel time (2 mentions).
- Recommended teacher to pupil ratios (2 mentions).
- Addressing supply and other temporary staffing challenges (2 mentions).
- Support available from national Gaelic groups (2 mentions).
- Monitoring of quality of GME provision (1 mention).
- Appeals process (1 mention).
- Information on the national strategy (1 mention).
- Handling “late comers” to GME (1 mention).

7. ROLE OF GME IN THE FUTURE OF GAELIC AND PROMOTION OF ITS GROWTH

Background

The Scottish Government supports the aim of creating a secure future for Gaelic in Scotland and wishes to see growth in the numbers learning, speaking and using the Gaelic language.

The Government believes that there is strong potential for Gaelic to demonstrate both its contribution to Scottish identity and heritage in the past and also its ability and potential to contribute positively to many future elements of Scottish cultural life.

Question 8: What are your views on the role that GME has to play in the future of Gaelic.

7.1 65 respondents (82% of all respondents) addressed this question. The overarching view was that GME has a key role to play in the future of Gaelic, but not in isolation. Respondents referred to GME as “not the be all and end all” (Ind) and not enough in itself to secure the future of Gaelic. One respondent commented:

“Whist recognising that education alone will not save a language it does make a fundamental contribution in language revival” (Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta)).

7.2 Various respondents across different categories envisaged GME producing the next generation of Gaelic-speaking parents, teachers and leaders. GME was viewed as having a role as a pre-requisite to young people taking part in wider Gaelic cultural activities within music, sport and drama. A few commented that GME played a part in enhancing the image of Gaelic amongst young people, promoting it as a modern, progressive language linked to identity and culture.

7.3 For most respondents however, GME required to be supported by wider family and community Gaelic use, to make Gaelic normal, routine and accepted as a language of peers and social media. The importance of providing opportunities for adult learners through family and community activities, and open and flexible learning was emphasised, one respondent remarking:

“ Too much pressure and reliance should not be placed on GME and GME’s success must be complemented by enhanced Gaelic learners opportunities, family learning opportunities and adult/lifelong learning models that lead to fluency for parents, grandparents and extended families of children currently in Gaelic and those who will be in the future – a holistic approach” (Argyll and Bute Council).

7.4 A few respondents commented specifically on the what they understood to be the importance of pre-school Gaelic learning in order to give children the best chance in primary GME.

7.5 One respondent (Rep) recommended more funding be directed to wider Gaelic learning in different contexts rather than focusing funding largely on the primary education setting.

7.6 Seven respondents cautioned that in their view the impact of GME is curtailed by variation in standards of teaching with resulting lack of fluency amongst pupils.

7.7 Five respondents called for more in-depth study of precisely why Gaelic is in the decline. One (PC) commented that based on the Public Attitudes Survey 2013, support for Gaelic culture may not automatically translate into the view that speaking the language is important. Two respondents highlighted the need to assess the longer-term role of GME in the context of ever increasing mobility amongst Gaelic speakers in which many leave their communities to live and work amongst non-Gaelic speaking communities.

Question 9: What other steps could be taken to encourage and promote the growth of GME in Scotland?

7.8 66 respondents (84% of all respondents) addressed this question. To some extent, their commentary overlapped with views put forward in relation to previous questions.

7.9 Two main recommendations dominated responses. Firstly, respondents identified a clear **need to recruit, train and support more teaching staff** who could deliver GME. One respondent highlighted what they perceived to be the lack of availability of qualified teaching staff as, “the single biggest blockage to GME development” (Association of Directors of Education Scotland). Respondents from across different sectors called for the development and implementation of innovative initiatives and incentives to attract potential teaching staff to GME, with ideas such as permitting native Gaelic speakers who are already qualified teachers in other subjects, to retrain on full pay.

7.10 Several respondents called for smaller class sizes in GME schools and units; others identified an urgent need for more Gaelic-based resources to reduce the need for GME teachers to have to devote time to adapting English medium resources. One respondent commented:

“There is a dearth of resources of all kinds in Gaelic. Although some new materials are distributed....teachers are still constantly having to translate materials. This is not an attractive proposition for new teachers. This is constantly brought up as an issue” (Inverness Royal Academy).

7.11 A few respondents recommended an exploration of the potential of on-line learning for students as a strategy to help to address the shortage of teachers. Others advocated working with training providers to establish formal recruitment targets (PC) or collaborating with SQA to offer a wider range of courses in Gaelic (LA).

7.12 A recurring theme was that priority should be given to ensuring adequate provision of Gaelic speaking early years practitioners in order to ensure children have access to immersion approaches pre-school.

7.13 The second main recommendation to emerge from responses was the **need to promote and publicise GME** in a more comprehensive and structured manner. Again, there was cross-sector support for national and local promotion of the benefits of GME. A few respondents advocated the appointment of “GME ambassadors” in each local authority area; others emphasised that promotion should be led from the centre, at Ministerial level, with high profile national bodies such as the General Teaching Council for Scotland, SQA and the Scottish Funding Council also engaged in promoting the virtues of GME.

7.14 Seven respondents recommended targeted promotion of GME to parents of children of pre-school age.

7.15 A secondary theme within responses was that GME would naturally be supported by parents once they had more confidence that 3 – 18 years provision and beyond, would be available for their children. Provision was viewed as too variable and inconsistent in extent and quality at present, which was perceived as reducing parental confidence in GME and curtailing its growth.

7.16 Calls were made by nine respondents, largely individuals, for more informal opportunities for families to learn to speak Gaelic through fun, home-based activities and resources such as DVDs and games. A few commented on their positive experiences of summer camps and schools which had involved entire families meeting others with similar interests.

7.17 A few respondents considered that building coherent partnerships involving local authorities, Scottish Government, parents, Parent Councils, community groups and Bòrd na Gàidhlig would be useful in achieving joined-up approaches to encouraging and growing GME. Another suggestion was for closer collaboration between universities, colleges and the Scottish Funding Council, to promote and enhance GME.

7.18 A few further recommendations were made by one or two respondents:

- Strong commitment to Gaelic plans for all Scottish local authorities.
- Learn from relevant successes elsewhere.
- Ensure revenue and capital grants to local authorities continue and that GME is protected from financial cuts.

- More support and funding for extra-curricular activities with communication in Gaelic.
- Offer free transport to GME schools for children in wider catchment areas.
- Ensure signage is in Gaelic and English with both scripts of equal size and erected in prominent public spaces.

8. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

8.1 Respondents were invited to submit any further comments over and above those already provided in response to the previous specific questions.

8.2 A few local authorities took the opportunity to argue against the introduction of legislation on GME provision. One remarked that local authorities are already subject to various different pieces of legislation encompassing Gaelic provision and additional legislation could be unhelpful. Another cautioned that any legislation in this area could set a precedent for the same rights in relation to other community languages in Scotland. Others disagreed, however, with individual respondents in particular supporting a right to GME or at least for local authorities to promote it.

8.3 One childcare respondent expressed their support for a national strategy to develop GME in Scotland. Three other respondents argued instead for a national language or communication strategy which addressed all of Scotland's communication needs including communication support needs.

8.4 Four respondents recommended that the development of GME be evidence-based, with primary research required to identify longer term outcomes of GME. There were calls made for examination of the transition stages between primary and secondary school in particular, to identify drop off in use of Gaelic and reasons for this.

8.5 Three respondents expressed concern at the lack of Gaelic IT provision in schools. They commented that schools are dependent on third party companies who deliver IT on behalf of local authorities. It was noted that none offers any IT in Gaelic. This was viewed as a key gap in provision with suggestions that Gaelic provision be included as a condition of contract. It was suggested that a new cross-sector body be established, with a role in the provision of Gaelic-localised IT support in GME schools.

8.6 Three respondents re-iterated their concerns about the quality of GME with one perceiving this to be a serious problem which left many primary school pupils unprepared for GME schooling at secondary level.

8.7 Three respondents expressed concern that the current model of GME appeared to be simply a translation of English medium education rather than an approach to education in its own right. According to these respondents, this resulted in class sizes which were inappropriately large, was offputting to new teachers and engendered bilingualism rather than biculturalism.

8.8 Two respondents referred specifically to the need to improve Gaelic media in Scotland in terms of the quality of Gaelic TV programmes, the introduction of a

daily, national broadsheet in Gaelic, and BBC radio in Gaelic available all of the time.

8.9 A few other new issues were raised, each by only one respondent:

- Public funding should not be directed to Gaelic as it is not relevant to all areas of Scotland.
- If there are limited resources to allocate to GME, these may be best used through partnership working arrangements rather than by individual local authorities.
- It may be possible to strengthen the interface between Education Scotland, SQA, Scottish Funding Council and Stòrlann regarding resources and the translation of GME materials, particularly at secondary school stage. This could streamline educational resource creation, translation and production.
- GME should be considered routinely in relation to other policy, e.g. by education authorities in their parental involvement strategies.
- Gaelic refresher sessions should be readily available to all. The example was provided of a person being GME educated, but taking on an English-speaking job in the short term, before needing to brush up on Gaelic in order to use it once more in the workplace.
- Curriculum for Excellence for Gaelic medium teaching should take more account of the specialist nature of GME learning.

ANNEX 1: LIST OF RESPONDENTS

Local Authorities

Aberdeen City Council
Argyll and Bute Council
City of Edinburgh Council
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Department of Education and Children's Services, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
East Ayrshire Council
East Dunbartonshire Council
East Renfrewshire Council
Glasgow City Council
Highland Council
Orkney Islands Council
Perth and Kinross Council
Scottish Borders Council

Parent Councils

Comann nam Pàrant Edinburgh and Lothians
Comann nam Pàrant a' Ghearsdain
Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta)
Comhairle nam Pàrant, Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce
Scottish Parent Teacher Council
Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu

Representative Bodies

Association of Directors of Education Scotland
General Teaching Council for Scotland
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
Secondary teachers group CLAS
The Educational Institute of Scotland

Academics/Academic Bodies

Inverness Royal Academy
Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh
Soillse

Voluntary/Community Groups

An Comunn Gàidhealach
Children in Scotland
Moray Gaelic Group

Childcare

Òganan Dhùn Èideann
Sradagan Dhùn Èideann

NDPBs

Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Scottish Qualifications Authority

Other

MG ALBA
Storlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig
The Gaelic Arts Agency

Individuals

42 respondents including parents and teachers.

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