



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

**Friday 21 February 2025**

**Request received 15.01.2025**

## 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

### Initial Assessment

10. On Wednesday 15 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 were the names of a further 2 children across a range of year groups, whose parents had expressed an interest in GMPE for their children. One of the additional children is in the same year group as the specified child, the other is in the August 2027 cohort, although the parent(s) could opt for August 2028 due to month of birth.

19. As detailed in paragraph 8, the Education Directorate undertook to establish if the education authority held any other relevant information. The CLD service indicated that they were informally aware of a possible 4 further families who *may* be interested in GMPE with children from across the range of pre-school age groups. This information is the result of the work of the Gaelic Development Officer in CLD in running Book Bug and similar activities in Gaelic across Fife for pre-school age children.

20. In total, therefore between the specified child request and other information the following numbers have been identified. There are two children, named in the application, whose parents are interested in GMPE in the August 2026 P1 cohort. From other cohorts there is definitely one child from another year group whose parents wish GMPE and there are a potential four further children also from other P1 cohorts.

21. As such the threshold of five children in any one year group is not met.

## SECTION 3

### Next Steps

22. As detailed in Section 2 the threshold for a full assessment for GMPE has not been met, therefore there is not currently a potential need for GMPE in Fife and a full assessment will not be undertaken at this time.

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](mailto:education.services@fife.gov.uk) to contact us.