

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

The proposal is that the Secondary School catchment areas of Kinlochleven High School and Lochaber High School be amended whereby St. Bride's Primary School, Onich, would in future be included within the catchment area of Kinlochleven High School

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS STATEMENT

THIS IS A CONSULTATIVE PAPER PREPARED IN TERMS OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY'S AGREED PROCEDURE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010

This paper sets out a proposal by Highland Council to change St. Bride's Primary School from being an associated primary for Lochaber High School to being an associated primary for Kinlochleven High School. If agreed the proposal would be implemented as soon as possible after the start of the new school session in August 2012.

Background

- 1.1 The catchment area for St. Bride's Primary School encompasses the communities of North Ballachulish and Onich, extending as far north as Corran Gardens (located in the vicinity of Corran Ferry).
- 1.2 The arrangements under which primary schools are designated as associated primaries for particular secondary schools are largely historic and sometimes reflect educational, administrative and transport arrangements that have been superseded. In the case of St. Bride's PS, the current arrangement is in many ways a leftover from County Council boundaries that were abolished in the 1970s. Prior to 1975 the communities of North Ballachulish and Onich were part of Inverness-shire County Council, from where pupils attended Lochaber High School in Fort William for secondary education. The communities of South Ballachulish/Glencoe were part of the Argyll County Council area and pupils from those communities attended Oban High School for secondary education. The administrative arrangements reflected transport arrangements in that travel between North and South Ballachulish was at that time made via the Ballachulish Ferry, which was replaced by a bridge in December 1975. Following local government reorganisation, also in 1975, South Ballachulish, Glencoe and Duror become part of the new Highland Region and the primary schools serving these communities were designated as associated schools for Kinlochleven High when that school was upgraded to a 6-year secondary in 1993. St. Bride's PS however, continued to be an associated school for Lochaber High.

- 1.3 Until recently these arrangements worked well. In the last few years however, there has been a shift in parental preferences between the two schools. In the last three years the majority of pupils from within the St. Bride's PS catchment have enrolled in Kinlochleven High School.
- 1.4 Under Highland Council policy pupils placed in a school other than their catchment school are not entitled to school transport. Parents of pupils in the St. Bride's PS catchment attending Kinlochleven HS are therefore responsible for both the organisation and the cost of school transport between home and school.
- 1.5 As a result of the above the subject of the designation of St. Bride's as an associated primary to Lochaber High has been the subject of discussion amongst parents. These discussions resulted in a request from a parent that the St. Bride's PS Parent Council investigate the procedure for changing the status of St. Bride's PS from an associated school for Lochaber High to an associated school for Kinlochleven High. Following advice from the Education, Culture and Sport Service, a special meeting of the St. Bride's Parent Forum was convened to discuss the issue and a ballot of parents organised. The result of the ballot was a vote in favour of the Parent Council formally requesting that the education authority consult on changing the status of St. Bride's Primary School to an associated school for Kinlochleven High.
- 1.6 The cited reasons for the request are that (i) the catchment area of St. Bride's PS is geographically closer to Kinlochleven than to Fort William; (ii) that pupils from the neighbouring primary schools of Ballachulish, Glencoe and Duror, with whom the St. Bride's pupils interact during the school year, all transfer to Kinlochleven HS, and; (iii) that a change to the secondary catchment would allow pupils from Onich and North Ballachulish access to school transport to their preferred secondary school.

Educational Benefits

- 2.1 Highland Council is of the view that the school environment should be of a quality that sustains and improves education provision, pupil performance and outcomes for the young people of Highland.
- 2.2 With the above aim in mind, Highland Council has adopted the above indicators in reviewing its' school estate:
 - Pupils should be educated in facilities which are rated at least category B for Condition and Suitability
 - Pupils should be members of an age-appropriate peer group
 - Pupils should have the opportunity to engage in the widest possible range of activities beyond the core curriculum, including music, sports, drama and art
 - Pupils with additional needs should be educated in the most appropriate local setting

- Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from the nearest classified road pick-up point to school (Primary) or 45 minutes from the nearest road pick-up point to school (Secondary), although it is recognised that this may not always be possible in a rural Council area such as Highland
- School facilities should be of a size appropriate to the delineated area that they serve, paying due regard to demographic trends
- School delineated areas should reflect geography, travel routes and population distribution
- Safe school transport should be provided and safe traffic management in and around school sites should be implemented
- Teachers should be members of a professional learning community comprising at least 3 members located in the same facility
- The implications of school location to local communities should be considered
- Schools, wherever possible, should be located where there is a recognised village or other built up community

- 2.3 The current suitability and condition assessments for Lochaber High will be revised following the completion of Phase 3 of a major refurbishment programme that has been underway for several years and which has already delivered major improvements in the school's accommodation. New facilities include refurbished classrooms, IT suites, Home Economics department and Technical department. A state-of-the-art Sports and Drama Centre opened in 2010 and includes a four-court games hall, gymnasium, fitness suite, dance studio and drama studio. Two grass pitches have been added to the existing full-size synthetic pitch. The school hall is a major performance venue for the community. There is a support base for pupils with additional support needs and a behaviour support unit. It is the Council's expectation that the school will in future be rated at least "B" for suitability. The 2011-12 roll is 879.
- 2.4 Pupils at Lochaber High School are offered English, Mathematics, French, Gaelic, Geography, History, Art & Design, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, General Science, Computing, Modern Studies, PE, Music, HE, Product Design, Graphic Communication and Craft & Design, Drama, Religious and Moral Education and Personal and Social Education. From S3 onwards pupils choose their specialisations from within a broad curriculum that follows national guidelines.
- 2.5 Pupils with additional support needs are provided with appropriate support within mainstream classes to allow them to maximise the educational opportunities available at Lochaber High. The school also has excellent facilities and equipment for meeting the needs of the most severely disabled pupils.
- 2.6 Lochaber High School is located 15 miles from St. Bride's PS. It is approximately 12 miles from the northern boundary of the St. Bride's PS catchment at Corran Gardens. Access from the catchment area is along the A82 trunk road.

- 2.7 Currently the school bus from Ballachulish to Lochaber High departs North Ballachulish at approximately 0800, arriving at Lochaber High School at 0835. Suitable arrangements are in place for traffic management.
- 2.8 Kinlochleven High School is currently rated as A for suitability and A for condition. The 2011-12 roll is 148. The school is accommodated within a new PPP building constructed around 3 years ago and has excellent facilities. Classrooms are spacious and well-equipped with modern equipment and facilities for science, technical subjects, home economics and modern languages. There is a dining hall that is shared with the adjacent primary school. Also adjacent to the school is a local community centre, the Leven Centre, which has a wide range of facilities including a 150 seat theatre, 2 sports halls, small fitness suite, all weather pitch, community library and meeting rooms. There is a well-planned traffic management system involving the provision of parking, bus and car drop offs and pedestrian access.
- 2.9 Kinlochleven High School offers Maths, English, French, Geography, History, Art & Design, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, General Science, IT, Computing, Business Studies, Economics, PE, Music, HE, Product Design, Graphic Communication and Craft & Design, Drama, Skills for Work, (various courses), Religious and Moral Education and Personal and Social Education. Presentation subjects are taught from Access 3/Foundation to Advanced Higher.
- 2.10 Pupils with additional support needs are provided with appropriate support within mainstream classes to allow them to maximise the school's educational opportunities. There is a dedicated ASN teacher.
- 2.11 Kinlochleven High School is located 8.5 miles from St. Bride's PS. However, the distance between the two schools is 11.5 miles as measured by the school transport route. The school is approximately 11.5 miles from the northern boundary of the St. Bride's PS catchment at Corran Gardens (14.5 miles as measured by the school transport route). Access from the St. Bride's catchment area is mostly along the B863 road from Glencoe to Kinlochleven.
- 2.12 Highland Council considers that both Lochaber High School and Kinlochleven High School offer high quality educational experiences for their pupils. In making their request, the Parent Council of St. Bride's PS made it clear that the educational standards at Lochaber High School were not an issue, specifically highlighting that all the St. Bride's parents felt both schools had excellent Head Teachers and were aware both had received positive HMle reports.
- 2.13 Both schools meet the criteria for school facilities and locations, set out in paragraph 2.2 above and both schools deliver the core curriculum to pupils. There is a shorter travel time between North Ballachulish and Kinlochleven, but the difference is only 10 minutes and is eliminated for those pupils at the north end of the St. Bride's catchment.

- 2.14 If the proposals were adopted, all current and future pupils from the St. Bride's PS catchment attending Kinlochleven High School would become eligible for funded school transport between home and school. For reasons of fairness it would be necessary to also continue funding school transport to and from Lochaber High for any pupil from the St. Bride's catchment who had enrolled at Lochaber High by or during the 2011-12 school session. Transport to Lochaber High would not be available by right to any pupil from the St. Bride's catchment enrolled at Lochaber High after a decision to change St. Bride's to an associated school for school for Kinlochleven High. In the future any pupils from the St. Bride's catchment wishing to enrol at Lochaber High would need to rely on whatever public transport was available. There is no guarantee that buses travelling to Fort William would extend their journeys to Lochaber High or its environs.

3 Effect on the two secondary schools

- 3.1 In estimating the future rolls of both schools, it is reasonable to project that a proportion of pupils from the St. Bride's catchment will opt for Kinlochleven High on placing requests. On the basis of current arrangements and that projection, the estimated rolls for the two secondary schools over the next few years are:

Lochaber High

2012-13 - 853
 2013-14 - 842
 2014-15 - 815
 2015-16 - 819
 2016-17 - 839
 2017-18 - 841

Kinlochleven High

2012-13 - 151
 2013-14 - 148
 2014-15 - 151
 2015-16 - 142
 2016-17 - 143
 2017-18 - 145

- 3.2 The roll at St. Bride's PS is currently 21. On present figures the number of pupils transferring to Secondary school over the next 7 years will be

2012-13 - 2
 2013-14 - 5
 2014-15 - 2
 2015-16 - 3
 2016-17 - 3
 2017-18 - 3
 2018-19 - 5

- 3.3 A change in the secondary transfer arrangements would have a small negative impact on the roll at Lochaber High, leading to a reduction in staffing. There would be an opposite impact upon Kinlochleven High, although the proportionate effect would be greater due to the somewhat smaller roll at that school. As mentioned above however, over the last two years pupils leaving the St. Bride's PS area have opted for Kinlochleven High on placing requests. On this basis the change would largely formalise what has recently been happening in practice.
- 3.4 Estimated rolls following the implementation of the proposed change in the secondary transfer arrangements would be as follows:

Lochaber High

2012-13 – 851
 2013-14 - 834
 2014-15 - 805
 2015-16 - 805
 2016-17 - 822
 2017-18 - 822

Kinlochleven High

2012-13 - 153
 2013-14 - 156
 2014-15 - 160
 2015-16 - 155
 2016-17 - 159
 2017-18 - 164

- 3.5 Kinlochleven High has an operational capacity of 245. The projected roll for August 2012 is 151 so the school could comfortably accommodate an annual enrolment from the St. Bride's catchment. The proposed change would not therefore have implications for capacity.
- 3.6 There is a need to consider the possibility of the change resulting in the S1 intake at Kinlochleven exceeding 40 in a given year, a pupil number that would require a third practical class. The highest S1 intake at Kinlochleven High in recent years has been 34, so the prospects the intake going higher than 40 must be considered low.

4 Effect on the Local Community

- 4.1 Highland Council does not envisage any negative effects on the local community as a result of the current proposals.

5 Financial Consequences

- 5.1 There is currently a bus contract taking 9 eligible pupils and 1 concessionary (as of January 2012) from Onich and North Ballachulish to St Brides PS. This would be unaffected by the change.
- 5.2 Another bus contract takes 17 eligible pupils from North Ballachulish to Lochaber High (equally split between Ballachulish/Onich and the southern end of Fort William i.e. Achintore Road, and Seafield Gardens). The annual cost of this is currently £30,400.
- 5.3 Two large buses serve Kinlochleven High School (from Duror and Ballachulish). One of these operates from Fort William, and the estimated 4 to 6 pupils who may progress from St. Brides PS to Kinlochleven HS each year would use the existing Kinlochleven HS transport at no additional cost.
- 5.4 If the proposals were accepted, Highland Council would, for a period of several years, be obliged to provide transport from the St. Bride's PS catchment to both Lochaber High and Kinlochleven High. Whilst transport from the area to Lochaber High would eventually be phased out, it would still be necessary to operate transport to Lochaber High from the area of Kiachnish Bridge/Achintore Road (with the actual mileage being dependent on where pupils are resident within that area), as that area lies within the Fort William Primary School catchment and would therefore remain within the designated area for Lochaber High. It should, however, be possible to reduce the size of the vehicle as well as the mileage operated, so achieving a saving compared to the current transport cost.

6 Summary

- 6.1 The Parent Council of St. Bride's Primary School has formally requested that a consultation be carried out on changing their school from an associated school for Lochaber High to an associated school for Kinlochleven High. The above consultation document invites views on the subject.

7 Recommendation

- 7.1 Although the letter from the Parent Council does not specifically indicate a preference in terms of secondary education, it is implicit in their request that a significant proportion of local parents have a preference for Kinlochleven High over Lochaber High. This is confirmed by the recent pattern of enrolment from pupils leaving St. Bride's PS. The Parent Council is also correct in pointing out that St. Bride's PS has close links with the neighbouring primary schools of Ballachulish, Glencoe and Duror and in fact St. Bride's Primary School forms part of the Associated School Group with those 3 schools (along with Kinlochleven Primary and High Schools). Changing the status of St. Bride's PS might therefore bring about some benefits in terms of improved transitional working between the primary and secondary schools.

- 7.2 Taking the above into account Highland Council recommends that the St. Bride's PS catchment is transferred, for secondary education purposes, into the Kinlochleven High School catchment. Highland Council does not however have a strong view on this matter and will give considerable weight to the views expressed during consultation.
- 7.3 The Council must formally consult on changes to provision, hence the options to be considered in terms of the Council's policy on changes to educational provision. This consultation paper is issued in terms of the authority's agreed procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report and submissions received will be presented to the ECS Committee of the Highland Council.