

Caledonian Economics



Putting our children's education first

SUSTAINABLE
SCHOOL ESTATE
REVIEW

The Highland Council

**Sustainable School Estate Review
Confidential Briefing Paper for Elected Members
Summary of initial data gathering stage**

Portree High School
Associated Schools Group

11 December 2013

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1 Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

1.1 Key Questions

This study poses three questions in the context of the Portree ASGs:

1. Are there any remote isolated locations where a school will need to be located (“red lined”) so long as demand exists?
2. Are there any opportunities to change the configuration of primary schools to:
 - a) combine existing smaller schools to create viable, sustainable Primary Hub schools of three or more classes? Previous work carried out as part of SSER identified this being the ideal minimum size for a primary school;
 - b) separate GM and EM provision, allowing appropriately sized centres to be created where ‘total Gaelic immersion’ seems an entirely reasonable option;
3. Are there any opportunities to create a 1000 pupil secondary, this having been identified in previous studies as being the optimum size for a secondary school, or to create a 3-18 campus?

In addition, it considers where other investment could be targeted to address specific issues of suitability and condition in the school estate.

1.2 Answers to the Key Questions

These questions are answered as follows:

Question 1: “Yes”, it is suggested that the following schools are “red lined”:

Elgol Primary; Raasay Primary School; Sleat Primary.

Question 2 (a): “Yes”, as follows:

- it is suggested that the idea of a new school at Dunvegan is explored. This would encompass the current catchments of Dunvegan and Knockbreck schools, the northern part of the Carlost catchment and all or part of the Edinbane catchment and could be integrated with other community initiatives and facilities in the area;

Question 2 (b): “Possibly”, as follows:

- around the Kilmuir/Staffin area English medium numbers are at or near the levels that might be considered unsustainable. Consider,

moving the catchment boundaries to help sustain numbers or make one school English medium and one Gaelic;

Question 3: “No”, the geography of the area suggests that the existing configuration of secondary schools will be required for the foreseeable future.

Additional issue: the above suggestions would address most of the concerns about Condition, Suitability and Sustainability in the ASG with the exception of Broadford where adaptations are required to address building issues there.

2 Introduction

2.1 Introduction

This briefing paper has been prepared by Caledonian Economics Ltd on instruction of the Highland Council. It presents the findings of the initial ‘Scoping and Fact Finding’ stage of a review of the school estate in the Portree High School Associated Schools Group (ASG).

Work has been carried out as part of the Council’s Sustainable School Estate Review (SSER) which seeks to identify initiatives and developments to improve the sustainability of the school estate by ‘putting education first’, and targeting investment where it will deliver the maximum educational benefits to the greatest number of pupils, dealing with the buildings in the poorest condition and improving operational efficiency where possible.

2.2 Rural Schools

All the primary and secondary schools in the ASG are classed as ‘rural’ in terms of Scottish Government guidance and legislation.

Options for their future are being considered in this briefing for the purpose of information gathering and analysis only, and no recommendation to proceed to statutory consultation will be taken forward without due consideration by the council.

3 The School Estate¹

3.1 Secondary School Condition and Suitability Rating

The up to date Condition and Suitability Rating for Portree High School is shown below in Figure 3-1.

Figure 3-1

School	Condition	Suitability
Portree High School	A	A

3.2 Primary School Condition and Suitability Ratings

Suitability and Condition ratings for the schools as assessed by Highland Council following government guidelines are shown below.

Figure 3-2 – PRIMARY SCHOOLS, CONDITION AND SUITABILITY²

	Condition	Suitability
Broadford	C	C
Carbost	C	B
Dunvegan	C	B
Edinbane	C	C
Elgol	C	B
Kilmuir	C	C
Knockbreck	C	C
MacDiarmid	B	B
Portree	B	B
Raasay	B	B
Sleat	C	C
Staffin	B	A
Struan	C	B

This indicates that the poorest primary school buildings (in terms of Suitability and Condition, as defined) are Broadford, Edinbane, Kilmuir, Knockbreck, and Sleat.

Updated Condition and Suitability ratings will be published when available.

3.3 Assumptions Regarding Housing development

The published school roll forecasts are based on certain assumptions regarding the rate and extent of housing development in the catchments. Details are provided on the Council website at

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/highlandfactsandfigures/schoolrollforecasts.htm>

¹ Condition and Suitability ratings are revised periodically to reflect changes in the buildings. The information used here is based on the most recent publicly available data and may not reflect all developments in the buildings since the data was last published on the Scottish Government website.

² Condition and Suitability ratings as published in the Scottish Government Core Facts, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/4199>

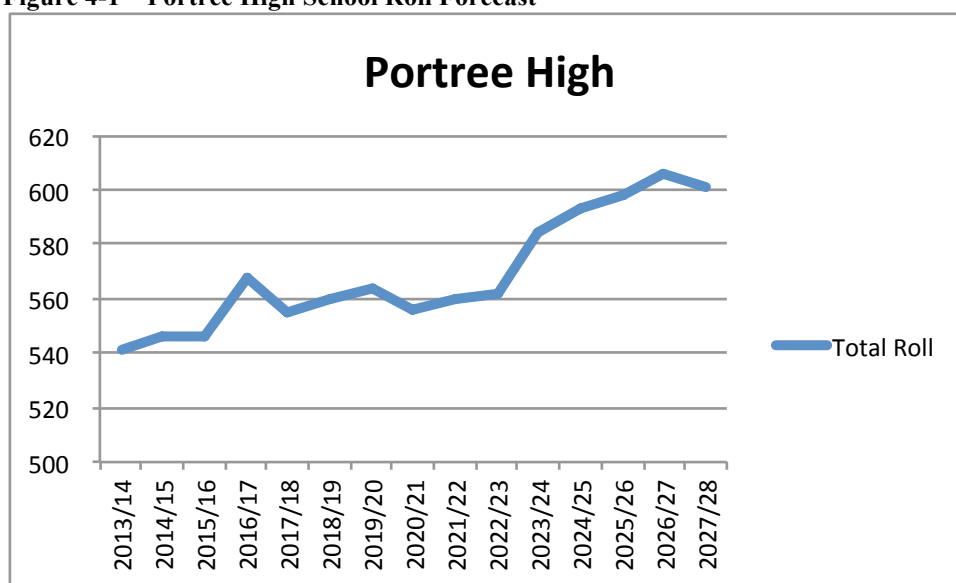
4 Roll Forecasts – Portree High School

4.1 Introduction

An analysis of forecast pupil numbers has been carried out to understand future trends. These are presented on the basis of the official figures published by the Council and are derived from the pupils enrolled in the schools at the point of the September 2013 roll ‘census’.

The forecast for Portree High School is shown below in Figure 4-1. This shows the position including the effect of rezoning Kyleakin Primary School from Portree High School ASG to the Plockton High School ASG which happened in August 2013.

Figure 4-1 – Portree High School Roll Forecast

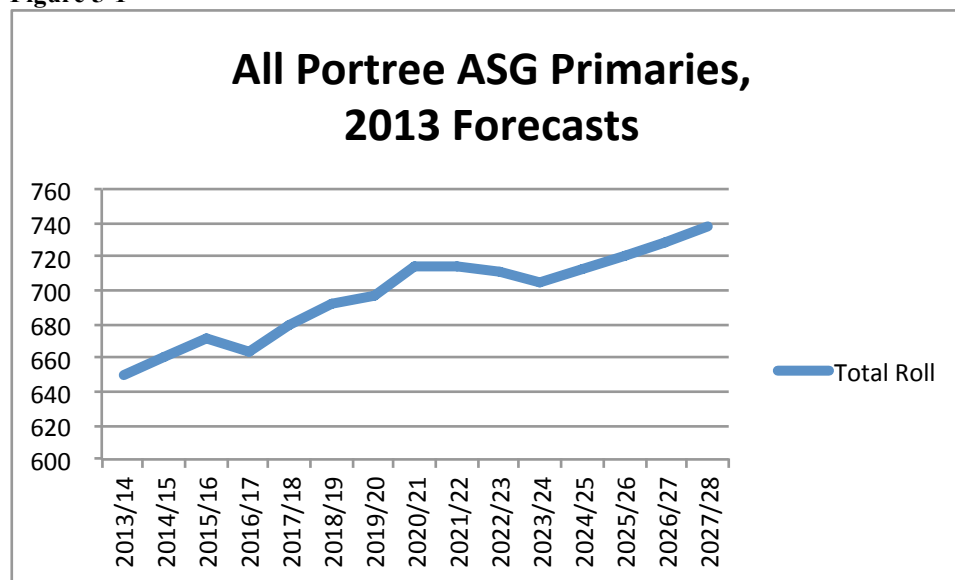


5 Roll Forecasts – Primary Schools

5.1 High Level Observations

The aggregate roll of the primary schools in the ASG is shown below in and Figure 5-1, and figures for the individual schools are shown in the following sections.

Figure 5-1



The forecasts in Figure 5-1 and subsequent sections are based on the September 2013 pupil census. The most recently available rolls and class breakdown are shown below in Figure 5-2. There have been some pupil movements in the intervening period since then so in a small number of cases there are minor differences in the totals shown below in Figure 5-2 and the numbers shown in Figure 5-1 and the subsequent graphs. Where there has been movement the 2013 census-based figures are shown below in brackets in the 'Total' column.

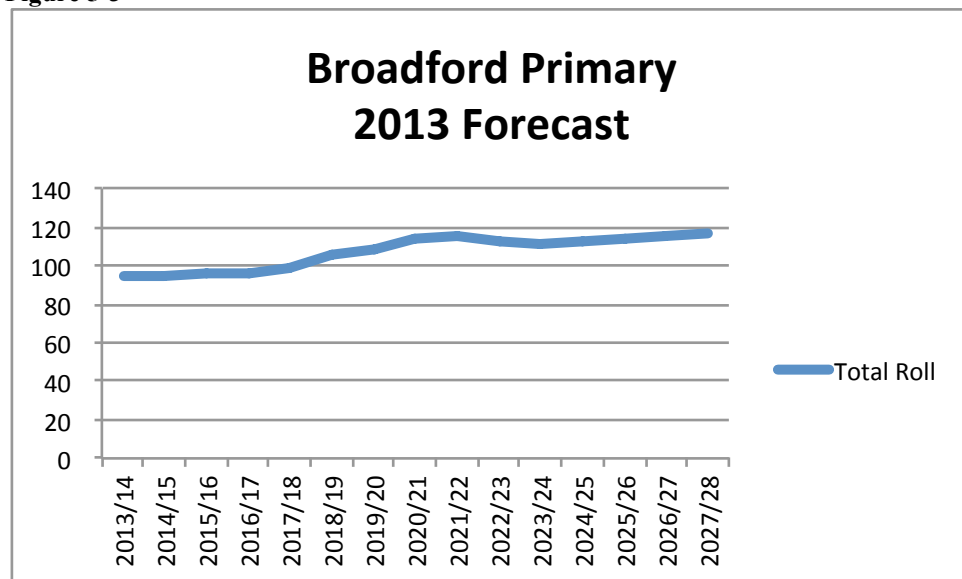
Figure 5-2

	EM1	EM2	EM3	EM4	EM5	EM6	EM7	GM1	GM2	GM3	GM4	GM5	GM6	GM7	TOTAL
Broadford	4	6	3	9	7	12	7	7	6	5	5	10	6	5	92 (94)
Carbost	3	6	4	3	5	8	3								32
Dunvegan	3	7	5	7	4	5	6	2	1	2	0	5	2	2	51 (53)
Edinbane	1	0	0	2	0	3	0								6
Elgol	1	5	3	2	5	0	2								18
Kilmuir	2	4	2	1	3	1	1	7	4	2	3	4	3	2	39
Knockbreck	0	0	0	1	1	1	1								4 (3)
Macdiarmid	6	6	11	10	11	5	3								52
Portree	18	21	22	16	32	27	26	11	13	9	14	10	12	21	252 (261)
Raasay	2	1	0	1	4	1	1								10
Sleat	4	5	2	0	1	2	1	7	4	14	5	5	6	3	59
Staffin	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	3	3	1	4	18
Struan	1	0	0	1	0	1	3								6

5.2 Portree High School ASG

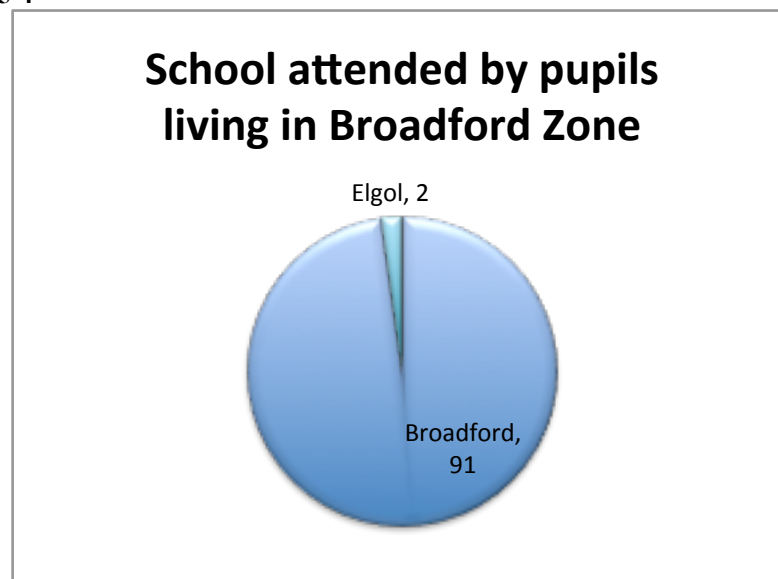
5.3 Broadford Primary School

Broadford Primary school is situated in Broadford and serves an area bounded by the coast to the north, Loch Ainort, Loch Slapin and Loch Eishort to the west and south, Glen Arroch to the east and towards Kinloch to the southeast where it is bounded by the adjacent Sleat Primary School catchment area. In August 2013 it had three English classes and two Gaelic. Its roll is forecast to rise slightly from its present level of around 94 as shown below in Figure 5-3.

Figure 5-3

Around 93 pupils live in the Broadford Primary catchment zone, of whom 91 attend Broadford Primary and two attend Elgol as shown below in Figure 5-4 and the summary table in Figure 5-26.

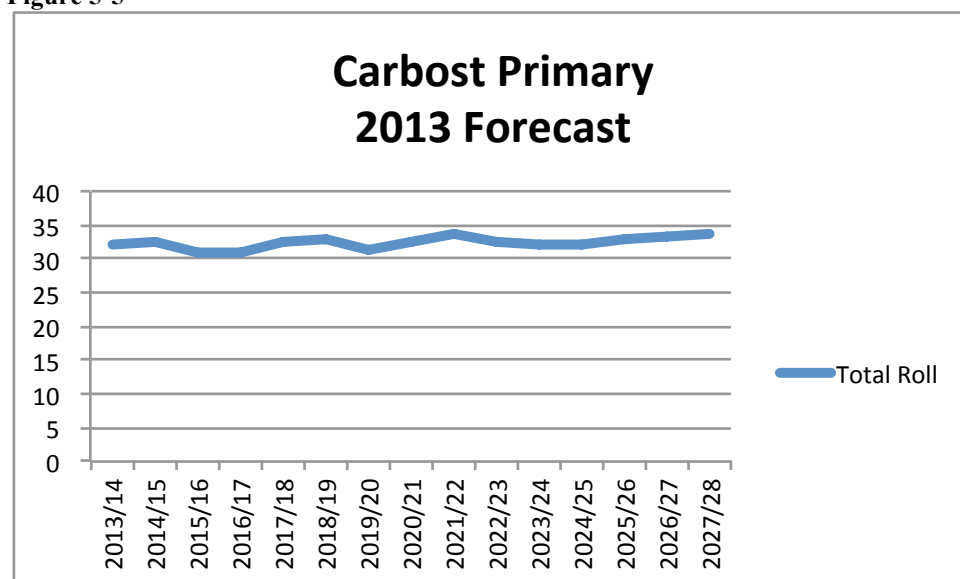
Figure 5-4



5.4 Carbost Primary School

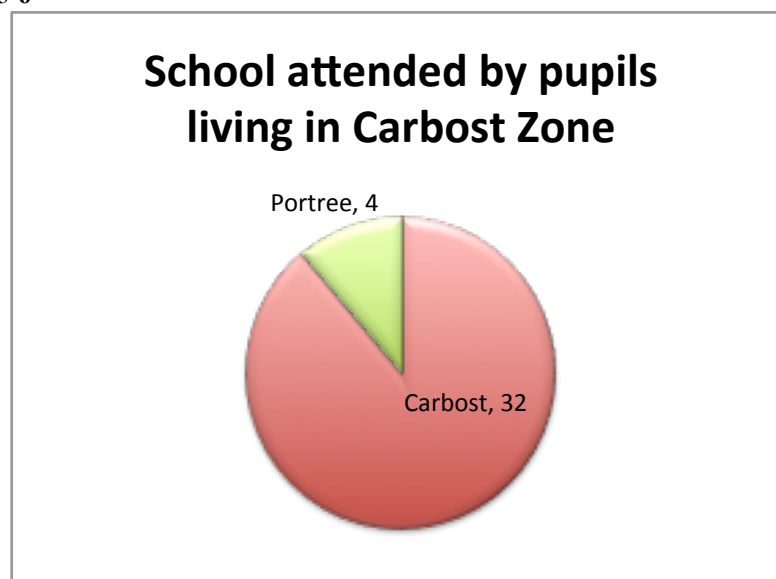
Carbost Primary school serves a large part of the western side of Skye. It has around 32 pupils in two English classes. Its roll is forecast to remain stable as shown below in Figure 5-5.

Figure 5-5



Around 36 pupils live in the Carbost Primary catchment zone, of whom 32 attend Carbost Primary and four attend Portree as shown below in Figure 5-6 and the summary table in Figure 5-26.

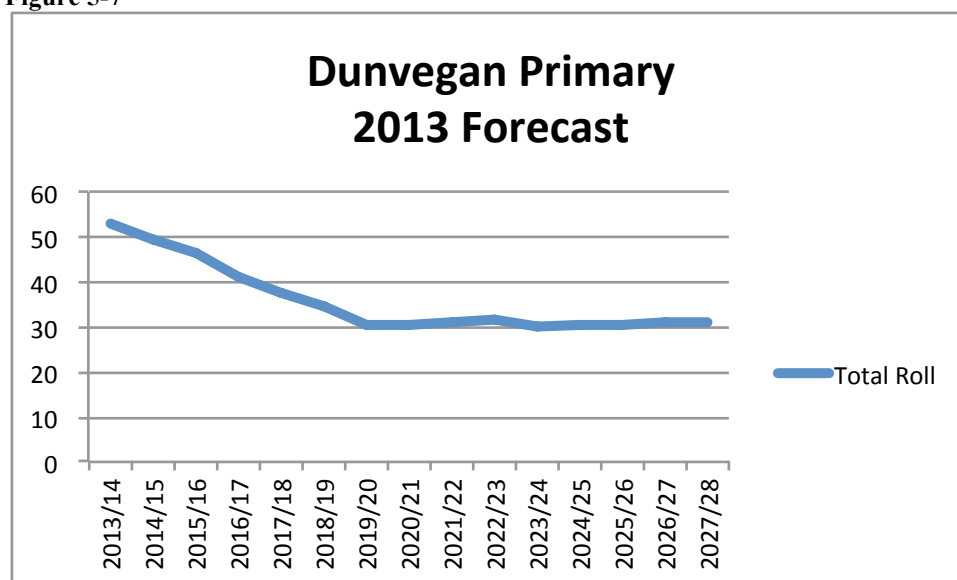
Figure 5-6



5.5 Dunvegan Primary School

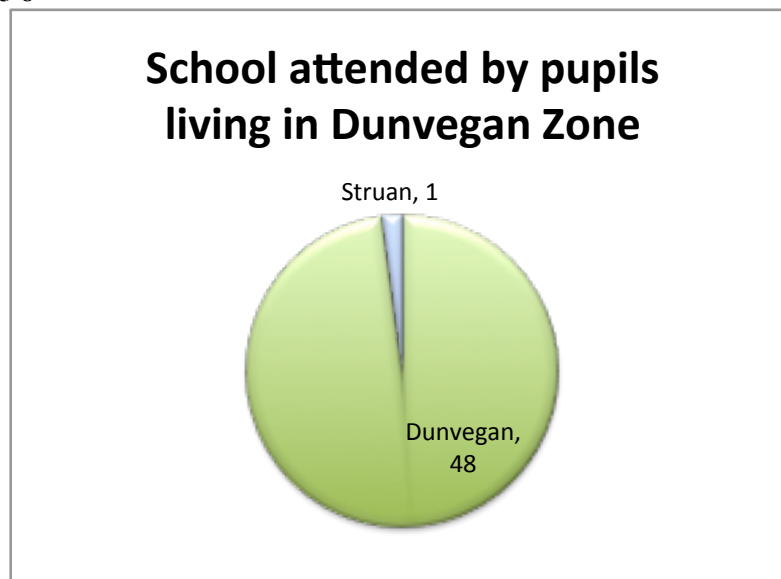
Dunvegan Primary school serves a large part of the north western side of Skye including the Duirnish peninsula. It has around 53 pupils in two English classes and one Gaelic class. Its roll is forecast to fall as shown below in Figure 5-7.

Figure 5-7



Around 49 pupils live in the Dunvegan Primary catchment zone, of whom 48 attend Dunvegan Primary and one attends Struan as shown below in Figure 5-8 and the summary table in Figure 5-26.

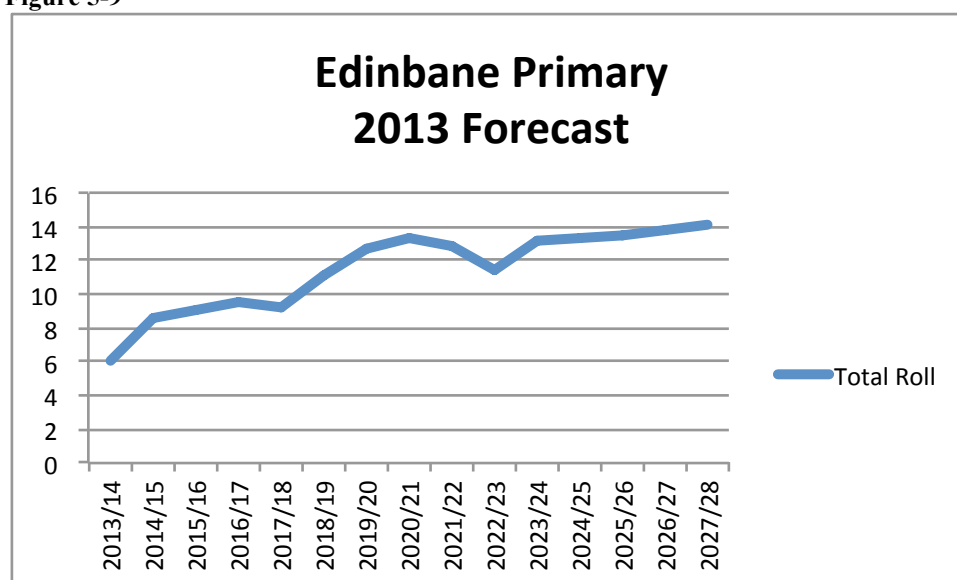
Figure 5-8



5.6 Edinbane Primary School

Edinbane Primary school serves the village of Edinbane and surrounding area around Loch Greshornish. It is roughly equidistant (9 miles) between Dunvegan and MacDiarmid Primary Schools. It currently has 6 pupils in a single English class. Its roll is forecast to rise as shown below in Figure 5-9 although this is very sensitive to placing request assumptions because more than half the pupils in the school's zone attend other schools by parental choice.

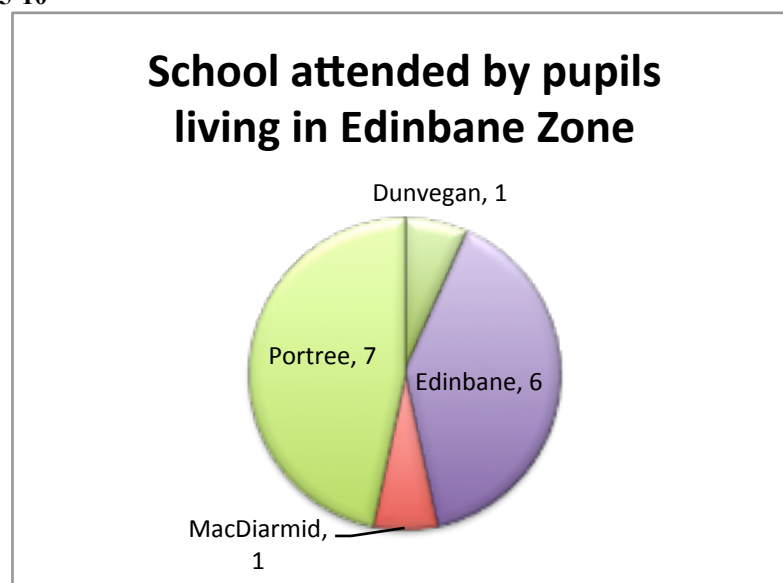
Figure 5-9



Around 15 pupils live in the Edinbane Primary catchment zone, of whom six attend Edinbane Primary, seven attend Portree and one attends each of

Dunvegan and MacDiarmid as shown below in Figure 5-10 and the summary table in Figure 5-26.

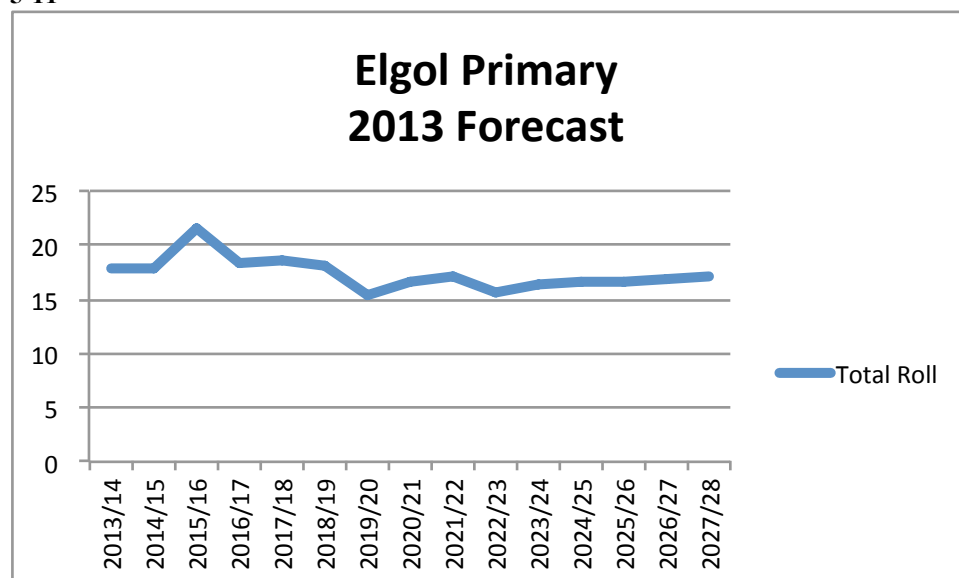
Figure 5-10



5.7 Elgol Primary School

Elgol Primary school serves the village of Elgol and other settlements in the peninsula formed by Loch Scavaig and Loch Slapin. It is roughly 15 miles by road from the nearest school (Broadford). It currently has around 18 pupils in a single English medium class. Its roll is forecast to fall as shown below in Figure 5-11.

Figure 5-11

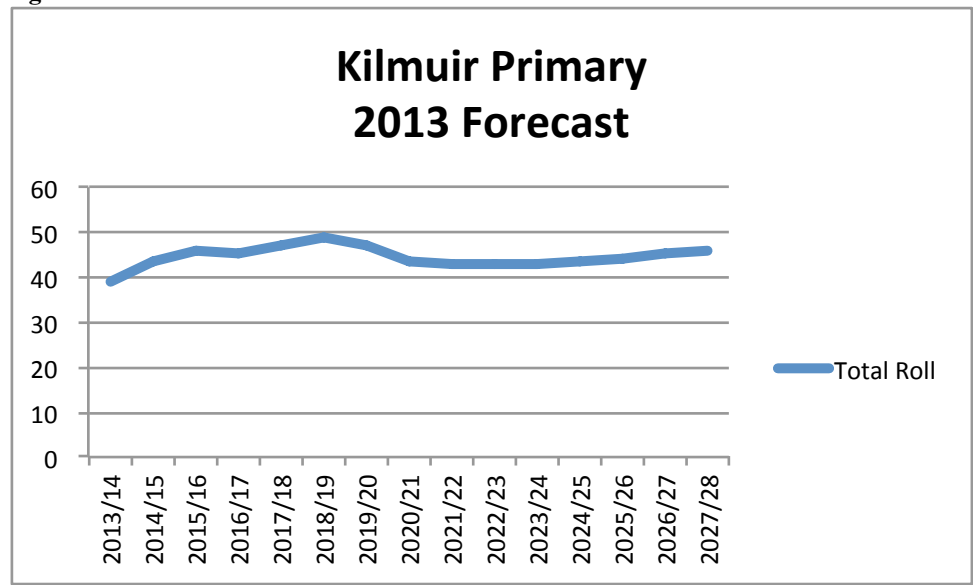


At the time the data was gathered all pupils living in the Elgol catchment zone attended the school.

5.8 Kilmuir Primary School

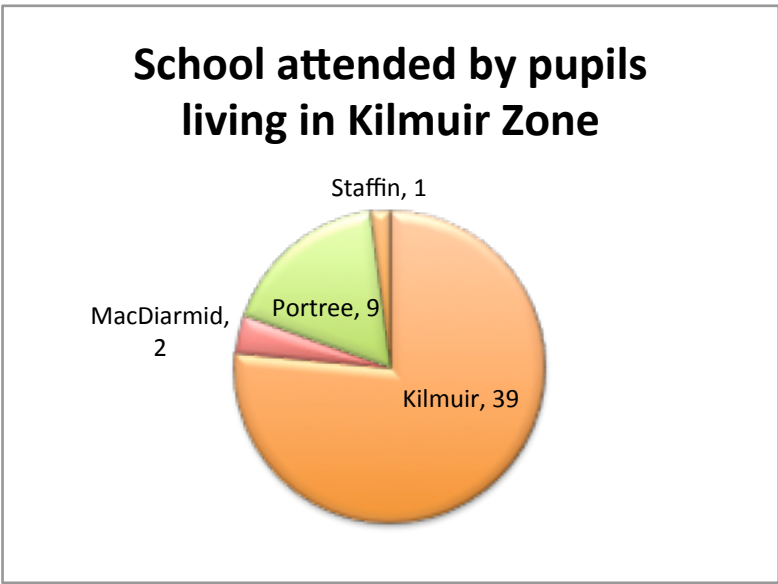
Kilmuir Primary school serves the northern and western parts of the Trotternish peninsula and includes the catchment of Uig Primary School which is currently “mothballed”. It currently has around 39 pupils in two Gaelic classes and a single English class. Its roll is forecast to rise as shown below in Figure 5-12.

Figure 5-12



Around 51 pupils live in the Kilmuir Primary catchment zone (including the zone of the mothballed school at Uig), of whom 39 attend Kilmuir Primary, nine attend Portree and two attend MacDiarmid and one attends Staffin as shown below in Figure 5-13 and the summary table in Figure 5-26.

Figure 5-13



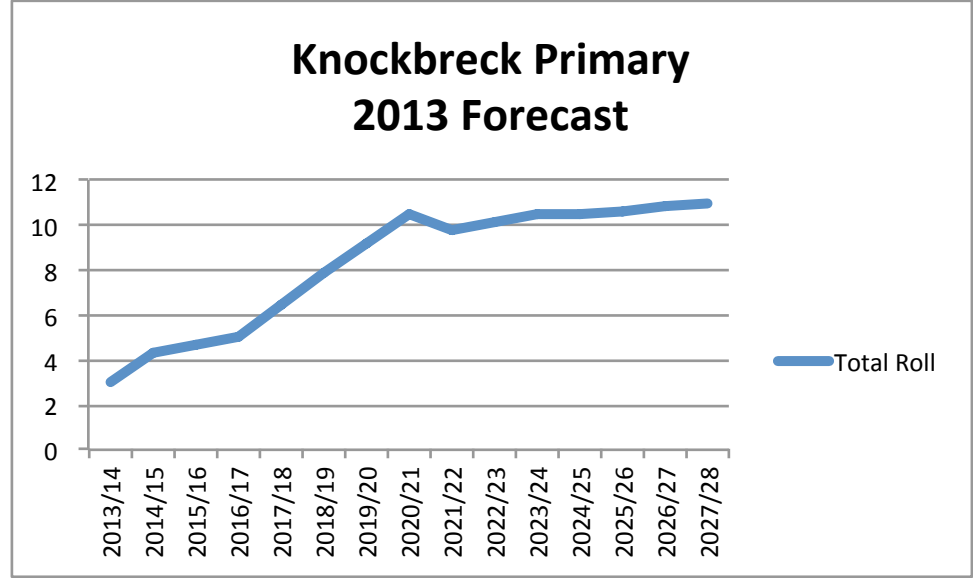
5.9 Knockbreck Primary School

Knockbreck Primary School serves the Waternish peninsula. It is situated towards the farther end of the peninsula and is beyond the main settlements.

It is roughly 11 miles by road from either of the two nearest schools (Dunvegan and Edinbane).

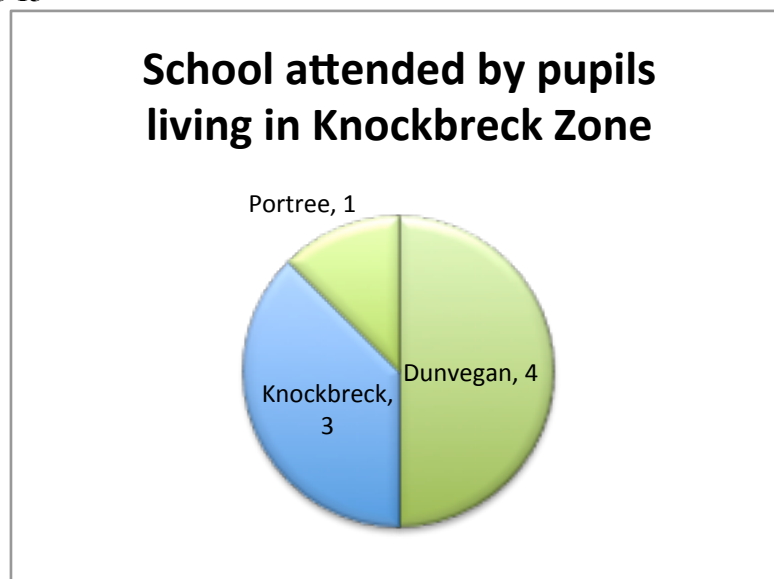
Its roll is forecast to rise as shown below in Figure 5-14 although as with any very small school the forecast is highly sensitive to assumptions on placing request choices, birth rates, and the nature of - and purchasers of - new housing.

Figure 5-14



At the time the figures were produced around eight pupils lived in the Knockbreck Primary catchment zone of whom three attended Knockbreck, four attended Dunvegan and one attended Portree as shown below in Figure 5-15 and the summary table in Figure 5-26.

Figure 5-15



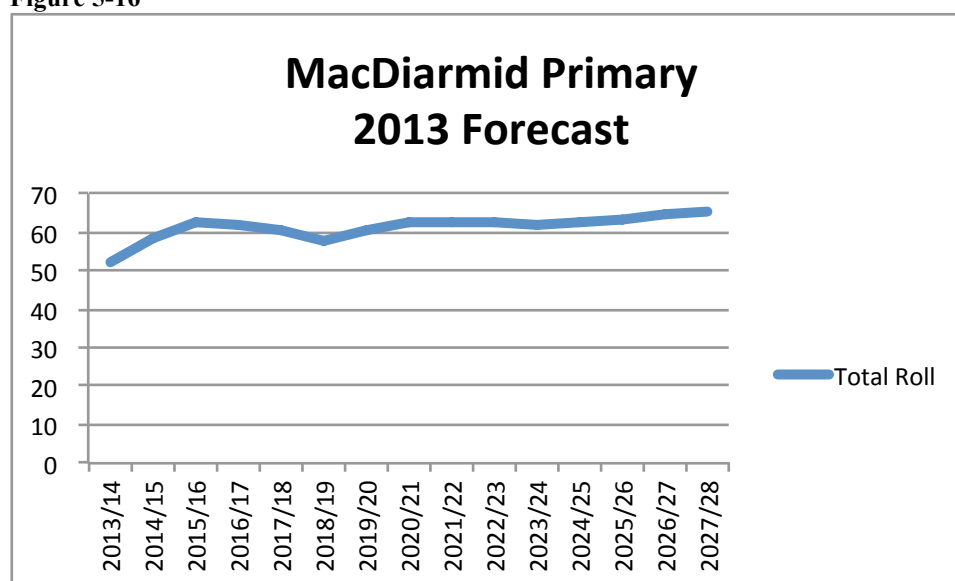
5.10 MacDiarmid Primary School

MacDiarmid Primary school is situated within the community of Skeabost and serves the area around Loch Snizort Beag including Borve, from Glen Hinnisdal to Loch Treaslane.

It is approximately 9 miles from Edinbane Primary School and 5 miles from Portree Primary School.

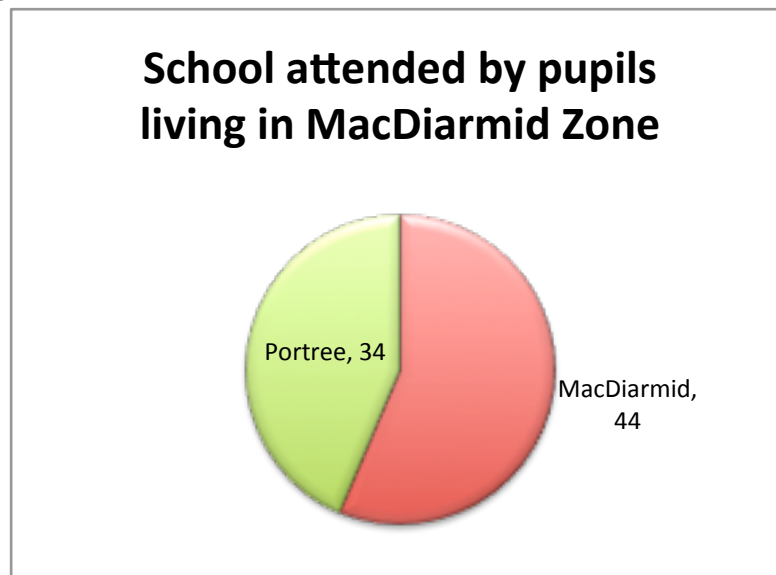
Its roll is forecast to rise from its present day level of around 50 to between 60 and 70 by 2027 as shown below in Figure 5-16.

Figure 5-16



At the time the figures were produced around 78 pupils lived in the MacDiarmid Primary catchment zone of whom 44 attended MacDiarmid and 34 attended Portree by parental choice as shown below in Figure 5-17 and the summary table in Figure 5-26.

Figure 5-17

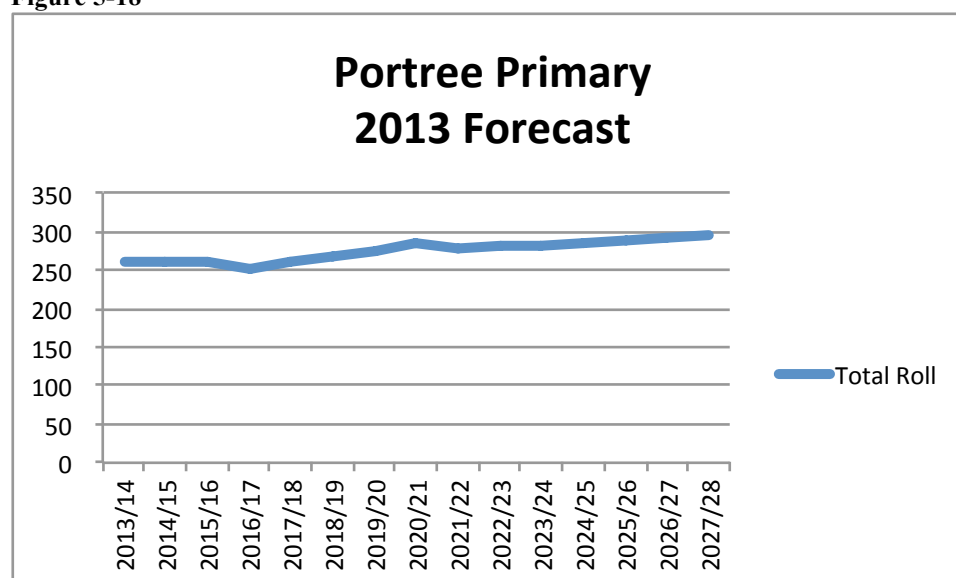


5.11 Portree Primary School

Portree Primary school serves Portree and a large part of the Eastern side of Skye, from Loch Leathan to Loch Ainort. It is 17 miles from Carbost primary School, 27 miles from Broadford 17 from Staffin and 5 from MacDiarmid.

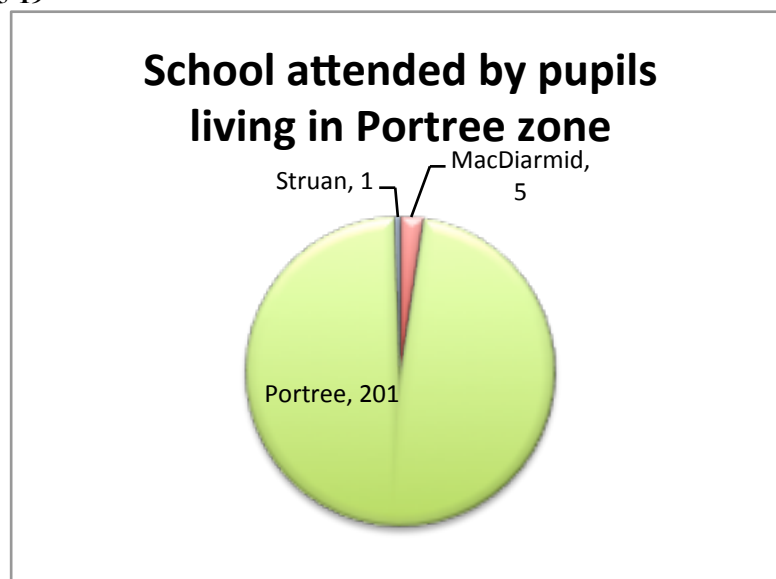
Its roll is forecast to rise to around 300 by 2027 as shown below in Figure 5-18. However this does not take into account that part of its roll will move to the new Gaelic school when it opens.

Figure 5-18



At the time the figures were produced around 207 pupils lived in the Portree Primary catchment zone of whom 201 attended Portree, five attended MacDiarmid and one attended Struan by parental choice as shown below in Figure 5-19 and the summary table in Figure 5-26.

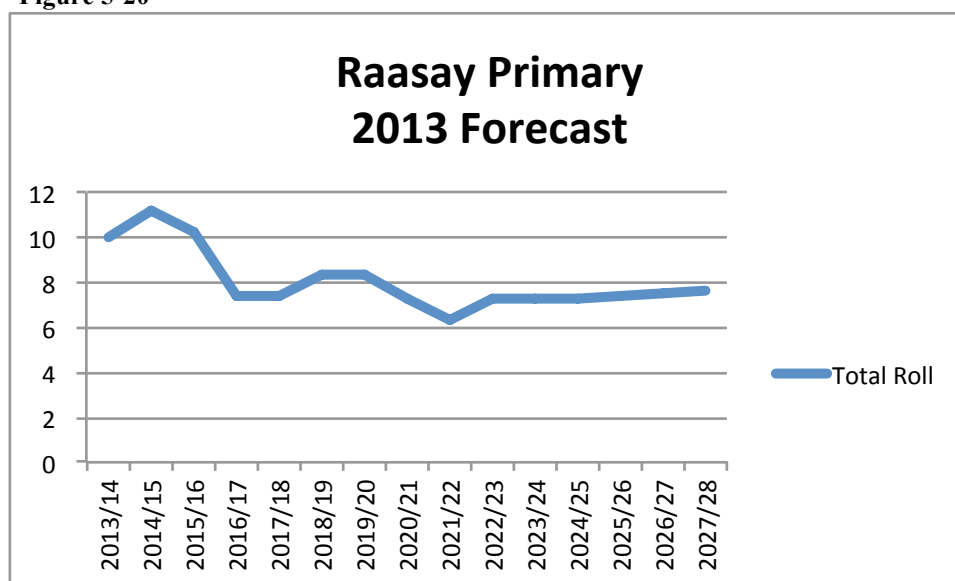
Figure 5-19



5.12 Raasay Primary School

Raasay Primary school serves the island of Raasay. Its roll is forecast to fall and remain in single figures. All pupils in the catchment attend the school.

Figure 5-20

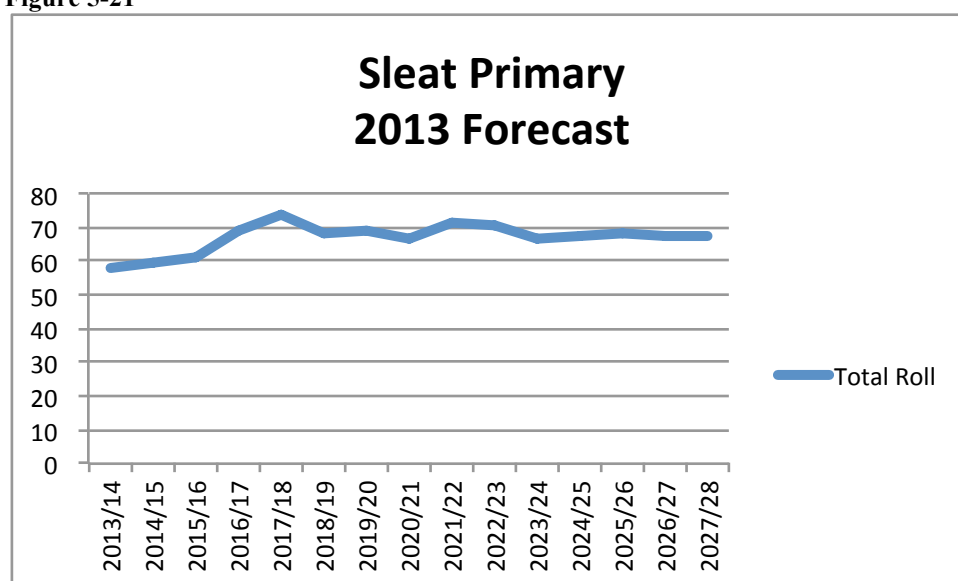


5.13 Sleat Primary School

Sleat Primary school serves the entire Sleat peninsula in south west Skye from near Kinloch on the A851 and south of Glen Arroch (excluding Kylerhea) to its extremity at Aird of Sleat.

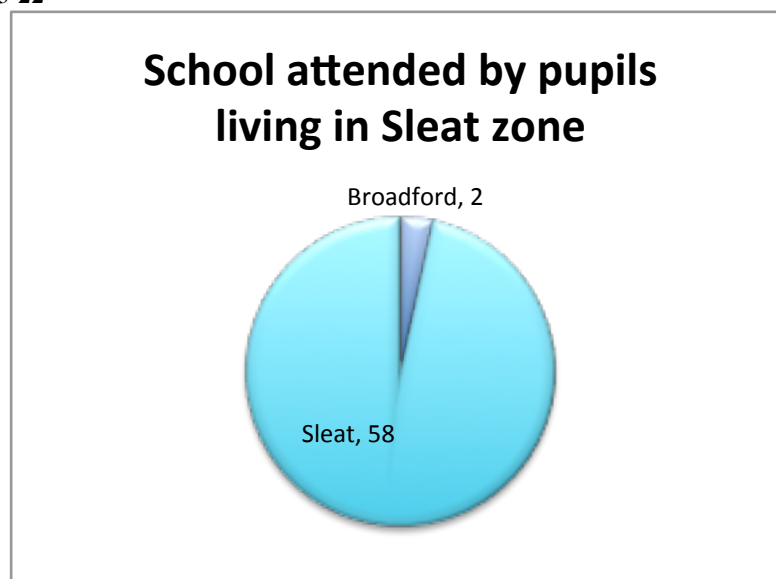
It has around 44 pupils in three Gaelic classes and 15 pupils in a single English class. Its roll is forecast to rise slightly as shown below in Figure 5-21. These forecast allow for pupils arising from the new Kilbeg housing development, which has recently been granted outline planning permission.

Figure 5-21



At the time the figures were produced around 60 pupils lived in the Sleat Primary catchment zone of whom 58 attended Sleat and two attended Broadford by parental choice as shown below in Figure 5-23 and the summary table in Figure 5-26.

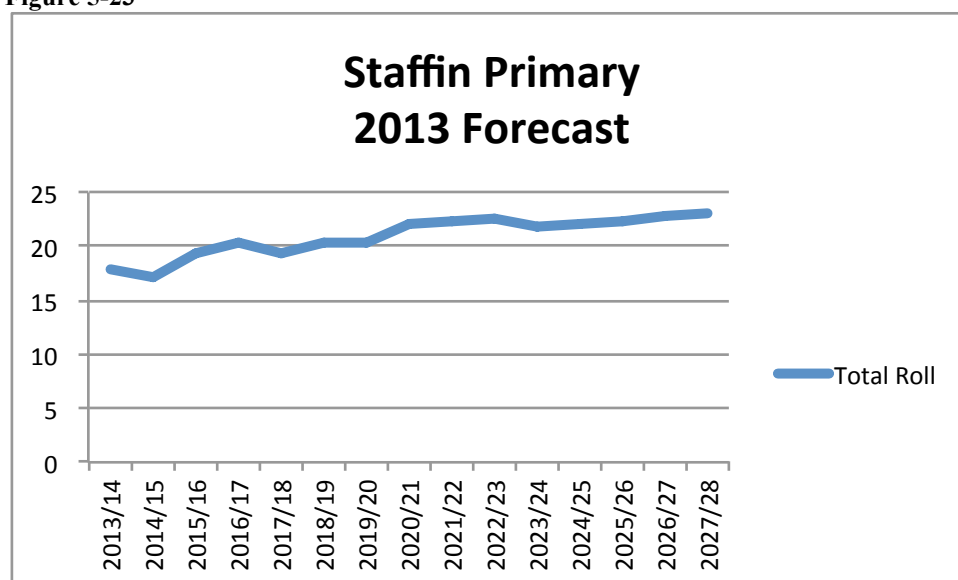
Figure 5-22



5.14 Staffin Primary School

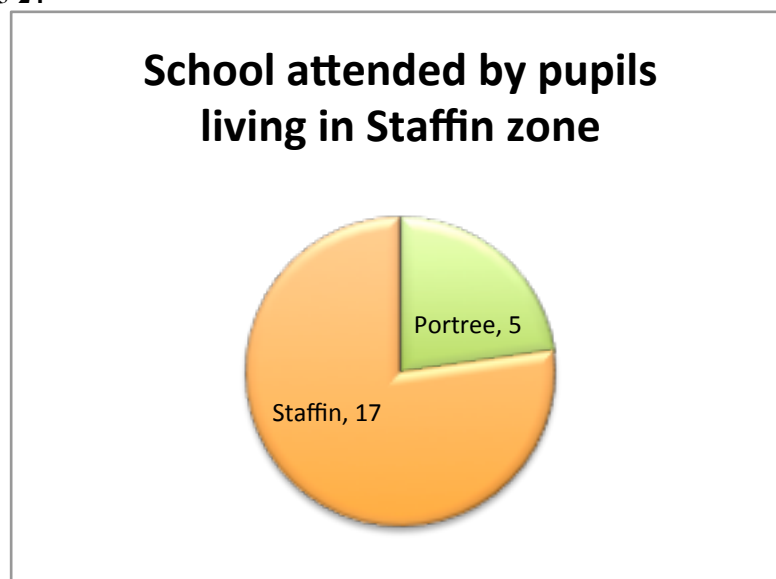
Staffin Primary school serves the eastern side of the Trotternish peninsula, a stronghold of the Gaelic language. It has around 18 pupils, most of whom are in a Gaelic class. Its roll is forecast to rise slightly as shown below in Figure 5-23.

Figure 5-23



At the time the figures were produced around 22 pupils lived in the Staffin Primary catchment zone of whom 17 attended Staffin and five attended Portree by parental choice as shown below in Figure 5-24 and the summary table in Figure 5-26.

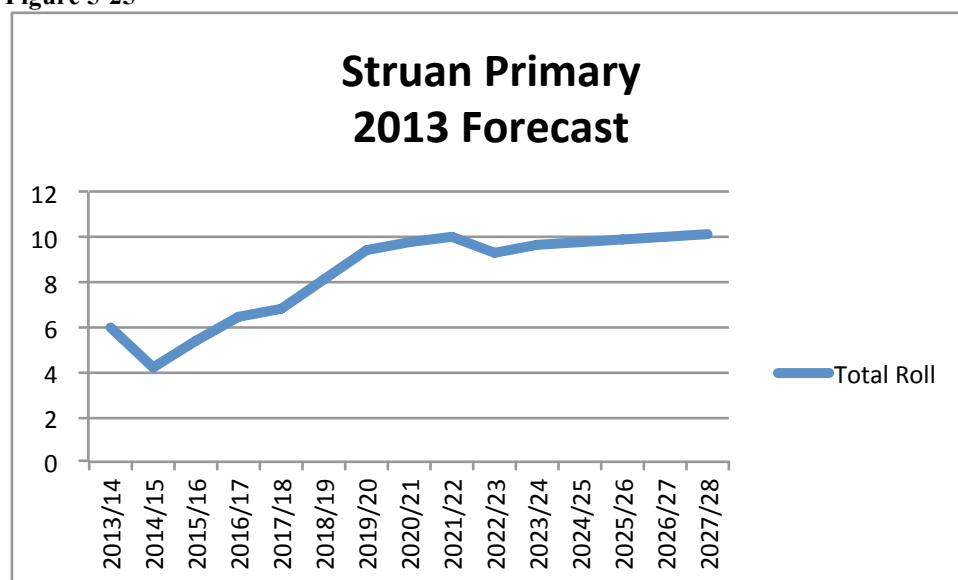
Figure 5-24



5.15 Struan Primary School

Struan Primary school serves the area around Bracadale roughly from Ose to Drynoch and along the B885. Its roll is forecast to rise to around 10 as shown below in Figure 5-25.

Figure 5-25



All pupils living in the Struan zone attend the school.

5.16 Out of zone placements – all Portree ASG Primary Schools

The number of pupils in each catchment and the schools they attend are summarised below in Figure 5-26. Of the 650 pupils included in the table, 569³ or 88% attend the school for the catchment within which they live.

There could be a range of reasons for this including the availability of Gaelic medium in some schools, convenience of schools relative to parents' places of work, location of nursery schools or other childcare factors. Another explanation could be that some families are taking the view that the size of their catchment school is not ideal (either too large or too small) and are choosing a viable alternative where it exists.

MacDiarmid sees the largest number of pupils attending a school in another zone (Portree).

Kilmuir and to a lesser extent Staffin and also lose numbers into Portree. In the case of Kilmuir it is interesting to note that those from the former Uig zone probably pass very close to MacDiarmid en route to Portree.

The schools which see the largest proportion of outward placing requests are Edinbane and Knockbreck which both see more than half the local pupils attend other schools.

Figure 5-26

School Zone Living In	School Attended													Total
	Broadford	Carbost	Dunvegan	Edinbane	Elgol	Kilmuir	Knockbreck	MacDiarmid	Portree	Raasay	Sleat	Staffin	Struan	
Broadford	91				2									93
Carbost		32							4					36
Dunvegan			48										1	49
Edinbane			1	6				1	7					15
Elgol					16									16
Kilmuir						24			2			1		27
Knockbreck			4				3		1					8
Kyleakin (Plockton)	1													1
MacDiarmid								44	34					78
Portree								5	201				1	207
Raasay										10				10
Sleat	2										58			60
Staffin									5			17		22
Struan													4	4
Uig ('mothballed')						15		2	7					
Total	94	32	53	6	18	39	3	52	261	10	58	18	6	650

³ counting the Uig zone as Kilmuir

6 Key Questions and Ideas

6.1 Key Questions

In the course of discussions with local elected members, school staff, Parent Council representatives, Community Council representatives and education managers, a number of questions have emerged that encapsulate the key issues within the ASG:

1. Are there any remote isolated locations where a school will need to be located (“red lined”) so long as demand exists?
2. Are there any opportunities to change the configuration of primary schools to:
 - a. combine existing smaller schools to create Primary Hub schools of three or more classes? Previous work⁴ carried out as part of SSER identified this being the ideal minimum size for a primary school;
 - b. separate GM and EM provision, allowing appropriately sized centres to be created where ‘total Gaelic immersion’ seems an entirely reasonable option;
3. Are there any opportunities to create a 1000 pupil secondary, this having been identified in previous studies as being the optimum size for a secondary school, or to create a 3-18 campus?

Each of these questions is addressed in the following sections.

⁴ “Educational Benefits Analysis Report – Size” May 2012

7 Should any schools be “red lined”?

7.1 Conditions that would justify ‘red lining’ a school

It has been suggested that the following criteria are applied to identify any remote isolated locations where a primary school will always need to be located so long as demand exists:

1. locations where there is a single primary school on an island which requires a ferry service which is likely to be disrupted by the weather;
2. locations where there is a single primary school on a peninsula which is not accessible by land and which requires a ferry service which is likely to be disrupted by the weather;
3. locations which are accessible only by a road which is frequently impassable in winter;
4. locations that are so distant from any nearest alternative primary school that it would be unreasonable for primary age pupils to travel daily taking into account the nature of the roads, risk, and uncertainty about travel time.

7.2 Suggested list of ‘red line’ schools

After applying these criteria to the primary schools in the ASG under consideration, it is suggested that the following schools are “red lined”:

- Elgol Primary, possibly on the basis of Criteria 4. The 15 mile road to Broadford is single track. Although it crosses no difficult or high terrain, journey times can be unpredictable due to heavy traffic in the tourist season;
- Raasay Primary School (criterion 1);
- Sleat (Criterion 4 although only 14 miles from Broadford on a good road, the roads in the further reaches of its catchment (including Aird and the Toskavaig/Tarskavaig loop) are poor and are over 20 miles from the alternative).

8 Primary School Reconfiguration Options

8.1 Background

There are some settlements in the Highlands where a school will be needed for as long as there is a demand for it, by dint of location, isolation, and travel distance/time/risk to any alternative. The size of such schools would be dictated by the number of children in the settlement. There are several such schools in the Portree ASG, as discussed in the preceding section of this briefing paper.

Similarly, geography and demographics mean that across much of the Highlands it would not be practicable to create schools of a size that would be the norm in urban areas.

A study carried out as part of SSER⁵ considered whether there are any aspects of school life (teaching methods, staff development/support, relationship with the community) that are related to school size, and if there is a minimum critical size for a primary school below which it becomes increasingly difficult to make available the range of activities that would normally be expected.

The study concluded that the strategic direction should be to create primary schools that can maintain a stable, sustainable roll of at least three classes where it is reasonable and viable to do so after taking into account travel and community factors.

Many of the reasons for this conclusion are to do with the quality of interactions between staff and pupils, between members of staff, and between pupils in the classroom.

Council policy, in line with the national school estate strategy⁶ aspires to have schools that are 'fit for purpose' in terms of condition, suitability and sufficiency. Figure 3-2 shows the condition and suitability ratings for the schools, assessed according to the methodology prescribed in the Scottish Government 'Core Facts' guidance.⁷ Any option to reconfigure the schools should leave pupils in a building that is at least as good as their current school (in terms of Condition and Suitability) and should ideally be better.

8.2 Numbers of Classes in the Portree ASG Schools

Figure 8-1 below shows the number of classes within each school in the session 2013/14, distinguishing between English and Gaelic medium.

⁵ Report on a Workshop to Consider any Educational Benefits Related to Primary School Size, May 2012

⁶ Building Better Schools: Investing in Scotland's Future

⁷ Suitability Core Fact and Condition Core Fact

Figure 8-1

	ENGLISH MEDIUM							GAELIC MEDIUM				
Broadford	P1-3	P4-6	P6/7					P1-4	P4-7			
Carbost	P1-4	P5-7										
Dunvegan	P1-4	P5-7						P1-7				
Edinbane	P1-7											
Elgol	P1-7											
Kilmuir	P1-7							P1-4	P5-7			
Knockbreck	P1-7											
Macdiarmid	P1/2	P3/4	P5-7									
Portree	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P1	P2/3	P4/5	P5/6	P7
Raasay	P1-7											
Sleat	P1-7							P1/2	P3/4	P5-7		
Staffin	P1-7							P1-7				
Struan	P1-7											

Most of the schools on the island have fewer than three classes: only Broadford, Portree, MacDiarmid and Sleat (Gaelic) have three or more, and the English medium stream at Sleat is in a single class. It is suggested that Raasay and Sleat and Elgol are ‘red lined’ as described earlier.

8.3 Ideas and options emerging from the analysis

A number of ideas and options have been suggested within the two ASGs that would variously address some of the issues of class numbers, condition and suitability, and Gaelic immersion. These are:

1. create a new school in Dunvegan which would replace the existing Dunvegan Primary School, Edinbane, Knockbreck and Struan;
2. combine or realign the catchments of Staffin and Kilmuir and focus English medium education at one location and Gaelic medium in another. Alternatively, combine or realign the catchments of Staffin and Kilmuir to provide more balance between the English medium and Gaelic medium rolls. It has been suggested that this could be achieved by moving the zone boundary towards Duntulm;
3. develop the facilities at Broadford primary school to address the condition and suitability ratings, taking advantage of any opportunities that might exist to develop this into a multi-service community hub through the possible relocation of the Broadford Service Point and existing sports/play facilities in the immediate vicinity of the school.

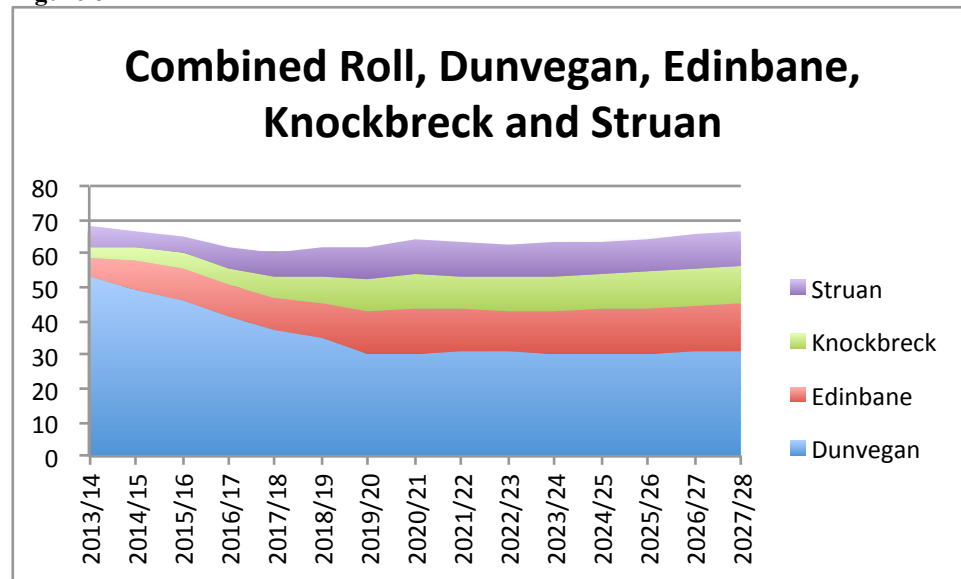
8.4 Create a new school in Dunvegan

8.4.1 Current Position and Forecasts

Rolls are forecast to remain broadly level in the four schools on the north west part of Skye as shown below in Figure 8-2. Each of the four schools

(Dunvegan, Edinbane, Knockbreck and Struan) has fewer than three classes within a single language medium.

Figure 8-2



Roll forecasts, as already noted, are made on the basis of assumptions for placing requests (based on historical patterns), birth rates, housing completion rates and pupils generated per household.

The Council's Planning and Development Services will provide additional commentary on the roll forecasts and will test the sensitivity of the forecasts to changes in the input variables across a range of scenarios. Analysis will also be carried out to develop a fuller understanding of the possible numbers in English and Gaelic medium pupils.

8.4.2 Conclusions

Thus on the basis of these forecasts, the roll of a combined school would be in the range of 60 to 68 pupils if the four catchment zones are combined in total.

The catchment boundaries of adjacent schools could be adjusted as part of this reconfiguration, where it makes sense to do so, for example by zoning the southern part of the Struan catchment to Carbost school, and the eastern part of the Edinbane catchment to MacDiarmid.

Rezoning part of Edinbane and part of Struan as described would reduce the number of in-zone pupils slightly, but experience elsewhere in the Highlands indicates that a new school can be appealing to parents and this could stem the drift of pupils towards Portree.

On the basis of current levels of up take of Gaelic medium education in the area, this means that a new school would probably have three English medium classes and one Gaelic medium.

Thus, it would appear that combining the four catchments and creating a new school would create a very viable and sustainable educational establishment that would provide an excellent focus for the community and would remove any uncertainty over the future of education provision in the area for a great many years into the future.

This option would have the following advantages for pupils:

- all pupils would benefit by being in a school with more than the ideal minimum number of classes for the foreseeable future;
- all pupils would benefit from buildings in a better condition than the existing ones;
- every pupil would have access to the full range of modern facilities on site without the need to travel during the school day;
- traffic management in and around the site would be much improved from the situation in any of the current buildings;
- better access to visiting specialists at the new school;
- all pupils would have the benefit of school lunches cooked freshly on site, and served in good quality dining facilities;
- other modern infrastructure for communication and information technology including smart whiteboards in classrooms and digital signage in reception areas.

8.5 Staffin and Kilmuir

At the time of writing, Kilmuir had around fourteen pupils in a single English medium class and around 25 in two Gaelic medium classes. The classroom used for the P4-7 Gaelic class is small. The roll of Kilmuir is forecast to grow and the current trend is for the proportion choosing Gaelic to increase. Kilmuir is approaching the level where congestion becomes a concern.

Staffin had around 15 pupils in a single Gaelic medium class and around two in a single English medium class. A statutory consultation was carried out in 2010 to change the provision of education in Staffin Primary School to a Gaelic Medium School with an English Medium provision.

There are three placing requests out of Kilmuir, two to Portree and one to Staffin (also nine to Portree and two to MacDiarmid from the Uig catchment). Staffin (and Uig) are significantly closer to than MacDiarmid than to Portree. There were no placing requests into Kilmuir.

Five pupils living in the Staffin zone attended Portree Primary School. This may be for a number of reasons including convenience relative to parents' work or childcare arrangements.

8.5.1 Concentrate EM in One School

With a prospect of English medium pupils falling towards single figures for the whole of the Trotternish peninsula, it is appropriate to consider whether it would be in pupils' best interest to concentrate English medium provision at one of the schools. Logically, this would be at Kilmuir which has the larger English medium roll, provided the buildings could be brought up to a standard that would allow the additional pupils can be accommodated in suitable facilities. This idea would have the further benefit of creating the conditions whereby the goal of Gaelic 'total immersion' could be delivered at Staffin.

Taking the idea a stage further, there would be merit in considering concentrating all Gaelic medium provision at Staffin (i.e. rezoning GM at Kilmuir to Staffin), creating a group of around 41 pupils. This would place all the Gaelic medium pupils on the peninsula in a 'total immersion' setting and would therefore have the potential to further strengthen Gaelic in this stronghold of the language. Representations made during the consultation in 2010 expressed concerns about the impact of falling roll numbers and the negative impact that would result from a reduction teacher entitlement below two full time teachers. Sustaining the pupil roll would as a consequence sustain teacher numbers.

This would clearly mean longer travel distances for some pupils, however the majority of pupils at Kilmuir are already entitled to school transport because of the difficulty in establishing safe walking routes to the school.

Even if English medium provision is concentrated in one of the schools, it is conceivable that English medium numbers will remain at the same low overall level which, it could be argued, is barely sustainable. A growing tendency may then emerge for families to choose to send pupils to the nearest English medium alternatives (MacDiarmid or Portree) on the basis that these schools would offer wider social groups and various educational benefits, with the possible result that English medium education on the peninsula could eventually become non-existent.

8.5.2 Move zone boundaries

A different means of easing pressure at Kilmuir would be to move the zone boundary between Staffin and Kilmuir northwards to Duntulm. This would move a small number of pupils from English Medium in Kilmuir to Staffin, relieving some of the pressure on space at Kilmuir and improving the sustainability of the small EM class at Staffin. However the size of the EM roll in each of the schools would remain a concern.

It is suggested that these ideas are discussed with local communities to establish their viability and acceptability.

8.6 Creation of separate GM and EM Schools in Portree

The current approved Highland Council Gaelic Plan includes a commitment to “*establish a partnership approach with the Scottish Government to deliver new standalone Gaelic Primary Schools in Fort William and Portree*”.

A decision has been taken to build the new Gaelic primary on the site of the hostel, and to create new hostel accommodation, probably in the former Elgin hostel building next to the High School.

9 Secondary School Reconfiguration Options

Background studies carried out as part of SSER have indicated that, where possible, secondary schools should be of around 1000 pupils or more. Recognising always that staff will seek to do their very best for pupils whatever the circumstances, it is recognised that below this size it becomes increasingly difficult for the school management to meet pupils' expectations in terms of the range of subjects, levels and combinations that can be offered. It also becomes increasingly difficult to provide appropriate professional development opportunities for staff and for staff members to advance their career by moving to more senior positions within the school.

The combined roll of Portree High School and Plockton High School, the nearest by road, is around 900, and a school of this size could confer many of benefits identified. If starting from a 'blank sheet of paper', it might be thought that a single new school might be sited at a central location, perhaps around the bridge, in Broadford or around Auchtertyre. However two factors render this option impractical:

- the Council is committed to paying for Portree High School through a 30 year PPP which would be difficult to change;
- the size of the combined catchment would result in significant travelling distances for many pupils, potentially increasing the need for residential accommodation.

For these reasons it is concluded that there are no viable options to create a larger secondary school in the area.