

## Fiosrachadh Pearsanta / Contact Information

**Buidheann B** / Organisation B

## Ceistean | Questions

This response is from Organisation B. We welcome the opportunity to respond to Bòrd na Gàidhlig's consultation on the national Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) for 2017 – 2022.

JGHS is the sole provider of secondary Gaelic-medium education in Edinburgh with most of its Gaelic-medium pupils having completed their primary education at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce.

Organisation B has seen the response to the consultation prepared by Comann nam Pàrant (Dun Èideann) and endorses its position. With regard to secondary education GME in particular, Organisation B would like to make the following points.

We agree that GME should be a priority area for next GLP, as it is under the current plan, and that this approach has the potential to provide major support to the overall objective of increasing the numbers of Gaelic speakers. However, we consider that there needs to be greater focus on how secondary GME is delivered and resourced to ensure that pupils reach the end of their schooling still engaged in Gaelic and having had the opportunity to reach fluency. This should be the explicit aim of secondary GME and secondary schools should be supported and resourced to achieve that objective. Failure to do so runs the risk that the expansion of primary GME in recent years does not result in significant increases in the numbers of fluent adults.

Recent experience has been that recruitment of staff, both for Gaelic as a subject and for other subjects taught through Gaelic, is often difficult with multiple rounds of advertising required in some cases. Where it is not possible to engage teaching staff this can and does have an effect on the provision of Gaelic teaching and, if it is not possible to recruit staff qualified in the subject areas where children are already being taught through Gaelic, this results in their transfer to English-medium classes. This is unsatisfactory and Organisation B considers that steps need to be taken urgently to ensure that teachers are available across Scotland to teach in the subject areas which the SQA offers through Gaelic. The lack of appropriately qualified staff not only has an effect on pupils who have opted for subjects delivered through Gaelic, but also decreases potential uptake where there is a perception that there is no guarantee that a course will continue to be offered through Gaelic for its full term.

In this connection, we support the e-sgoil initiative and see clear opportunities to expand the subject areas being offered and to ensure the continuity of courses delivered across Scotland. However, this initiative needs to be carefully planned and delivered, with training provided for teaching staff both delivering classes and supporting esgoil use in schools. It is not a replacement for appropriate levels of Gaelic staff in each school, but rather an enhancement of provision.

Secondary GME is almost always taught in an environment where Gaelic-speaking pupils are far outnumbered by their English-speaking peers, which produces particular challenges in achieving any sort of level of immersion. The current Statutory Guidance provides little assistance in recommending the best way in which satisfactory levels of immersion can be achieved and, in reality, the approach will vary from school to school. It is important that there is a clear position on what constitutes secondary GME and support in place, or plans for how that support can be put in place, to achieve that level of provision. Otherwise there is an ongoing risk that the level and quality of GME offered will depend entirely on specific staff members and the support offered by senior management, and the circumstances particular to each school, rather than on considered objectives and best practice put forward under an overarching national policy framework. We consider that this is a particularly under-developed area of GME and one which needs urgent consideration if the objective of delivering fluent adult speakers is to be achieved.

There is a specific challenge around maintaining the interest of teenagers in Gaelic and providing extra-curricular activities which will support their developing fluency. Some steps towards greater engagement in this area have been taken recently, for instance by Comann na Gàidhlig, and this is very much welcomed. However, this is an area which requires further development.