

**Assessment Response to a Parental
Request for Gaelic Medium Education
(GMPE)**

in

Scottish Borders Council

6 November 2025

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SECTION 1

Background

1. The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 places a duty on education authorities to promote and support Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) and establishes a process by which parents can request Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) from their education authority.
2. Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) takes the form of immersion, i.e. children experience all their learning in the early years of primary school (Pr. 1 - 3) through the Gaelic language. Thereafter, immersion continues but in Pr. 4 – 7 English is introduced, while Gaelic remains the predominant language of the classroom.
3. At present Scottish Borders Council does not make such a provision but supports families who wish such an experience for their children, and are successful in being granted a placing request to schools in neighbouring local authorities, through provision of transport.
4. [Statutory guidance](https://www.gaidhlig.scot/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Statutory-Guidance-for-Gaelic-Education.pdf)¹, issued by the Bòrd na Gàidhlig came into force on 1 February 2017, Part 1 of which sets out the steps education authorities must take to assess demand on receipt of a request for GME.
5. Under the legislation and statutory guidance parents of children under school age, and who have not yet started to attend a primary school, have the right to request an assessment of the need for GMPE from the education authority in which the family resides. Any request must also set out or be accompanied by evidence of demand for GMPE from parents of other children resident in the same education authority area and who will commence primary school in the same year group as the specified child. An initial assessment should be completed within a 6 week window; a full assessment allows 10 weeks for the local authority to undertake and report on the exercise.
6. When an education authority receives a parental request made under the 2016 Act, it must designate the geographical area in relation to which it will undertake its assessment of the need for GMPE referred to as a 'GMPE assessment area'.
7. The threshold for an obligatory full assessment under the 2016 Act is that an education authority is satisfied that there is demand in the GMPE assessment area from the parents of at least five children who are resident in the GMPE assessment area and who are all in the same pre-school year group; the specified child should be counted in this total.

SECTION 2

Initial Assessment

8. On 17 July 2025 the department received a request from a parent resident in Scottish Borders seeking an assessment of the demand for GMPE in Scottish Borders for her child, known as the 'lead child', who is due to start primary school in August 2026.

¹ <https://www.gaidhlig.scot/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Statutory-Guidance-for-Gaelic-Education.pdf>

9. Where any education authority determines that there is a potential need for GMPE in the GMPE assessment area, it has two possible options, it can:
- carry out a full assessment of the need for GMPE in the GMPE assessment area; or
 - without carrying out a full assessment, exercise its discretion to take such steps as are necessary to secure the provision of such GMPE as it considers appropriate in the GMPE assessment area.
10. Following initial assessment of demand (as detailed in paragraphs 18 to 24), the department decided to carry out a full assessment of the need for GMPE. The statutory guidance requires that *'when carrying out a full assessment an education authority must have regard to a list of mandatory matters, and must decide to secure the provision of GMPE in the GMPE assessment area unless it would be unreasonable to do so'*.

SECTION 3

Full assessment - consideration of Mandatory Factors

11. When carrying out a full assessment, an education authority must have regard to a list of mandatory matters, and must decide to secure the provision of GMPE in the GMPE assessment area unless it would be unreasonable to do so.
12. The mandatory factors considered included:
- Views provided by statutory consultees
 - Initial assessment information in relation to demand
 - Existing GMPE provision in adjacent authorities and the availability of access
 - Access to GMPE in Scottish Borders from children in other Local Authorities
 - Accommodation
 - Costs
 - Teachers – including potential availability within Scottish Borders and the potential to recruit
 - The Scottish Borders Gaelic Language Plan.

Views provided by statutory consultees

13. It is required that when undertaking a full assessment the views of statutory consultees be sought and their response taken in to account. The department requested the views of Education Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comann nam Pàrant and The National Parent Forum of Scotland on Monday 8th September 2025.
14. As per the full assessment protocol Education Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant all responded within four weeks of notification. It is not a statutory duty placed upon The National Parent Forum of Scotland or Comann nam Pàrant to respond. All responses received from the statutory consultees were in favour of establishing GMPE in Scottish Borders Council.

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED: MAIN POINTS

15. The following is a summary of the main points arising from the written responses submitted by the statutory respondents.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

- There is a need for GMPE within Scottish Borders Council beginning in session 2026-27;
- The establishment of GMPE within the Scottish Borders Council would be a more appealing option for families than travelling to a neighbouring authority provision;
- Should GMPE provision be agreed, in line with the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, a GMPE catchment area should be defined and consulted on
- The Local Authority reviews provision of GMPE in the context of ultimately providing a 3-18 Gaelic Medium Education (GME) service for residents of Scottish Borders; and,
- Consider and plan for providing GME Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and Secondary provision at a future point.

Comann nam Pàrant

- Strongly agree with the findings of the initial assessment that there is a need for GMPE in the Scottish Borders;
- Agree with the decision to designate the Tweeddale area as the GMPE assessment area which reflects the residency of families who have requested GMPE;
- Recommend that the local authority consult with parents to establish a cohesive 3-18 structure for GME; and,
- Recommend the local authority undertake a more robust assessment of demand.

Education Scotland

- Agree that there is sufficient demand for establishing Gaelic Medium Primary Education from August 2026;
- Note that the council has set the designated assessment area for primary Gaelic Medium as the Tweeddale area.
- Recommend that the council revisit their proposed assessment area for Gaelic Medium Education to maximise and enable, all possible and interested enrolments;
- The council should continue to take forward its statutory duty to promote Gaelic Medium Education with the wider parental body, as required by the 2016 Act.
- Recommend the council build on the impact of having a Gaelic playgroup by regularly consulting parents within the council to ascertain if there is a request to make early learning and childcare available through the medium of Gaelic;
- Recommend that parents should be fully consulted and involved in planning the future implementation of Gaelic Medium Education; and,
- Going forward, the council ensure equal and equitable access to Gaelic Medium Education.

16. A copy of all responses can be found as part of the appendix of this document.

Initial assessment information in relation to demand

17. As detailed in paragraph 8, the department received a request on 17 July 2025 from a parent resident seeking an assessment of the demand for GMPE. Included in the request were the names of a further 32 children across a range of year groups, whose parents had expressed an interest in GMPE for their children.
18. The department wrote to each parent included in the request for assessment, inviting them to confirm their wish for GMPE for their child. The department received 18 positive responses from families, including that of the lead child.
19. The breakdown of numbers for each year group is detailed in table 1 below.

Table 1

Year Group P1 Starting	Number of original applications	Number of positive responses to follow-up
2025	3	2
2026	9	7
2027	6	5
2028	6	3
2029	4	2
2030	5	4
TOTAL	33	23

20. Based on the application information received, the designated GMPE assessment area was defined as the Tweeddale locality.
21. The breakdown of numbers for each year group within or out-with the designated assessment areas is detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2

P1 Cohort	Number of applicants	Within designated assessment area	Out-with designated assessment area
2025	3	3	0
2026	9	8	1
2027	6	5	1
2028	6	5	1
2029	4	3	1
2030	5	5	0
TOTAL	33	29	4

22. As such the threshold of five children in any one year group is met.
23. At the time of assessment there was no request for provision prior to August 2026.

Existing GMPE provision in adjacent authorities and the availability of access

24. As detailed in paragraph 3, presently Scottish Borders Council does not make GMPE provision available within the local authority area, however the Council supports families who wish such an experience for their children, and are successful in being granted a placing request to schools in neighbouring local authorities, through provision of transport.

25. The department is not aware of any placing requests being made recently, however our statutory consultees (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comann nam Pàrant and Education Scotland) as part of this process highlighted the limited capacity of a neighbouring authority and the likelihood of future placing requests being refused.
26. The number of children accessing GMPE in neighbouring local authorities is zero.

Access to GMPE in Scottish Borders from children in other Local Authorities

27. As noted in paragraph 3, this is not currently available. The Education Department would require to update the current admission arrangements to take full account of any new provision.

Accommodation

28. The Education Department must consider and identify an appropriate location for the delivery of GMPE.
29. Given that the catchment area for GMPE has been identified as the Tweeddale locality, any current establishment identified as being most appropriate for the delivery of GMPE will be required to accommodate pupils within this area, in accordance with relevant legislation.
30. Application for a place in a Gaelic service will be managed via the Council's placing request process.
31. In order to ensure an appropriate learning environment, and to ensure immersive Gaelic education across the P1-P3 stages, amendments will be required to an identified school facility. This will in effect create a separate provision within the school, having a separate entrance and signage, but with shared access to communal areas such as dining and physical education facilities.
32. On the basis of the number of families who have indicated a desire for their child(ren) to be educated in a GMPE facility, initially the provision for GMPE will require a small number of learning spaces. Consequently it is very likely that the class composition for GMPE will be structured on the basis of multi-stage composite classes; this is where children from across several stages are educated by the same teacher and a support assistant within a single learning space.
33. It has been suggested by the statutory consultees that once established, demand will continue or increase in future years for Gaelic Medium Education in Scottish Borders, therefore any potential provision for GMPE, must give consideration to the ability to increase the number of learning and teaching spaces, as required.
34. Across the current school estate there is only a small number of current facilities which have the capacity to support the introduction of Gaelic provision within the designated area.

Costs

35. There will be capital costs associated with amendments to a current school building as well as additional physical resources such as tables and chairs and IT equipment. From early discussions with the Gaelic and Scots Team of the Learning Directorate at The Scottish Government, it is likely that a significant capital funding contribution from the Scottish

Government will be available to the Council to develop the Gaelic school in these matters.

36. A GMPE provision will require the recruitment and employment of a fluent Gaelic speaking teacher and a Gaelic speaking pupil support assistant (PSA). There may be further job sizing considerations required given the expectation of additional management duties for the Head Teacher. These additional roles will result in additional revenue pressure for the Council however some of this may be offset by a Scottish Government Specific Grant for Gaelic education. As the demand for GMPE grows the costs per capita may reduce to be in line with the cost of current primary provision as the number of children attending the provision increases.
37. In order to prepare a school for the introduction of GMPE provision, staffing resource will be required to support the development of the Gaelic curriculum, learning teaching and assessment materials. This role will further support other actions such as: looking outwards to identify and learn from existing good GMPE practice elsewhere; communicate effectively with parents, families and other stakeholders as the provision is developed; and support newly appointed teaching and PSA staff with pedagogy and curriculum development. It is possible that the majority of the revenue costs associated with this post will be met by Scottish Government funding.
38. If Gaelic provision was established in Scottish Borders, children who may attend and who live within a 2 mile radius of the provision, would not require to be transported to and from school each day. For children who reside out with the 2 miles radius but who are Scottish Borders residents, there could possibly be greater degree of flexibility in providing transport, as well as the distance required to travel. The Council will continue to seek funding for transportation costs for children to be transported to and from the facility.

Teachers

39. At present no robust information exists relating to the number of Scottish Borders Council employees who can speak, read, write or understand Gaelic. An action within our Gaelic Language Plan is to audit and monitor this.
40. Scottish Borders contacted the General Teaching Council Scotland to request information on the number of existing Scottish Borders teaching staff who are registered as Gaelic Teachers. This information is not yet available to the Education Department.
41. It is an assumption at this stage that at a minimum, a suitably qualified Gaelic speaking teacher would be required to establish GMPE provision from August 2026.
42. Any recruitment would be through the Council's existing recruitment process, with support sought from Bòrd na Gàidhlig to guarantee a successful outcome.

The Scottish Borders Gaelic Language Plan.

43. All public authorities in Scotland are required to have a Gaelic Language Plan under Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. Scottish Borders' current plan was approved in 2023 and is due to be renewed by 2028.
44. The Gaelic Language Plan sets out the Council's commitment to promote the Gaelic language in line with the National Gaelic Language Plan. The National Gaelic Language Plan 2018 -23 sets out three priorities:
- Increasing the use of Gaelic
 - Increasing the learning of Gaelic
 - Promoting a positive image of Gaelic.
45. In terms of the learning of Gaelic in Scottish Borders education establishments, the Council has committed within its Gaelic Language Plan to:
- assess any requests for GME and determine the need for appropriate provision in line with the statutory guidance
 - actively seek and promote opportunities for children and young people from 3-18 to learn Gaelic in our schools and centres.

SECTION 5

Conclusion

46. Having carried out an initial and full assessment, the Education Department accepts that there is demand, as defined by the statutory guidance, for GMPE within Scottish Borders Council from school session 2026 / 2027.
47. It is agreed by most statutory respondents that the Tweeddale locality should be identified as the geographical assessment area.
48. There is limited capacity for Scottish Borders residents to access GMPE in neighbouring local authorities.
49. Recruitment of suitably qualified staff to any future GMPE provision is paramount to successful introduction.
50. There should be consideration to the continuum of learning for children by planning towards 3 – 18 provision.

SECTION 6

Education Department Recommendation

51. To take forward a learning provision for Gaelic Medium Primary Education for the beginning of school session 2026 / 2027.

SECTION 7: Next Steps

52. The Education Department will:

- Undertake a full assessment of the viability of the presumption to provide GMPE for school session 2026/27 with specific consideration of:
 - Available locations for GMPE and carry out a consultation with key stakeholders.
 - A staffing model for the delivery of GMPE
 - Admission arrangements for any new provision.
- Work in partnership with families and interested parties on the above.
- Work in partnership with the statutory respondents on the above.

APPENDICES

**Freagairt Bòrd na Gàidhlig air Measadh Slàn airson
Solarachadh Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig aig ìre Bun-
sgoile ann an Comhairle Chrìochan na h-Alba.****Ro-Ràdh**

Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' toirt fa-near na leanas:

1. Fhuair Comhairle Chrìochan na h-Alba iarrras bho phàrantan taobh a-staigh an Ùghdarras Ionadail a tha a' sireadh Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig (FtMG), aig ìre Bun-sgoile, a' tòiseachadh ann an 2026-27 agus gun deach an stairsneach de 5 chloinne a ruigsinn airson an tagraidh seo.
2. Às dèidh measadh tòiseachaidh, chaidh an t-Ùghdarras Ionadail air adhart gu measadh slàn (Earrannan 12 agus 13 de dh'Achd an Fhoghlaim 2016). Chaidh measadh slàn a thòiseachadh air sgàth 's gun do dhearbhaich an t-Ùghdarras Ionadail gu bheil feum anns an t-sealladh airson FtMG, aig ìre Bun-sgoile, às dèidh a' mheasaidh thòiseachaidh.
3. Chaidh beachdan Bòrd na Gàidhlig a lorg leis an Ùghdarras Ionadail ann an litir air 8 Sultain 2025.

Freagairt bho Bhòrd na Gàidhlig

A rèir An Stiùiridh Reachdail air Foghlam Gàidhlig, Roinnean 1.49 agus 1.50, tha am Bòrd den bheachd gu bheil feum ann airson FtMG, aig ìre Bun-sgoile, taobh a-staigh Comhairle Chrìochan na h-Alba bho thoiseach an t-seisein-sgoile 2026-27.

'S e prìomh adhbhar airson seo gun deach an stairsneach de 5 chloinne a ruigsinn agus gu bheil fianais shoilleir a' dearbhadh gu bheil iarrras a bharrachd ann airson bliadhnaichean suas gu 2030.

Tha sinn cuideachd a' toirt fa-near gu bheil Comhairle Chrìochan na h-Alba an-dràsta a' toirt seachad FtMG tro chom-pàirteachas le Comhairle Baile Dhùn Èideann. Leis na h-astaran agus an ùine siubhail bho Chrìochan na h-Alba, gu h-àraidh bho na sgìrean taobh a-staigh na sgìre measaidh a chaidh a chomharrachadh airson FtMG aig ìre Bun-sgoile, dh'fhaodadh nach e roghainn tharraingeach a tha seo do phàrantan. Le bhith a' stèidheachadh FtMG, aig ìre Bun-sgoile, taobh a-staigh Comhairle Chrìochan na h-Alba, bhiodh seo nas tarraingiche do theaghlaichean.

Ma thèid aontachadh ri solar FtMG, aig ìre Bun-sgoile, a stèidheachadh, a rèir an Stiùiridh Reachdail air Foghlam Gàidhlig, bu chòir gun tèid sgìre-sgoile FtMG, aig ìre Bun-sgoile, ainmeachadh agus co-chomhairle a chumail mu dheidhinn.

Tha am Bòrd a' moladh gun dèan an t-Ùghdarras Ionadail ath-sgrùdadh air solarachadh FtMG, aig ìre Bun-sgoile, ann an co-

**Bòrd na Gàidhlig Response to Full Assessment on the Provision
of Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) in the Scottish
Borders Council.****Introduction**

Bòrd na Gàidhlig notes the following:

1. Scottish Borders Council received a request from parents within the Local Authority seeking Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) commencing in session 2026-27 and that the threshold of 5 children had been reached for this request.
2. Following an initial assessment, the Local Authority proceeded to a Full Assessment (Sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 2016). The Full Assessment has been initiated because the Local Authority has determined there is a potential need for GMPE following the initial assessment.
3. The views of Bòrd na Gàidhlig were sought by the Local Authority in a letter dated 8th September 2025.

Response from Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

In accordance with the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education Sections 1.49 and 1.50 the Bòrd is of the view that there is a need for GMPE within Scottish Borders Council beginning in session 2026-27.

The principal reason for this is that the 5-child threshold has been met and that there is clear evidence of additional demand for subsequent years up to 2030.

We also note that Scottish Borders Council currently provides GME through a partner arrangement with Edinburgh City Council. Given the travelling distances and times from the Scottish Borders, particularly from the areas within the identified GMPE assessment area, this is likely not an attractive option for parents. The establishment of GMPE within the Scottish Borders Council would be a more appealing option for families.

Should GMPE provision be agreed, in line with the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, a GMPE catchment area should be defined and consulted on.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig recommends that the Local Authority reviews provision of GMPE in the context of ultimately providing a 3-18

theacsa seirbhis Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig 3-18 a sholarachadh aig a' cheann-thall. Mar sin, ghabhadh seo a-steach a bhith a' beachdachadh air agus a' planadh airson solar Tràth-ionnsachaidh is Cùraim-chloinne agus Àrd-sgoile a thabhann san àm ri teachd.

Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig mothachail gu bheil Plana Gàidhlig aig an Ùghdarras Ionadail agus gu bheil an t-eagran làithreach ag ainmeachadh gheallaidhean gus taic agus bhrosnachadh a thoirt do dh'Fhoghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig.

Ron iarrtas airson FtMG aig ìre Bun-sgoile, bha Bòrd na Gàidhlig mothachail air an ùidh a bha a' fàs ann am FtMG taobh a-staigh Comhairle Chrìochan na h-Alba. Gus taic a thoirt seachad, chaidh taic ionmhais a thabhann tron sgeama Tabhartasan nan Tràth-bhliadhnaichean, don bhuidhinn Pàrant is Pàiste na Pùballan, a tha cuideachd a' faighinn taic bho Chomann nam Pàrant. Tha na 32 ainmean a th' air an iarrtas airson FtMG, aig ìre Bun-sgoile, a' dearbhadh gu follaiseach cho cudromach is a tha an iomairt seo agus soirbheachas air oidhirpean phàrantan.

Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' coimhead air adhart ri bhith ag obair còmhla ri Comhairle Chrìochan na h-Alba ann a bhith a' leasachadh Foghlam Gàidhlig, a' togail air an obair a tha air an stiùireadh leis a' choimhearsnachd agus leis an ùghdarras ionadail mu thràth, agus tha sinn air bhioran mun bhuaidh air leth a bhios aige seo air ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig ann an Crìochan na h-Alba san àm ri teachd.

Gaelic Medium Education (GME) service. This would require consideration and planning for providing GME Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and Secondary provision at a future point.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig notes that the Local Authority has a Gaelic Language Plan in place with the current edition detailing commitments to support and promote Gaelic Medium Education.

Prior to the parental request for GMPE, Bòrd na Gàidhlig was aware of the growing interest in GME within Scottish Borders Council. To support this, we provided financial support through the Early Years Grants Scheme, to the Gaelic parent & toddler Group Pàrant is Pàiste na Pùballan which has been supported by Comann nam Pàrant. The 32 names listed on the application for GMPE is clear evidence of the importance of this initiative and the success of parental efforts.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig look forward to working with Scottish Borders Council in developing Gaelic Education, building upon the work already being led by both community and local authority, and we're excited about the positive impact this will have for the future of Gaelic learning in the Scottish Borders.





**Comann Nam Pàrant Response to Full Assessment
Education (Scotland) Act 2016
Requested by Scottish Borders Council**

The information provided by the local authority relating to the request

Statutory Guidance is that, at the stage of full assessment, statutory consultees should be given details of the request. We have received details from the local authority on the numbers, ages and location of children included in the request.

The Initial Assessment

Scottish Borders Council have informed us that following initial assessment, the local authority has determined that there is a potential need for GMPE in their area.

The Potential need for GMPE in Scottish Borders Council area (Na Crìochan)

Comann nam Pàrant strongly agree with the findings of the initial assessment that there is a need for GMPE in the Scottish Borders. We feel that this a strong parental request with interest from 9 children who will start P1 in 2026, which is more than the 5 required to establish GMPE, as well as a significant number of potential pupils for the following years. We also note that there is interest from a small number of families with pupils currently in P1 and we would encourage the council to consider a P1/2 composite class for August 2026.

GMPE Assessment Location of provision

We agree with the decision to designate the Tweeddale area as the GMPE assessment area which reflects the residency of families who have requested GMPE. A local authority has an obligation to promote and support GME and provision which is accessible and attractive to families will make it easier for the authority to fulfil this obligation and achieve growth in GME. Gaelic medium education is based on a 3-18 curriculum, and we recommend that the local authority consult with parents to establish a cohesive 3-18 structure for GME.

Information relating to the demand for GMPE in the area of the authority from parents of children who are under school age and have not commenced attendance at a primary school

The interest in GMPE from families named on the request is the result of minimal promotion through parental word-of-mouth, the presence of one Gaelic Parent & Toddler group in the area and one information event organised by Comann nam Pàrant. It is possible that if the local authority were to undertake a more robust assessment of demand that more families would be identified.

The extent to which children resident in the GMPE assessment area could access GMPE in the area of an adjacent education authority

Scottish Borders Gaelic Language Plan states that “Gaelic medium education provision is currently delivered through partnership agreement with City of Edinburgh Council”. There are currently no pupils from Scottish Borders attending GME in Edinburgh. It is our understanding that this is due to the excessive travel times to Taobh na Pairce, the Gaelic school which is located in Leith so we believe it is entirely reasonable that Scottish Borders should now deliver GME for families within their area.

Conclusion

Scottish Borders current Gaelic Language Plan includes a commitment to “actively seek and promote opportunities for children and young people from 3-18 to learn Gaelic in our schools and centres.” This parental request for GMPE, and subsequent finding on initial assessment that there is potential demand for GMPE in the local authority area, provides an opportunity for the council to fulfil this commitment in their Gaelic plan by making provision for Gaelic medium education within the authority.

We have no doubt that once provision is established that demand will increase for Gaelic medium education. We would be happy to work with Scottish Borders Council in further promotion of Gaelic medium education to families.

We look forward to seeing provision established in August 2026.

M Wentworth
Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta)
07.10.25

Education (Scotland) Act 2016

Report by HM Inspectors of Schools to give an independent view of the determination for Scottish Borders Council to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education from August 2026, unless it would be unreasonable to do so. Scottish Borders Council has designated the assessment area for which it will assess the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education, as the Tweeddale area.

October 2025

1. Introduction

1.1 This report has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 (the 2016 Act). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial view of the determination to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education in Scottish Borders Council from August 2026. This is based on a request received by the council from parents of children under section 7 of the 2016 Act. The request is, as required, from parents of children under school age, whose children have not yet started to attend a primary school. The council has designated the Tweeddale area as the assessment area for which it will assess the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education.

1.2 Section two of this report sets out brief details of the assessment process and HM inspectors' evaluations on the determination for the council to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education. This is in accordance with Section 12 and 13 of the 2016 Act. HM Inspectors will use their national expertise to evaluate the potential need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education and draw on inspection findings from the Gaelic and wider educational context in Scotland. This section sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of:

- the details received from the council on the parental request;
- other information received from the council that they, as required, considered during the initial assessment about the demand for Gaelic Medium Primary Education; and
- mandatory factors that must be considered by the council in its determination of the potential need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education. This is in accordance with section 1.52 of the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education 2017.

1.3 Section three of this report summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the need to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education. Upon receipt of this report, the 2016 Act requires the council to have regard to it in preparing their report on the determination to establish Gaelic Medium Primary Education. The council's report must include an explanation of how it has complied with its duty to secure the provision of Gaelic Medium Primary Education, unless it would be unreasonable to do so.

1.4 The council must publish its final report no later than ten weeks after deciding to carry out a full assessment. HM Inspectors will publish our report on our website at the same time as the council is publishing their final report.

1.5 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- synthesis and analysis of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal;
- discussion with the council and relevant consultees; and
- review of the council's Gaelic Language Plan and other planning processes.

2. Assessment process and HM Inspectors' determination on establishing Gaelic Medium Primary Education

2.1 Scottish Borders Council notified HM Inspectors on 8 September 2025 that they had received parental requests for an assessment of the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education. This request is for Gaelic Medium Primary Education to be established within the council from August 2026. The council advised HM Inspectors that they had undertaken an initial assessment of this request in August 2025. This evidenced that there is a demand for Gaelic Medium Primary Education. HM Inspectors agree that there is sufficient demand for establishing Gaelic Medium

Primary Education from August 2026. This is based on the evidence that the council has provided HM Inspectors at the time of writing this report. We therefore recommend that the council proceed with establishing Gaelic Medium Primary Education from August 2026.

2.2 The information provided by the council shows parents' interest in enrolling their children in Gaelic Medium Primary Education from 2026 and up to 2031. There are also a few children who have just commenced primary education that reasonably request late total immersion to enable them access to Gaelic Medium Education. The council has set the designated assessment area for primary Gaelic Medium as the Tweeddale area. However, some interested families reside out with the Tweeddale area and would not be within the designated assessment area. The council should revisit their proposed assessment area for Gaelic Medium Education to maximise and enable, all possible and interested enrolments. They should be clear that future setting of catchment areas for Gaelic Medium do not need to be the same as that for English Medium.

2.3 Comann nam Pàrant collaborated with parents to establish a playgroup in Gaelic within the council. They also supported parents by hosting an information event on Gaelic Medium Education. Both these activities have raised significantly initial parental awareness of Gaelic Medium Education. As a result, a group of parents have requested that Gaelic Medium Education be established. The number of parents making this request exceeds that required by Sections nine and ten of the 2016 Act. The council should continue to take forward its statutory duty to promote Gaelic Medium Education with the wider parental body, as required by the 2016 Act. They should continue working with Gaelic and national organisations to access the support they can offer in having a thorough strategy to promote and embed Gaelic Medium Education in the council. Additionally, the council should build on the impact of having a Gaelic playgroup by regularly consulting parents within the council to ascertain if there is a request to make early learning and childcare available through the medium of Gaelic. This would be in line with the consultation already taking place for the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The provision of early learning and care settings, as part of Curriculum for Excellence, through Gaelic total immersion would ensure three-year old children access Gaelic Medium Education. This would be beneficial in raising attainment and closing gaps longer term.

2.4 The council has a statutory Gaelic Language Plan, 2023-28. This is the council's first plan. It commits to demonstrating 'equal respect for Gaelic and English regarding any bilingual services and resources.' The Gaelic Language Plan details a partnership arrangement with Edinburgh City Council through which children and young people may access Gaelic Medium Education. The plan specifies that this partnership arrangement is not attracting interest from parents. For example, in 2022-23, there were no learners travelling to Edinburgh for Gaelic Medium Education from the council. Parents' current interest in Gaelic Medium Education shows a significantly increased response to accessing Gaelic Medium Education. Should local-based Gaelic Medium Education be established, it potentially improves all children's and young people's access to this option in education.

2.5 The council has some approaches in place to enable stakeholder involvement in implementing new projects for Gaelic. This includes a steering group. Clearly, this determination to establish Gaelic Medium Education has accelerated the pace at which the council is required to implement Gaelic Medium Education, should this go ahead. HM Inspectors recommend that parents should be fully consulted and involved in planning the future implementation of Gaelic Medium Education. The council has begun to engage other education authorities on how best to deliver Gaelic Medium Education. They should continue widening the scope of this research to consider all-Gaelic schools, as well as Gaelic Units and associated staffing structures, including promoted posts. Parental evidence shows an interest in considering all-Gaelic schools. The council's determination in how Gaelic Medium Education is delivered should make Gaelic Medium Education an attractive, long-term option that results in year-on-year growth in enrolments.

2.6 In 2017, Bòrd na Gàidhlig published Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education asking that councils create catchment areas, and consider establishing guidelines on transport, travel,

enrolment, admissions and placing requests for Gaelic Medium Education. Going forward, the council should take forward these duties to enable equal and equitable access to Gaelic Medium Education. They should have a clear policy on how they will support equity through the provision of free and safe travel and transport for learners to their Gaelic Medium Education provision. This is particularly pertinent should there only be one Gaelic Medium provision within the council. It would be important for the council to complete relevant impact assessments, including children's rights, and equality and human rights impact assessments. The council shared with HM Inspectors some of their initial planning towards a full assessment. The council is aware of the importance that their future plans are taken forward in strong collaboration with parents as part of a planned, strategic approach to developing progressive Gaelic Medium Education.

2.7 The council is aware of the high-quality and distinctive approaches to Gaelic Medium Education detailed in the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017, and best practice identified through inspections. In taking this forward, the council are still to explore how dedicated funding from Scottish Government can be accessed.

3. Summary

3.1 HM Inspectors have assessed and evaluated Scottish Border Council's determination of the potential need for securing Gaelic Medium Primary Education within the council from August 2026. We have drawn on our national expertise to evaluate the potential need and possibility of securing Gaelic Medium Primary Education. This has taken account of the wider parental, Gaelic and educational context in Scotland. HM Inspectors recommend that Gaelic Medium Primary Education should be set up in Scottish Borders Council for August 2026. This will support the council's ambition to advance their statutory Gaelic Language Plan. In this report, HM Inspectors have summarised our evaluation of a few mandatory factors for the council to consider for implementing successfully Gaelic Medium Education.

**HM Inspectors
October 2025**