



## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

### EDUCATION CULTURE & SPORT SERVICE

#### CONSULTATION REPORT ON THE PROPOSAL TO CHANGE PROVISION OF EDUCATION IN STAFFIN

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal to:

**Change the provision of education in Staffin Primary School, by making the school a Gaelic Medium School with an English Medium provision.**

Having had regard (in particular) to:

- Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period
- Oral representations made to it (by any persons) at the public meeting held in Staffin on 9 November 2010
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education report

This document has been issued by the Highland Council under the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Following representations from The Parent Council of Staffin Primary School requesting that consideration be given to the establishment of a dedicated Gaelic school with an English medium class at Staffin Primary School, Members of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, at their meeting on 16 September 2010, agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to alter the provision of education in Staffin Primary School. It was agreed that the consultation would be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 1.2 **Appendix 1** is the original consultative paper and provides full details of the above proposal.

## 2.0 The Statutory Consultation Process

- 2.1 The Council's agreed procedures with regard to statutory consultation on changes to education provision were followed. The consultation began on Monday 4 October 2010. The consultative paper (**Appendix 1**), along with a letter inviting the submission of written comments to the Acting Area ECS Manager - Ross, Skye and Lochaber by Friday 3 December 2010, was made available to:
- a) Parents of pupils and pre-school pupils in Staffin Primary School
  - b) Head Teacher and staff of Staffin Primary School
  - c) P4-7 pupils attending Staffin Primary School
  - d) Staffin Primary School Parent Council
  - e) Community Councils for Staffin, Kilmuir and Uig
  - f) The local Members of Parliament and the Scottish Parliament
  - g) Chair and Vice-Chair of ECS Committee and local Members
  - h) Ward Manager for Eilean a Cheo
  - i) HMIE
  - j) Trade Union representatives
- 2.2 By way of advertisement, the availability of the consultative paper and date of public meeting were also brought to the attention of other individuals and community groups.
- 2.3 One written submission was received (**Appendix 3**).

## 3.0 Issues raised in written submission

- 3.1 There was one written representation received and this was from Staffin Primary School Parent Council. The group expressed concerns about staffing/pupil ratios that it is proposed will be in place for August 2011. The current projected school roll would mean the loss of a 0.5 FTE teacher in Gaelic Medium. The view expressed was that there would be no advantage in altering the status of Staffin Primary School, if full Gaelic immersion at the infant stages was to be removed.

- 3.2 A further concern raised was the dilution of Gaelic input in Staffin Primary School, by employing Class Contact Reduction Teachers who deliver certain curricular areas through the medium of English.
- 3.3 Some parents have already indicated that they will move their children to another school which provides Gaelic Medium Education, if teacher numbers are to drop by 0.5 FTE in Staffin Primary School.
- 3.4 The school is viewed by parents as a vital component and contributor to the high standard of Gaelic used in daily living in the Staffin Community. It was felt that any reduction in staffing would result in a diminished Gaelic education provision in the local school.
- 3.5 Parents expressed concerns that if, for half of the week, pupils were to be taught in a composite P1-7 class, it would be unrealistic to expect successful delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence through the medium of Gaelic.

#### **4.0 Issues raised at the public meeting**

- 4.1 The Minute of the public meeting at Staffin Primary School is attached as **Appendix 2**. The wider issue of a need for more housing in the Staffin area was viewed as having an impact on the school roll. It was stated that information had been received indicating that Staffin was not deemed to be a priority area and the Council was urged to consider this matter.
- 4.2 Two members of the audience wished to bring Kilmuir Primary School into the discussion. A query was also raised about the medium and long term plans for primary schools outwith Portree.
- 4.3 The proposal to make Staffin Primary School a Gaelic School was welcomed but it was stated that it was important to ensure that two full-time teachers were retained in order to support the Council's policy on immersion at the early stages.
- 4.4 A parent wished to know if there would always be English Medium provision at Staffin.
- 4.5 A member present was supportive of the proposal for a Gaelic School with an English Medium class, but said that perhaps the time had come to be more militant to ensure the survival of the Gaelic language.

#### **5.0 Highland Council's response to the written and oral representations**

- 5.1 Given that there is uncertainty about the Council's stance regarding housing in the Staffin area, it was stated that this matter would be explored and feed back provided.

- 5.2 The public meeting was to discuss the consultation relating to Staffin Primary School only and queries relating to Kilmuir Primary School should be addressed to the Acting Area ECS Manager after the meeting.
- 5.3 The observations made in relation to staffing ratios were considered to be valid and would be given further consideration at a later date.
- 5.4 English Medium provision in Staffin Primary School would continue, as stated in the consultative paper.
- 5.5 All responses would be given due consideration, as per the consultative paper and there would always be a choice for parents.

**6.0 Summary of issues raised by HMIE and the response offered by the Service**

- 6.1 A copy of the HMIE report is appended at **Appendix 4**.
- 6.2 Observations raised within the HMIE report can be summarised as thus:
- The proposal to change Staffin Primary School's status from an English medium school with Gaelic medium provision, to a Gaelic medium school with English medium, has some potential to provide educational benefit to children.
  - In the Gaelic medium classes, children's self esteem may be improved as a consequence of the recognition of the status of their spoken language.
  - It is not clear from the proposals what the wider educational benefits would be for the children presently in Staffin Primary School.
  - The Council may wish to make clearer what impact the change of provision will have on aspects of learning and teaching, such as instruction by specialist teachers in English, to children in the Gaelic medium classes.
  - The Council should clarify to what extent Gaelic medium pupils will learn and be taught through the medium of Gaelic, should the falling school roll result in a decrease in staffing provision and should the pupils in the Gaelic medium classes continue to be taught in English in some aspects of the curriculum.
  - It is not yet clear how the benefits of language immersion for pupils in the Gaelic medium classes will be greater should the proposals be implemented.

6.3 The Service's response to these issues is included within section 10.

## **7.0 Review of proposals following consultation period**

7.1 Following receipt of written representations received by Highland Council and consideration of oral representations made at public meetings held during the consultation period, officials reviewed the proposals.

7.2 The feedback from the consultation was considered by Council officials to ensure that the Council met the requirements of the 2010 Act.

7.3 Having reviewed the feedback from consultees, officials concluded that the basis of the proposal remained. As a result, the recommendation to the ECS Committee on 10 March 2011 will be to alter the provision of education in Staffin Primary School, by making the school a Gaelic medium School with an English medium provision.

## **8.0 Alleged omissions or inaccuracies**

8.1 There were no omissions or inaccuracies that were notified to Highland Council during the consultation period.

## **9.0 Legal issues**

9.1 The Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, throughout this statutory consultation.

9.2 As provided for in section 1 of the 1980 Act, it is the duty of the Council to ensure adequate and efficient provision of school education within Highland, such education to be directed towards the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of children or young persons to their fullest potential (Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000). That said, as with all Council duties, the Council has a duty to make arrangements to secure best value and in securing best value, the Council is required to maintain an appropriate balance between, inter alia, the quality of its performance of its functions and the cost to the authority of that performance (Local Government in Scotland Act 2002, section 1). In coming to any decision the above factors should be taken into account.

## **10.0 Conclusion**

10.1 The proposal to alter the provision of education in Staffin Primary School by making the school a Gaelic Medium School with an English Medium provision was universally accepted.

10.2 However there were other issues raised which, although not strictly relevant to the proposal under consideration, merit comment from the perspective of future educational provision at Staffin Primary School

- The Council will further explore staffing levels at Staffin Primary School to take account of the benefits of language immersion for pupils in Gaelic medium classes.
- Staffing allocations for Class Contact Reduction will be arranged to ensure, wherever possible, that pupils are taught through the medium of Gaelic.
- The Council will endeavour to extend links with the wider community of Staffin in order to provide opportunities for pupils to use spoken and written Gaelic in a range of environments, including music, drama and dance.

10.3 On the basis of the feedback received, it is recommended that Staffin Primary School becomes a Gaelic medium school with an English medium provision.

## 11.0 Recommendations

11.1 It is therefore recommended that:

- the provision of education in Staffin Primary School is altered, by making the school a Gaelic medium School with an English medium provision, from 15 August 2011.



**Hugh Fraser**  
**Director Education Culture & Sport**

**16 February 2011**

### **Background Papers included:**

- Appendix 1:** The Consultative Paper
- Appendix 2:** Minute of public meeting at Staffin Primary School
- Appendix 3:** Submissions received
- Appendix 4:** HMIE Report