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AREA EDUCATION OFFICE
SKYE & LOCHALSH

- 1 DEC 2010

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3 Brogaig
Staffin
IV51 9JY
30 November 2010Mrs Rosemary Bridge
Education Officer, Skye & Lochaber
Area Education Office
Portree
Isle of Skye

Dear Mrs Bridge

Staffin Primary School: Gaelic School with English Medium class

At our Parent Council meeting last night very strong feelings were expressed concerning the staffing/pupil ratio that will be in place from August 2011. Our projected roll would mean that we would lose 0.5 FTE of a teacher in Gaelic Medium at Staffin Primary.

We were under the impression that changing to Gaelic School status would be to our advantage. However, it appears to be of no apparent advantage to us – the reverse appears to be the case.

Concerns raised are:

- It would be a farce encouraging pupils to join Gaelic Medium when their needs will not be met in a multi-composite P1-P7 in one class.
- P1-P2 should have full Gaelic immersion but we are looking at a situation where, in a P1-P7 class, this will be impossible as older pupils have more English education. This is disadvantaging children at the most important stage of their early education in the learning of Gaelic, as many come from non-Gaelic speaking homes.
- Some parents have already expressed that they will move their children to another school providing Gaelic education, outwith our community, if teacher numbers dropped.
- Staffin Community Trust has recently won the prestigious Gaelic Community award in recognition of the standard of Gaelic being used in daily living in the community, of which our school is a vital component and contributor. Instead of sustaining this level of excellence we would now appear to be facing a diminished Gaelic education provision in our local school.
- Gaelic is of a very high standard at Staffin School and teachers at Portree High School often comment on that when our pupils arrive at High School. We, as parents, are very concerned that this would no longer be the case. Expecting one teacher to achieve this high level of competence and successfully deliver the Curriculum for Excellence is a major concern and also unrealistic.

- If we were to be a successful Gaelic school, we need to have Gaelic spoken by all who come into contact with our pupils during the school day. At present CCR time, Art, Class Music and PE are taught through the medium of English, diluting the Gaelic input.

If we are to follow through with the plans to change the status of Staffin Primary to a Gaelic Medium School, we strongly implore that you consider these valid concerns of parents.

We are totally supportive of our head teacher and the teaching staff and would like staffing levels to remain as they are at present.

Yours sincerely,

Morag McLean
Secretary Staffin School Parent Council
On behalf of Staffin Primary Parent Council

CC: Hugh Fraser, Director of Education
Drew Millar, Councillor
Ian Rennick, Councillor
Hamish Fraser, Councillor