

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to establish a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Lochcarron Primary School, Plockton Primary School and Plockton High School. This has three parts.

- To establish a Gàidhlig Medium catchment area for Plockton Primary School. The new catchment will overlay the current English Medium catchments of Plockton Primary School, Kyle of Lochalsh Primary School, Kyleakin Primary School, Auchtertyre Primary School, and Loch Duich Primary School. Particular arrangements will apply for transport to Plockton from the other catchment areas.**
- To establish a Gàidhlig Medium catchment area for Lochcarron Primary School, the Gàidhlig Medium catchment to be identical to the school's English Medium catchment.**
- To formalise the current arrangements relating to Gàidhlig Medium Education in Plockton High School, under which the catchment area for Plockton High School will apply to both Gàidhlig Medium and English Medium Education.**

May 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His 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 catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Lochcarron Primary School, Plockton Primary School and Plockton 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 2010 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; any other users; children 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:

- attendance at the virtual public meeting held on 9 March 2022 in connection with the council's proposals;
- 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
- 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 formal consultation ran from 1 March 2022 to 29 April 2022. The proposal paper was distributed to staff, Parent Councils and parents of pupils attending the schools detailed within the proposal paper. It was also sent to members of the United Kingdom and Scottish Parliaments, trade unions, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comann nam Pàrant and community councils. A notice was placed in local press. Information was available on the council's website and on social media.

2.3 The council hosted a virtual public meeting, at which officers set a rationale for the proposals, discussed high-level educational benefits, and invited attendees' views. Fourteen members of the public attended the virtual public meeting. Attendees raised questions on travel

connected to attending Gaelic Medium Education at Plockton Primary School. They also asked about available nursery placings through the medium of Gaelic. The council received 11 written responses. Most of these raised similar issues to those aired at the public meeting. Bòrd Na Gàidhlig is a statutory consultee for changes to arrangements for Gaelic Medium Education provision. They welcomed that a catchment area was being set for Gaelic Medium Education but identified areas that the council should address, including transport. Comann nam Pàrant welcomed the proposal. They were reassured by the further enactment of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. Comann nam Pàrant highlighted the importance of continuity in 3-18 learning through the medium of Gaelic. Children were clear of the benefits to them of a catchment area.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The Highland Council continue to implement the statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017. The council's proposed catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education will overlay the catchment areas of almost all primary schools associated with Plockton High School. This proposal assists the council in clarifying parents' entitlement and admission arrangements to Gaelic Medium Education. It also assists the council with duties to providing best value and statutory planning for Gaelic.

3.2 Almost all consultees support the council in establishing a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education. They agreed that this would result in educational benefits. There are a few issues arising from the consultation that require further action. Gaelic Medium Education is growing in Plockton High School's associated school group. The council expect further educational benefits from these proposals. In collaboration with parents, the council should continue to plan longer term. They should ensure that parents' voices continue to be heard, with any potential equity and equality barriers to Gaelic Medium Education addressed. These include ensuring that Gaelic Medium Education nursery places are consistently available to support parents into work, study, or training. Children should make quicker progress in developing their fluency in Gaelic by having an option to attend a total immersion nursery. There is also an interest in more learning through Gaelic being provided at the secondary stages. Parents are concerned about the travel time required for relatively short distances to attend Gaelic Medium Education at Plockton Primary School. Further, primary-aged children require to change buses, with waiting time for the next bus. The council in its final report needs to outline how children are kept safe while travelling for Gaelic Medium Education. They should also outline how travel arrangements will not be a barrier to attracting and sustaining growth in Gaelic Medium Education. The proposal paper should clarify whether children attending Gaelic Medium Education at Lochcarron Primary School receive free transport. The council asked for views on whether all of Loch Duich's Primary School catchment area be included in the Gaelic Medium Education catchment area. HM Inspectors' view is that this should be the case, with free transport provided.

3.3 HM Inspectors recognise that the council continue to enact their statutory duties to promote Gaelic. Since commencing this statutory consultation, the council informed HM Inspectors that they are setting up Gaelic Medium Education in Applecross Primary School. In its final report, the council should outline how parents in rural areas, such as Glenelg, will access their right to an assessment of the future need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education. This should include when it may not be possible for parents of five children to be requesting Gaelic Medium Education. This is as specified in legislation.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the council's proposal is of educational benefit to children and parents who reside within the catchment areas for Plockton High School. The proposal gives clarity to parents on how to access Gaelic Medium Education. The council needs to specify safe and

reasonable travel arrangements in its final report. They should also share more of their long-term local vision for the curriculum through Gaelic. This would strengthen the educational benefits from this proposal.

HM Inspectors
May 2022