

Analysis of Gaelic Medium Education Enrolment in P1 for 2024-25

The following report provides an analysis of the data from schools regarding Gaelic Medium Education enrolment for 2024-25 and includes comparisons with previous years, reasons for change provided by schools and proposed actions to increase enrolment in 2025.

1. Analysis of enrolment by school compared with 2023-24.

Please note that small numbers in some settings will result in large percentage variations for very small pupil movements.

GME P1 Enrolment - % Change from 2023 to 2024	
Schools with an increase in GME P1 roll of more than 10%	Lionel, Uig
Schools with an increase in GME P1 roll of between 1% and 10 %	Sir E Scott
Schools that have seen no change in GME Enrolment or had no entries	Breasclete, Eoligarry, Leverhulme, Pairc, Sgoil an Taobh Siar, Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath, Stornoway Primary
Schools with a decrease in GME P1 enrolment of between 1% and 10%	Balivanich
Schools with a decrease in GME P1 roll of more than 10%	Back, Castlebay, Daliburgh, lochdar, Laxdale, Sgoil an Rubha, Sgoil nan Loch, Shawbost, Tong

In a number of instances, the variation on last year was small but the most significant impact on enrolment was in schools where the rate fell by over 10% contributing to a significant drop overall.

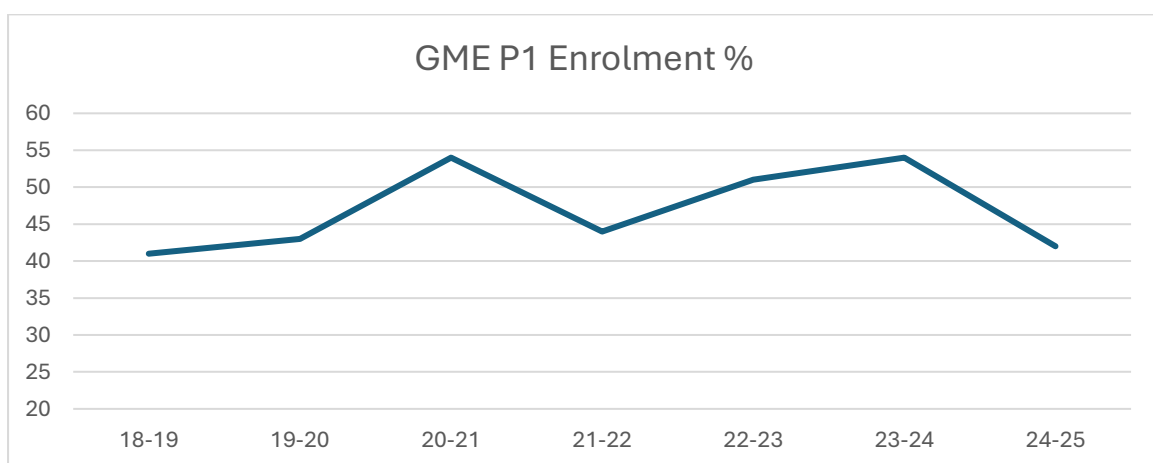
In total, the one-year reduction in roll for 2024-25 is equivalent to 12%. The percentage of learners in GME primary remains static at 47%.

The table below provides a breakdown of the percentage split of enrolment between GME and EME for each school for the August 2024 P1 intake. Two locations do not currently offer GME and two schools had no P1 intake.

School	2024-25%	
	GME	EME
Balivanich	48	52
Breasclete	0	0
Castlebay	50	50
Daliburgh	50	50
Eoligarry*	-	100
lochdar	83	17
Laxdale	22	78
Leverhulme	0	0
Lionel	100	0
Pairc*	-	100
Sgoil a Bhac	34	66
Sgoil an Rubha	11	89
Sgoil an Taobh Siar	87	23
Sgoil nan Loch	40	60
Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath	60	40
Shawbost	50	50
Sir E Scott	83	17
Stornoway Primary	31	69
Tong	40	60
Uig	100	0
Total	42	58

2. P1 Enrolment over time

The graph below shows the change trend in GME P1 enrolment in Comhairle schools over the last seven years. The high point in 2020-21 related to the first introduction of the Gaelic First policy.



3. Factors Affecting GME Enrolment in 2024-25

Schools were surveyed post-enrolment to gather information about factors that were identified as affecting the uptake in 2024 and this was combined with central analysis of data to establish causes for change. They are summarised below in the interests of supporting the service to address such issues for future enrolment.

Roll Drop

In a small number of schools, an overall drop in roll has adversely affected the total enrolment into GME, although not particularly the ratio of one language to the other.

Nursery Deferrals

2024 saw a significant increase in parents exercising their new right to defer entry to school if their child has not achieved the age of five by the point of school starting (Children born between January and mid-August for the enrolment year). Overall, nursery deferrals increased nearly threefold in 2024 compared to the previous year, which was the first year it was available (16 in 2023 to 48 in 2024). Of these deferrals over 60% of them were expected to enrol into GME. This equates to 24% of the expected GME intake in 2024 choosing to defer entry for a year, significantly reducing the overall percentage enrolment.

Legacy Deferrals

The number of children who deferred entry in 2023 and then enrolled in 2024 was significantly smaller and contained a very low number of GME pupils so the legacy deferrals from 2023 now entering school did not increase the overall enrolment with any significance but did increase English Medium enrolment.

Sibling Tracking & Childcare

Analysis of data from schools indicates that a large number of the enrolling children that had been in a Sgoil Àraich/Gaelic Nursery setting and subsequently enrolled in English Medium already had older siblings in English classes and had enrolled in Sgoil Àraich as that was the only childcare available pre-school. This is an audience we need to target more systematically to continue into GME P1, particularly where they have had the benefit of at least two years of Gaelic provision in Sgoil Àraich, sometimes more.

ASN

There was a higher than usual rate of children in the 2024 intake with assessed Additional Support Needs (ASN), some of them requiring significant support and specialist interventions. Where these needs relate to literacy difficulties, it is almost always the case that parents will make the decision to enrol in English. We have more work to do to both increase GME ASN capacity and to support parents of children with assessed needs to make that choice confidently.

EAL

Related to the above, three schools reported higher numbers of children in the 2024 P1 entry where English was an additional language (EAL) to their native or home language. As such, where families are focusing on securing their core learning of English, they will not make the choice for GME.

Social Factors

Analysis of the information from several schools indicated that parents fed back to them that decisions on language stream are affected by what class their friends enrol into. This can result in a 'contagion' effect where multiple GME enrolments are lost as clusters of parents follow collective decisions to enrol in a certain class based on friendship groupings. This factor can sometimes benefit GME where that is the trend but can also work against in some settings. This is another area where targeted communication and support can be strengthened.

Family Circumstances

On a small number of occasions, decisions about language stream for enrolment has been determined by stated family circumstances. This has included views that the family does not feel it has a sufficient support structure to support a child learning through the medium of Gaelic or can be because of matters relating to childcare beyond school and the wider needs and capacity of families.

Parental Perceptions of Service Quality

In some cases, parents have been reported to make decisions about enrolment based on perceptions held about the quality of learning and teaching that their child will receive by selecting a certain language stream. This can include issues relating speculation about quality of previous experience of other children or families and can relate to the whole school journey, including secondary, and not just P1. This can often be a matter of perception rather than actuality but it reinforces the critical importance of making sure quality is maintained as well as quantity and that this is clearly shared and conveyed to parents. Parents advocating to other parents is a very important factor.

4. Actions to Address Growth in GME for 2025

The following actions are being planned at undertaken at both department and school level with the intention to increase enrolment in 2025.

- Meeting with HTs and Heads of School to share current enrolment information and to plan and prioritise school-based work to promote GME enrolment.
- Best practice sharing between schools to ensure successful work is shared with all, including examples relating to creation of a strong Gaelic culture, promotion of support for parents and innovating engagement sessions.

- Working with ELCs/Sgoiltean Àraich to track predicted enrolment for 2025 and to engage early, well before enrolment, with families considering GME. This year, that work will need to include forecasting of possible deferred entries.
- Checking in on an individual basis with all the registered deferrals from 2024 to have certainty about their enrolment intentions for 2025.
- Expansion of La na Gàidhlig in November 2024 to become Seachdain na Gàidhlig and to accordingly expand the promotion and benefits of GME and bilingualism across this week. (We also mark the national *Seachdain na Gàidhlig* but it's position in late February each year means it's too late to tie in with promotion of GME enrolment, which opens a month earlier)
- Recording and promotion of new testimonials and positive messaging for GME and bilingualism, including development of new materials for social media platforms.
- More systematic and targeted use of the 'Splaid' promotional vans across the islands to target enrolment information and support to ELCs, Pàrant is Pàiste groups, childminders etc.
- Co-ordinated work with officers and partners involved in all aspects of Gaelic promotion and delivery to have a co-ordinated approach to promotion of GME enrolment.
- Promotion and reinforcement of Gaelic First policy and review of information and questions on the Comhairle's enrolment form to ensure that the policy is clear about default GME enrolment.
- Develop more use of 'Stay and Play' sessions in Gaelic where parents can stay and receive information have questions answered.

It is recognised that the audience of parents with children in the 0-3 age group are a major priority audience for Gaelic Medium promotion and there are separate actions for this. The actions above relate to aims to increase the P1 enrolment in 2025 specifically.