



Community Services

Response to a Parental Request for Gaelic Medium Education (GMPE) in Bunessan Primary School, Isle of Mull.

May 2017

The request for GMPE in Bunessan Primary School has been successful. Information on the rationale behind this decision is contained within this report.

This document has been issued by Argyll and Bute Education Services in response to a parental request for GMPE in Bunessan, Isle of Mull under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

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1.0 The request for GMPE and consultation process (initial assessment)

1.1 Parental request for GMPE

Argyll and Bute Council received a request for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) in Bunessan Primary School from The Ross of Mull and Iona Comann nam Pàrant group in June 2016. The request stated that the families of the 2017 cohort of P1 children all wanted GMPE to be available in their local primary school.

The secretary of the Mull & Iona Gaelic Partnership emailed Education Services to express the Partnership's strong support for the introduction of GMPE in Bunessan Primary School.

Please follow the link below to see the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education. This Statutory Guidance has been issued by Bòrd na Gàidhlig under Section 9 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and consists of two main parts. Part 1 provides guidance specifically relating to the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 and its provisions for the Gaelic medium primary education (GMPE) request process and the duty placed on education authorities to promote and support Gaelic education. These provisions came into force on 1 February 2017. Part 1 of this Guidance was useful to the education authority in preparing for the provisions coming into force. Part 2 provides further guidance relating to the provision of Gaelic education in schools.

<http://www.gaidhlig.scot/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Statutory-Guidance-for-Gaelic-Education.pdf>

1.2 Decision to undertake the consultation : 25th October 2016

Under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, parents have the right to request GMPE in their area. The Education Authority has a duty to investigate whether there is a demand for GMPE in the area and whether it is possible to provide this stream of education.

On 25 October 2016, Argyll and Bute Education Services agreed that a consultation with all parents and carers of children aged from 0 – 4 in the Bunessan area be undertaken. The aim of the consultation was to identify whether there is a demand for GMPE in the area, starting in 2017, and what the projected numbers might be over the next few years.

1.3 Consultation on the proposal for GMPE

In the first instance, Education Services were required to identify a GMPE assessment area in line with the assessment protocol published as part of the Gaelic Provisions under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. The Assessment Process can be seen as a flow diagram on Bòrd na Gàidhlig's website or by following the link below:

<http://www.gaidhlig.scot/bord/education/statutory-guidance/>

The initial assessment process started by liaising with Health Services on the island to ascertain how many families had children under five and where they resided. A questionnaire was delivered by post to all families in The Ross of Mull area with children from 0 – 4 years old. The questionnaire asked whether English or Gaelic Medium Education was the preferred option for each of their children and when they are due to start school.

Responses were to be returned to the authority by **4th November 2016**.

1.4 Identification of the GMPE assessment area

Caledonian MacBrayne (Calmac) were consulted with regard to the reliability of the ferry crossing from Iona to Fionnphort. Due to bad weather and stormy seas it is possible that children in Iona could potentially miss a considerable proportion of their education if they had to travel to Bunessan Primary School to access GMPE. In September 2016 there were 65 cancelled sailings, in November 2016 there were 32 cancelled sailings and in December 2016 there were 61 cancelled sailings.

Due to the geography of Mull, children living north of The Ross of Mull would be able to commute to the existing GMPE provision in Salen Primary School.

Based on this information, Education Services decided that the GMPE assessment area should be The Ross of Mull.

Please see Appendix 1 detailing Mull and Iona catchment areas. Bunessan Primary School's catchment is in blue.

1.5 Results of the consultation during the initial assessment process

In total ten families were issued with a questionnaire. Three families responded that they wished to enrol their child/ren in GMPE. Three families stated that they wished to enrol their child/ren in English Medium Education (EMPE). Four families did not respond.

The three families who wish GMPE to be made available have children starting school in August 2017. The three children in the 2017 cohort represent 100% of the new P1 intake. In addition to this, there will be another child enrolled in GMPE in session 2018/19.

Given the findings of the initial assessment, Education Services felt it was prudent to move to a full assessment.

2.0 Full assessment process – responses from statutory consultees

- 2.1 It is required that when undertaking a full assessment the views of statutory consultees be sought and their response taken in to account. Views were sought from Education Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta and The National Parent Forum of Scotland on Monday 27th February 2017.
- 2.2 As per the full assessment protocol Education Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant Naiseanta all responded within four weeks of notification. It is not a statutory duty placed upon The National Parent Forum of Scotland or Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta to respond. All responses received from the statutory consultees were in favour of establishing GMPE in Bunessan Primary School.

The reasons included were that Salen GMPE provision is too far away from The Ross of Mull for the children to travel, that 100% of the 2017 intake choosing GMPE is considered a significant demand and that Bunessan is an area with strong links to Gaelic heritage, language and culture.

Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta responded;

GMPE provision in the area will provide a focus for Gaelic language activities and an opportunity to revitalise Gaelic in an area where there is still a small Gaelic community.

Education Scotland responded;

Education Scotland discussed with Argyll and Bute Council on 15 March 2017 the request from parents to set up GME provision at Bunessan Primary School. We also discussed and advised on the questions which Argyll and Bute Council identified as needing to be assessed in taking this request forward. These were based on the factors which an education authority must have regard to when undertaking a full assessment. In our discussions, we endorsed our view that there is a need and potential of securing GME in this area.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig responded;

Bord na Gaidhlig wholeheartedly welcome Argyll & Bute Council's positive response to this parental request for GMPE as outlined in the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education from the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. We recognise that there is existing provision at Salen on Mull, however it is not within safe and reasonable travelling distance and therefore Bunessan is the most appropriate location for families concerned.

3.0 Full assessment process – consideration of mandatory factors

- 3.1** When carrying out a full assessment, an education authority must have regard to a list of mandatory matters, and must decide to secure the provision of GMPE in the GMPE assessment area unless it would be unreasonable to do so.
- 3.2** Views provided by statutory consultees - as previously reported the response from each of the statutory consultees was in favour of GMPE in Bunessan.
- 3.3** Guidance on Gaelic Education – the education authority must have regard to this guidance when responding to a parental request for GMPE. The guidance can be viewed at: <http://www.gaidhlig.scot/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Statutory-Guidance-for-Gaelic-Education.pdf>
- 3.4** Initial assessment information – all the children whose parents requested GMPE in Bunessan Primary School live within the school’s existing catchment area. There will be no additional burden on Education Services to meet the travel costs of pupils accessing GMPE. The families of all children enrolling in P1 in August 2017 have requested GMPE with a further enrolment to follow. The families of those children for whom the request was made have some exposure to Gaelic at home.
- 3.5** Demand throughout the education authority area – the anonymous consultation with parents / carers of children under five years of age shows that 100% of the 2017 intake want GMPE with a future enrolment guaranteed. The fact that four families did not respond means that, as yet, their intentions are unknown. Across the education authority the numbers of children being enrolled in GMPE remains stable, with some schools receiving more pupils for GMPE than EMPE. It is therefore reasonable to assume that The Ross of Mull will experience a similar trend and that there will be future enrolments for GMPE.
- 3.6** Existing GMPE provision – Salen Primary School enjoys a healthy intake in to the GMPE P1 class each year. However, Salen is considered by Education Services as too far for children to travel. Bunessan Primary School is 40 miles from Salen Primary School. From the edge of Bunessan school’s catchment area to Salen is 46 miles, the majority of which is on a single track road.
- 3.7** Access to GMPE from other education authorities – The Ross of Mull does not border another education authority with GMPE provision and it would not be feasible to educate the children through Gaelic using this method. Equally, it would not be possible for children in an adjacent authority to access GMPE provision in Bunessan.
- 3.8** Accommodation – Bunessan Primary School will provide both English Medium Education (EME) and Gaelic Medium Education (GME). Education Services are currently liaising with the Property Services

Department of the council and the Scottish Government in order to provide accommodation for the GME class.

- 3.9** Costs – The Scottish Government have pledged support from their Gaelic School's Capital Fund in order to provide suitable accommodation for the Gaelic class. The cost of staffing will be met through Gaelic Specific Grant funding and Argyll and Bute Council's Education Budget.
- 3.10** Teachers - a suitably qualified Gaelic speaking teacher will be sought through the Council's existing recruitment process. When advertising for GM posts, Bòrd na Gàidhlig share the Council's adverts nationally on social media, through email correspondence and on their website. It is the intention of the local authority that GMPE provision will be available from August 2017.
- 3.11** Gaelic Language Plan – Argyll and Bute Gaelic Language Plan 2014 - 18 states that,

We are committed to the promotion and future growth of Gaelic education, language and cultural activities through continued awareness raising and language learning opportunities for employees and our communities. This Plan builds on the work that the Council has undertaken in the past in implementing our first generation language plan, promoting Gaelic Education and, specifically, on the benefits to be realised through bilingual learning.

It is clear from the sentiment relayed in the Council's Policy Statement that there is strong support for Gaelic Education in Argyll and Bute.

- 3.12** Gaelic in the area – The Ross of Mull has traditionally been a community with a number of Gaelic speakers and a strong support for Gaelic language and culture. The majority of families of those children who will be enrolled in GMPE have exposure to some Gaelic at home. There will be opportunities for the children being taught through Gaelic to work in partnership with the Gaelic classes in Salen and, virtually, with other classes across the authority through the use of V-scene (video conferencing facility). There is an annual Mòd in Mull and Oban which will also provide further exposure to the language and an opportunity to use Gaelic outside of school.

4.0 Decision of Education Services regarding initial request for GMPE

- 4.1** Having taken time to consider the request in line with the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, Education Services are preparing to provide GMPE in Bunessan Primary School. It is considered significant that 100% of the August 2017 intake will be enrolled in GMPE with a further enrolment to follow. There is scope for other families to choose GMPE for their children in the future.

Salen Primary School is too far for the children to travel on a daily basis and there is no opportunity for the children to receive GMPE within an adjacent education authority.

The Ross of Mull has traditionally enjoyed a strong Gaelic culture. It is the hope of Education Services that the provision of GMPE in the area will support and revive the tradition of Gaelic language.

5.0 Recruitment procedures/action required in the event of no appointment

- 5.1** A suitably qualified Gaelic speaking teacher will be sought through the Council's existing recruitment process. When advertising for GM posts, Bòrd na Gàidhlig share the Council's adverts nationally on social media, through email correspondence and on their website.
- 5.2** The Headteacher, staff and parents of Bunessan Primary School are being very pro-active in ensuring a successful recruitment through their intention to produce a short video for use on social media. Such projects have been very helpful in securing teachers in the past.
- 5.3** **However, GMPE provision in Bunessan Primary School cannot start until a GM teacher has been secured.** If there is no appointment made in time for August 2017, the education authority will continue to advertise in an attempt to recruit. Gaelic education will commence once a teacher is secured. In the event that a teacher is not available for an extended period, such as two years, the authority would take advice from the Statutory Consultees with regard to the appropriateness of the provision.

An electronic copy of this report is available on Argyll and Bute Council's webpage.

An electronic copy of this report will be emailed to:

- Education Scotland
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta
- The Parent Forum of Scotland
- The Scottish Government
- Property Services
- Transport

A hard copy of this report will be sent to:

- The parent who made the request for GMPE
- The Headteacher of Bunessan Primary School