

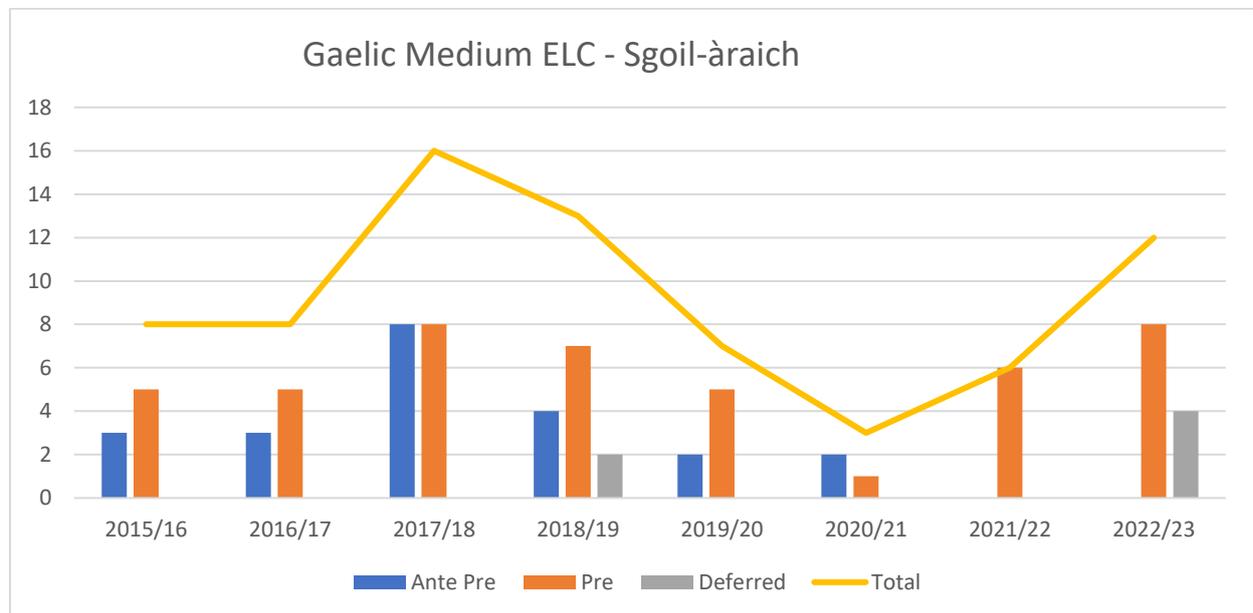
## Appendix B

### Service Evaluation of Gaelic Medium Education (GME)

Officers explored three questions to help understand what may be influencing the uptake of Gaelic Medium Education across Aberdeen City Council. The findings are summarised below.

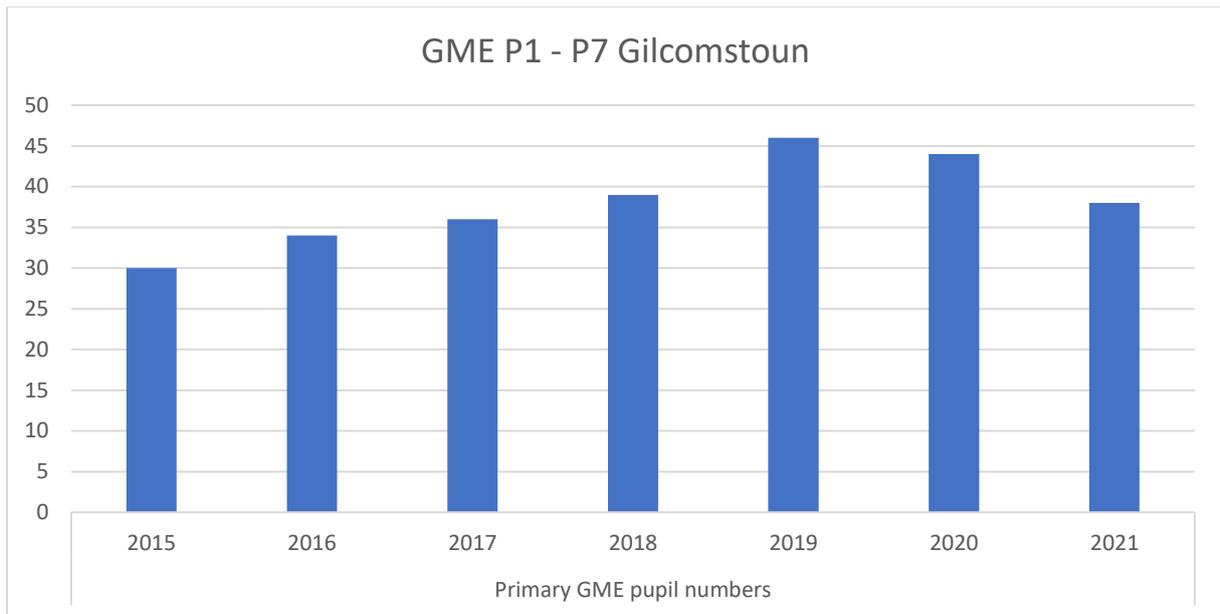
#### Is the current provision sufficient?

Aberdeen City is one of 11 Local Authorities who offer Gaelic Medium Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). Since August 2020, Gaelic Medium ELC has been provided within a new building at Gilcomstoun Primary School. The provision of Gaelic Medium ELC is outlined in ELC admission policies and has been promoted on social media to help increase knowledge of the provision.



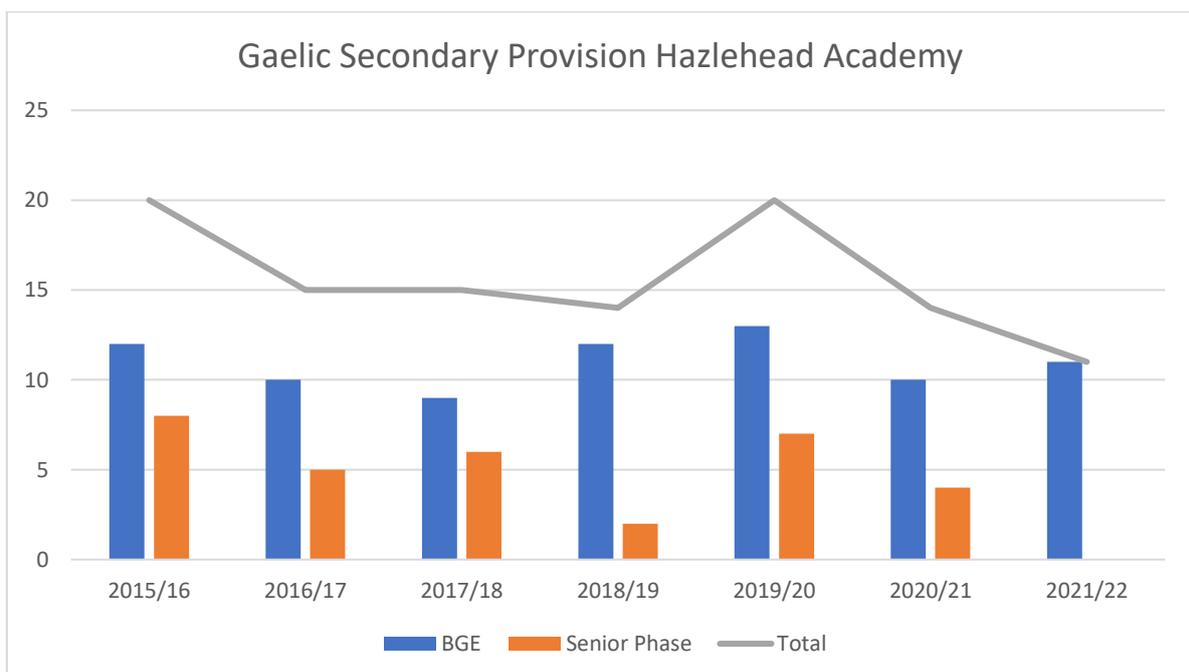
There is an upward trend in registrations for the Sgoil-àraich however the setting still has capacity for another 8 children. Although there are well planned and frequent transition activities between Sgoil-àraich and the Gaelic unit not all children choose to transition to P1 in the unit. The Lowest numbers were registered in 20/21 and are thought to be associated with the uncertainty created by the pandemic.

Aberdeen City is one of 15 Local Authorities who provide Gaelic Medium Primary School provision. Primary Gaelic Medium Education is provided at Gilcomstoun Primary School and around 0.3% of our total primary population take up this opportunity. Although uptake is low across Aberdeen, the percentage of primary school children accessing GME varies considerably across the country from 43% in the Western Isles to 0.3% in Aberdeen City and South Lanarkshire.



In the last 7 years numbers have peaked at 46 in the Primary School. During our recent consultation to create a zone for the school, parents suggested that establishing the whole city as a zone would increase numbers as it would allow parents to be secure in the knowledge children would be able to transition successfully to the provision at Hazlehead.

Aberdeen City is one of 13 Local Authorities who offer Gaelic Medium Secondary Education. Secondary Gaelic Medium Provision is located at Hazlehead Academy. In keeping with the national picture (less than half of those attending primary provision nationally attend GME provision in secondary), the number of children attending GME in secondary is considerably lower than the number attending primary provision. This is in keeping with national trends.



The Aberdeen City Council provision of Gaelic Medium Education is thought to be appropriate and sufficient.

### **Are there barriers to providing high quality provision?**

The delivery of immersive Gaelic Medium Education relies on the provision of fluent Gaelic speakers. All three provisions, (Early Learning and Childcare, Primary and Secondary) have experienced considerable challenges in recruiting Gaelic speakers over the last few years. We have developed links with University of the Highlands and Islands and are working with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta to seek solutions in line with other authorities in the Northern Alliance. Both organisations support us through promoting our vacancies through their social media sites.

We have been fully staffed in secondary since August 2021, however this session we struggled to recruit to Primary and there are currently 2 teaching staff vacancies. The Primary provision continues to operate with our secondary staff member supporting the senior primary class with intensive input on grammar. This input has allowed the learners to develop relationships early with secondary staff and will support transition in the longer term.

Both provisions take all opportunities offered to engage in the wider Gaelic community with Gilcomstoun currently working with Midas Media to be part of a documentary called Green Scotland. During the filming the pupils in the p4 – 7 class will be discussing the issues in Gaelic. Secondary will be welcoming a Gaelic author for a question-and-answer session. There are also opportunities for groups to attend the National Mod.

Learners who chose to transition to their local secondary have been supported to keep their language skills alive through virtual sessions after school. This does not provide all the opportunities attending Hazlehead Academy would provide, however it means the use of the language is supported and learners can still access GME senior phase courses through our city campus.

Historically, a central Gaelic speaking Officer has helped oversee and drive the strategic direction of Gaelic Medium provisions. Unfortunately, repeated attempts to recruit to this Education Support Officer post have been unsuccessful and the post remains vacant. Following discussions with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta it was felt that the introduction of a promoted post in the city may help to attract staff. The proposal would be to reduce the central officer time and convert one of the existing teaching posts into a PT creating a career pathway to hopefully attract staff and help with retention.

Despite the challenges faced, our settings continue to develop their practice and look at innovative ways of engaging young people in Gaelic language experiences. This session we have the whole of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year at Hazlehead experiencing outdoor learning through Gaelic language with a view to youngsters choosing the Gaelic

Language options in senior phase. Each provision benefits from good links with other Gaelic Medium Provisions across the Northern Alliance and can access support from E sgoil where required.

The main barrier identified to the provision of a high-quality service is the provision of sufficient Gaelic speaking staff to support delivery in our settings. We continue to work with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant to advertise vacancies and with UHI to provide placements for undergraduates and probationer teachers. This session we have one UHI student teacher who has asked to be placed within the primary GME provision.

A parent survey issued in October highlighted the lack of sufficient Gaelic speaking staff as an area of concern. As a result of the survey findings a parent focus group will be established meeting termly to discuss issues relating to GME education.

### **Are there barriers to accessing the three provisions?**

All three provisions can be accessed by families across the city however if zones alter to anything less than city-wide families would be required to submit a placing request. In the zoning consultation last year it was clear from parental feedback that it was felt the introduction of a city-wide zone removing the need for a placing request and providing equal access to all would increase the number of families wishing to access GME.