



Brentwood
Tomonie
Banavie
Fort William
PH33 7LX

Date 16th April 2011

Dear Rosemary

Re: Proposal to Close the Special Class at Banavie Primary School

I am writing to you with the deepest concern about the proposal to close the special class at Banavie Primary School. This is a service which is needed in the area.

We specifically moved to this area so that our daughter who has special needs could attend this school, which she will be doing as of August this year. I believe it is misleading of you to state in your consultation paper that "there are no further pupils waiting in the wings for the Banavie Special Class" (3.1).

I have also been in contact with the paediatric services in the Lochaber area and they have also highlighted to me that there are many other children with special needs who will be requiring this service. They also agree it would be a great loss to the children and the wider community. There are many years of expert knowledge at the school and this loss would be devastating to the children as well as a resource to other primary school teachers.

Although you have considered that not all children with special needs can be educated in mainstream education and we agree inclusion is good for society, but it does not always meet the need of the individual. The needs of the child should always be put first. You state in the proposal that "facilities do exist elsewhere within Highland and in Scotland" (2.1) but you do not highlight where. I question this, as is it because these other places are so far away you do not want them mentioned as more people will complain about children having to travel great distances such as Inverness. If this was the case I certainly would not accept this and would expect a special needs teacher employed in this area for my daughter. Due to her needs she has to be close to

her home not traveling great distances. I will not accept her social, emotional and physical well-being being affected in any way. She has the same human rights as the rest of us.

This leads me onto the savings you highlight. My daughter will require special needs teaching therefore I will be looking to the education department to fund this service. Not just for her but for the other children who shall be attending the school to meet all their rights to have an education. Have you also considered the costs of traveling, fuel and vehicle up keep, this may out way the cost of have a special class teacher. As the facility is already in the school, there is not going to be any saving in this area. The school building still has to be maintained. I have often found that the fabric of a building is not the main issue but its the teachers and their support, encouragement and attitude that is the vital part.

You also highlight that in the school it “may however be possible to retain the area as a learning support base” (6.2) but again this seems misleading. There are no fixed decision on this but its a leading statement with no direct answer.

You state in your proposal that “highland council has approved proposal to build two new primary school complexes.....additional support needs will be considered” (2.2). What does this really mean? Is this a pacifier to reduce the amount of complaints or is this because today’s legislation you legally have to consider disabled access etc or if you believe this is a current need for special classes then surely Banavie Primary School should remain open until such time as the new special class is opened.

I feel that at times this consultation proposal is misleading therefore you will not obtain the correct amount of complaints from parents, professional and the general public. I strongly believe that the special class at Banavie Primary School should remain open in order to meet the needs of children with special needs and their carers. You would be doing the community a great injustice if you close it.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Ridland

cc Bill Clark Councillor
Eddie Hunter Councillor
Maxean Durham Head Teacher Banavie Primary School
Hugh Fraser Education Director
Charles Kennedy MP