

Statement of Concern from Drummond Parent Council on Proposal to Move Secondary Level Gaelic Medium Education to Drummond

9th January 2018

A report to the Education, Children and Families Committee of City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) published on 8th December 2017 suggests Drummond as the site for secondary-level Gaelic medium education (GME) in the future. While the proposal is for Drummond Community High School to co-exist with GME, the report adds that “The transfer of GME secondary provision to DHS could also provide an opportunity in the longer term, if demand continues to increase, for the school to operate as a dedicated GME secondary school”. This “opportunity” would result in the closure of the school to all students except those who are fluent in Gaelic and/or GME primary education would be an entry requirement. Drummond would therefore stop being available to local children at non-GME primaries (i.e. Broughton PS, Leith Walk PS and Abbeyhill PS).

How would the transition work?

The Council have said that any transition would be gradual: GME pupils would start at Drummond on a year by year basis initially, starting in 2019 at the earliest. Drummond PC has been informed by City of Edinburgh council officers that: “It would be our intention to confirm in any statutory consultation paper which comes forward that any pupil who begins their secondary education at Drummond High School will be able to complete it at the school.”

School roll projections

By adding the CEC’s latest projections of the Drummond school roll to the projections of pupils in secondary GME from the CEC’s draft Gaelic Language Plan, we predict that Drummond’s current capacity of 600 would be exceeded by 2022.

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Drummond projected roll	333	330	339	371	418	459	486	501	511	508	499
Additional Gaelic pupils projected roll	0	0	31	83	144	196	247	324	353*	361*	360*
Total	333	330	370	454	562	655	733	825	864*	869*	859*

**Gaelic projections from 2025 onwards are based on estimates of the Gaelic primary intake.*

The projections assume a phased move of Gaelic to Drummond, i.e. from 2019 onwards P7s from Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce (the Gaelic primary school) transition to Drummond rather than James Gillespie’s High School (JGHS). Although the projections are estimates, they are currently our best guess about what could happen. CEC expects the total number of secondary school pupils to exceed the total number of places across Edinburgh in 2023, which might mean more pupils than predicted come to Drummond even without GME.

What happens if/when Drummond reaches capacity?

The figures raise questions about changes CEC would make in the early 2020s if GME were at Drummond alongside English-Medium Education (EME). Would out-of-catchment requests to Drummond no longer be allowed? Would the catchment schools (currently Broughton PS, Leith

Walk PS and Abbeyhill PS) for Drummond be changed? If so, would siblings of pupils already at Drummond be guaranteed a place? Would it be possible to expand the accommodation at Drummond? Would new admissions to Drummond be limited to Gaelic pupils only? What would be the impact on children with additional support needs who utilise the resource base?

What are the long term aspirations for Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh?

The numbers of primary school children in GME has been increasing since Taobh na Pàirce, the dedicated GME primary school, opened in 2013. At present the level of Gaelic provision in Gillespie's is low, with around three subjects being taught in Gaelic. Gaelic parents' organisations would like to improve the amount of GME at secondary level and have a dedicated Gaelic secondary school. These aspirations have political support, being recognised in CEC's Draft Gaelic Language Plan. A big obstacle to increased secondary GME is the problem of recruiting teachers who speak Gaelic well enough to teach in it. Nevertheless there is a clear direction of travel.

What has Drummond Parent Council been doing?

Drummond Parent Council organised a meeting for parents with children at Drummond and feeder primary schools on Tuesday 19th December in order to discuss the proposals and learn more from a Council official and the Head Teacher. Over 20 parents from Drummond and its catchment primaries were present, and there was overwhelming concern expressed about the proposal. Parents were not against secondary GME, but they don't want it to be at the expense of their local school. They are concerned that, in the context of the understandable aspiration of the Gaelic parent bodies for a dedicated GME secondary school, a period of coexistence with GME and non-GME would be difficult to manage, and could lead to tension between the two groups of parents and pupils.

Parents from Drummond and its feeder primaries have continued their discussions by an email group – please contact your local Parent Council to join in.

What happens next?

The Council plans to organise an informal consultation in January, with the idea of having “a suitable transfer proposal” agreed in time to write a “detailed draft statutory consultation” by March 2018. This does not give much time to consult with parents, but we will let you know as soon as any meetings are organised.

What can we do?

Contact Drummond Parent Council, via drummond.parent.council@gmail.com so we can keep you up to date.

Contact your local Councillors via <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/councillors/search> , and Councillors on the Education, Children and Families Committee via <https://tinyurl.com/cec-ecf-councillors>

Other Links

- *Broughton Spurtle* article: <http://www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk/news/should-drummond-go-gaelic>
- The report to Education, Children and Families Committee (8 December): <https://tinyurl.com/dchs-gme-consultation>
- Draft Gaelic Language Plan: <https://tinyurl.com/draft-glp>
- School Roll Projections: <https://tinyurl.com/cec-roll-projections-2017>