

Response to the Consultation Proposals regarding establishing catchment areas for GME primary and secondary schools within Highland Region.

Respondent:

Mrs Julie Read

Parent of Sophie Read, age 9, in GM6 at Millbank Primary School in Nairn.

Parent of Kirstie Read, age 11, just transitioned to S1 Nairn Academy, supposedly into GME (see below).

Dear Highland Council, Bord Na Gaidhlig, associated parliamentarians and stakeholders,

I have read with interest your Proposals, and shall attend the public meeting at Millbank Primary School on 5 September 2023, 1830.

We live in Nairn, within the catchment for Millbank Primary School.

My daughters have both attended Gaelic Toddlers in the town, spent their preschool years at Croileagan Inbhir Narainn, have been through GME at Millbank Primary School and are both considered fluent Gaelic speakers.

There is a prominently displayed banner in the town stating that bilingual education in GME is available from ages 3-18 within Nairn - *but Nairn Academy is not delivering GME under your own definition.*

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

On page 25 of this 48 page document it states:

2.15 The GME curriculum from S1 to S3 and into the Senior Phase (S4-S6) remains one based on the principle of immersion in Gaelic. It is considered essential that education authorities and schools identify the curricular areas and subjects, in addition to Gaelic, that are possible to deliver through the medium of Gaelic, based on the availability of staff and young people's choices.

2.16 Schools should aim to deliver a sufficient proportion of the secondary curriculum through the medium of Gaelic to enable young people to continue to develop their fluency in Gaelic. Schools and education authorities should plan for this, taking their lead from the subjects for which qualifications are available from the SQA (see paragraphs 2.18-19). Some secondary schools with GME will offer other subject provision and this will depend on local circumstances and teacher availability. Schools and education authorities should collaborate to develop secondary level GME curriculum opportunities, sharing of expertise, courses and a range of delivery methods, including the use of distance learning and technology..

Referring specifically back to the Consultation Document, Appendix A, Paragraph 6.1 it states that :

'The provision of GME at Nairn Academy is a relatively recent development....'

Kirstie Read has just entered S1 at Nairn Academy.

Out of her 32 periods per week, only 3 classes are in Gaelic - these are Gaelic language for fluent speakers. Nothing else (ie, none of the social or practical classes are being taught through the medium of Gaelic).

Frustratingly also, the 3 Gaelic lessons that she does receive are at the expense of another modern language.

I fought hard during Kirstie's last term at Millbank Primary School for the option for her to receive transport to the IRA to continue true GME, where the current S1s get 4 Gaelic lesson for fluent speakers per week, plus Modern Studies, Geography, History, RMPS and PSE all in Gaelic - plus they receive French classes.

In your consideration regarding GME catchment areas, you must understand that currently insufficient quantity of Gaelic is being delivered to even call it GME.

Therefore families from Nairn wishing their children to continue with full Gaelic immersion *must* be given the option to continue it at IRA, with the provision of transport - GME, as defined in the above Statutory Guidance Document, is not available at any more local establishment.

Pupils from Millbank commencing GME S1 at the IRA in session 2021-2022, and prior to this date, receive funded transport for the approximately 18 mile journey.

Subsequent S1 intakes (with the exception of the younger siblings of the above families) do not receive this option, and they are left to either sort their own transport arrangements, or to settle for non-GME (as described above) at Nairn Academy.

I very much look forward to your considered response.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Read
Parent stakeholder.