

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to:

- **establish a Gaelic Medium Education catchment area for Mallaig Primary School. The new catchment area will overlay the current English medium catchment areas of Mallaig Primary School, Lady Lovat Primary School and Arisaig Primary School, and**
- **formalise the current arrangements relating to Gaelic Medium Education in Mallaig High School, under which the catchment area for Mallaig High School will apply to both Gaelic and English Medium Education.**

May 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of The Highland Council's proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium Education (GME) catchment areas for Mallaig Primary School and Mallaig High School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; any other users; children and young people likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to Mallaig Primary School, Lady Lovat Primary School, Arisaig Primary School and Mallaig High School, which invited discussions with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 The Highland Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The consultation process ran from 4 February 2019 and will end on 22 March 2019. During that time, the council held a public meeting at Mallaig Primary School. The meeting was attended by one member of the public. Announcements were placed in the local press and on the council's online services. Statutory consultees, including parents/carers, children, staff and Bòrd na Gàidhlig were informed of the consultation. The council published documentation for the consultation on its website. They also distributed papers to a full range of stakeholders and interested parties. The

council put in place suitable arrangements to enable interested parties to respond to the proposal, whether that be electronically or in writing. No written responses were received. Bòrd na Gàidhlig did not respond.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The Highland Council's proposal is responding to legislation, which includes establishing catchment areas for GME provisions. Consultees were supportive of the proposal. Many recognised that the proposal formalised existing arrangements. There was an understanding of why very remote areas were not within the proposed GME catchment area. A few consultees expressed concerns about the safety of young children travelling on buses. Others deemed it important that the council's final report clarified approaches to regular promotion of GME at Mallaig Primary School and Mallaig High School. They felt this would assist in realising the full educational benefits, should the proposals be adopted.

3.2 A small minority of consultees felt that it would be useful to have a map which shows GME catchment areas, and GME designated areas across the west Highlands. This would give clarity on areas in boundaries, and assist with providing an overview of how GME catchments were coming together across a wider area. We have also agreed with the council that they will correct the title of the map in Appendix 2 of their proposal paper.

3.3 The council's statement on the educational benefits of this proposal should articulate more specific details pertinent to the benefits of this proposal.

4. Summary

Overall, the council's proposal is of educational benefit to children and parents in that it increases accessibility to GME. The council has a few concerns to address in taking the proposal forward, as detailed in section three of this report. They should give more detail on the educational benefits of this proposal, which are specific to GME in their proposed catchment area.

**HM Inspectors
May 2019**