

The proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School

Travel distances

Statutory Guidance on catchment areas for Gaelic medium education (GME) states that the catchment should be an area in which the education authority thinks it is reasonable for pupils to travel to school. There is an acknowledgement in the consultation paper that children from Kinlochewe, Shieldaig and Torridon areas would have very long journeys to school. It is not reasonable or practical to establish such an extensive catchment for primary education. Children from the Shieldaig area would have much shorter travelling times if they were to attend Gaelic medium in Lochcarron Primary which may be a more attractive option for parents.

Encourage demand for GME

The Statutory Guidance places a duty on local authorities to promote and support GME as follows:

An education authority must promote the potential provision of GME and GLE and provide support for pupils and teachers in these types of Gaelic education.

The lack of provision of Gaelic as a second language in feeder primary schools was referred to at the public meeting on 22nd January. It is important that all pupils have the opportunity to study Gaelic as learners and encouraged to continue their learning at secondary.

The Education Act 2016 describes the process whereby parents can request GME provision from their local authority. Although there is a minimum number of 5 pupils given as the requirement to trigger a full assessment for GME, in some circumstances this may be lower, in order to allow provision to be established in more rural areas. For example, we are aware of one rural school where the number of pupils on the request for entry to P1 GMPE was only 3; nevertheless, this was 100% of the intake and the request for GME was successful.

We are concerned that this proposal which, as claimed, 'helps to consolidate existing provision of GME' will deter parents from making a request for GME provision in their own school at a future date. We are also concerned that any such request would be less likely to have a positive outcome.

M. Wentworth
Comann nam Pàrant
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