

# Proposals to review school catchment being considered

**Further delays to the construction of Edinburgh's first Gaelic language high school could trigger a catchment review of one of the capital's biggest and best-ranked secondaries.**

Council chiefs could be set to adjust James Gillespie's High School's attendance boundary in response to rising capacity pressures.

The Marchmont school offers Gaelic medium education (GME) to around 120 pupils at its Darroch annexe – the only facility of its kind in Edinburgh – which will welcome the first cohort of S1 and S2 Gaelic pupils alongside some of the wider school community from August.

However after plans to build a standalone Gaelic high school in the capital were derailed, there are fears demand for places at James Gillespie's will make existing pressures worse.

Its notional capacity of 1450 is already projected to be exceeded by 176 pupils by the end of this year, before rising to more than 1900 by 2025 and peaking at over 2000 in 2028 before beginning to gradually fall by the end of the decade.



The newly redeveloped James Gillespie's campus was officially opened by Deputy First Minister John Swinney MSP and Education Convener Paul Godzik on 26 October 2016

In January councillors voted to delay a statutory consultation on a Gaelic high school after officers tasked with identifying suitable sites said that a dedicated city centre school would no longer be possible.

They said the two options being considered are a GME secondary school on a shared campus with the replacement Liberton High School or on the existing Castlebrae High School site in Craigmillar.

Members said this would "allow further discussions between the council and the GME community and to allow the council to provide further additional information on the present sites and any other sites that will support the quality of education as set out in the educational benefits section of the report."

The Education, Children and Families committee was told today on Tuesday that "contingency plans" now need to be put in place as a consequence of the delay in statutory consultation.

A council report read: "Consideration requires to be given to how the pressure on places at James Gillespie can be managed.

“Options include a catchment review for James Gillespie and or a placement policy which will ensure GME numbers can be managed within current capacity.

“Without the statutory consultation it is not currently possible to fulfil the ambitions to expand GME in the city.”

Edinburgh City Council’s executive director of children’s services Amanda Hatton said a GME facility built alongside the new Liberton High School is the “best option that we have educationally.”

She added: ““If we’re to move forward and expand GME in the city then we need to begin the building of a secondary school and Liberton is the best option that we’ve currently got available to us.

“If we don’t do that, and we haven’t agreed to a statutory consultation so we can’t do that, we then have to look at how we manage the situation at James Gillespie’s because the longer we delay in building the school, the more pressure there is on James Gillespie numbers.

“A catchment review would be a James Gillespie catchment review, a placement policy would relate to the placement of GME children and that’s the two that are mentioned.”

Crawford McGhie, manager of estates and operational support for the council, said: “The Darroch Annexe is an annexe for the whole of James Gillespie’s High School. The school has said they want to use it to focus on GME for the strategic plan for GME, but it’s not a dedicated resource.

He said James Gillespie’s as a school has a “rising rolls issue.”

He added: “The things that are possible to deal with that are a catchment review, internal reconfiguration, and in the secondary school they could look at things like timetabling

and also more accommodation.”

In a report officers also noted that a decision by councillors to delay progressing the engagement process “also has implications for the timescale that a dedicated GME secondary school could be developed at the Liberton campus”.

Officers said that due to the consultation being paused, the Gaelic school could now not be completed until 2028, three years later than planned. The construction of the new Liberton High School followed by the demolition of the existing high school building need to progress.

“It is no longer possible to construct the GME secondary school at the same time as the new Liberton High School and therefore the timescale for the GME construction element requires to be delayed until the end of the replacement Liberton High School project.

“An early indication of the earliest construction for a GME secondary school is that it could be completed in 2028.”

We filmed progress of the building in progress in 2014. James Gillespie’s was [officially opened](#) by John Swinney MSP then Education Secretary in 2016.