



**Response to a Parental Request
for Gaelic Medium Education in Fife Council**

Friday 21 February 2025

Request received 23.01.2025

SECTION 1

Background

1. The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 places a duty on education authorities to promote and support Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) and establishes a process by which parents can request Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) from their education authority.
2. Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) takes the form of immersion, i.e. children experience all their learning in the early years of primary school (Pr. 1 - 3) through the Gaelic language. Thereafter, immersion continues but in Pr. 4 – 7 English is introduced, while Gaelic remains the predominant language of the classroom.
3. At present Fife Council does not make such a provision but supports families who wish such an experience for their children, and are successful in being granted a placing request to schools in neighbouring local authorities, through contribution towards transport.
4. Statutory guidance, issued by the Bòrd na Gàidhlig, came into force on 1 February 2017, Part 1 of which sets out the steps education authorities must take to assess demand on receipt of a request for GME.
5. Under the legislation and statutory guidance parents of children under school age, and who have not yet started to attend a primary school, have the right to request an assessment of the need for GMPE from the education authority in which the family resides. Any request must also set out or be accompanied by evidence of demand for GMPE from parents of other children resident in the same education authority area and who will commence primary school in the same year group as the specified child. It may also include evidence of demand from parents of children resident in the same education authority area but in a different year group from the specified child.
6. When an education authority receives a parental request made under the 2016 Act, it must designate the geographical area in relation to which it will undertake its assessment of the need for GMPE referred to as a 'GMPE assessment area'.
7. Using this GMPE area, when an education authority receives a parental request made under the 2016 Act, it then has 2 possible actions:
 - If any parental request has been made in the last 2 years, then the education authority does not have to act on the new request unless there is evidence of a change of circumstances within that 2 year period.
 - Otherwise, there is a statutory duty to undertake an initial assessment of the need for GMPE in the assessment area in relation to the year group of the child specified in the request.
8. When making an initial assessment the education authority must take into account any information it holds about relevant demand for GMPE, whether this is evidenced in the request or otherwise.
9. The threshold for an initial assessment to lead to an obligatory full assessment under the 2016 Act is that an education authority is satisfied that there is demand in the GMPE assessment area from the parents of at least five children who are resident in the GMPE assessment area and who are all in the same pre-school year group; the specified child should be counted in this total.

SECTION 2

Response to this Application

10. On Thursday 23 January 2025, Fife Education Directorate received a request from a parent resident in Fife seeking an assessment of the demand for GMPE in Fife for their child, known as the 'specified child', who is due to start primary school in August 2026.

11. Included in the request was the name of one additional child in the same P1 cohort as the specified child.

12. The Education Directorate received a similar application from a different parent on 15 January 2025. That application also included one additional named child in the same P1 cohort.

13. The specified child in this (the 23 January) application was the named additional child in the same P1 cohort in the 15 January application. The specified child in the 15 January application was the named additional child in the same P1 cohort in this (the 23 January) application.

14. As detailed in paragraph 7, when an application is received within 2 years of a previous application an Education Authority does not have to act on that request unless there is evidence of a change of circumstances. As detailed in paragraph 13, because these two applications refer to the same two children, this application (23 January) does not constitute evidence of a change of circumstances

SECTION 3

Next Steps

22. As detailed in Section 2 no evidence of a change of circumstances from another application made within 2 years has been presented in this application, therefore no further action will be taken at this time.

23. The response to the application made on 15 January will stand. Details of this can be found here: [Gaelic Medium Education | Fife Council](#)

24. Parents still wishing GMPE for their child may make a placing request to neighbouring education authorities. The process for this is detailed in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

Process for Placing Requests and associated transport for GMPE outwith Fife Council

SECTION 1

Placing Requests to other Local Education Authorities

1. Typically, parents wishing Gaelic Medium Primary Education where this is not available in the authority in which they live would make a placing request to a neighbouring education authority.
2. Placing requests are made to an Education Authority following their protocols.
3. Fife will support with transport costs to a Gaelic medium school in a Local Authority which shares a border with Fife. This will be in the form of contribution towards a bus/rail pass. Pupils may have to make more than one change of transport. If public transport is not a reasonable option due to travel times or poor services, Fife Council will only contribute the equivalent of a public transport fare. Private car mileage or taxi fares will not be funded. Pupils are expected to walk to and from the nearest public transport link. Fife Council may refuse transport assistance to a school other than most cost effective to reach Gaelic medium school with places available. Parents are encouraged to use bus travel where possible in order to take advantage of the Scottish Government provision of free travel for children and young people.
4. To support parents, the education authorities neighbouring Fife and links to their webpages with information about Gaelic Medium Primary Education are provided here.
 - City of Edinburgh Council <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/school-places/gaelic-schools-1>
 - West Lothian – <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/32394/Gaelic-Medium-Education>
 - Clackmannanshire - <https://www.clacks.gov.uk/learning/gaeliclanguageplan/>
 - Perth and Kinross - <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/21194/School-enrolment>
 - Dundee - <https://www.dundee.gov.uk/service-area/children-and-families-service/education/gaelic-medium-primary-education-gmpe>
5. Parents intending to make a placing request to a neighbouring authority must inform Fife Council of this intention and keep them informed of the outcome of this request so that arrangements for support with transport if successful or for alternative educational provision if unsuccessful can be made. Failure to comply with this request may result in Fife being unable to offer support with transport or a lack of space in the child's catchment primary. Please use education.services@fife.gov.uk to contact us.