

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HM Inspectors of Education addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to establish a Gaelic Medium Education catchment area for Glenurquhart Primary School. This new catchment will overlay the current English Medium catchments of Glenurquhart Primary School, Balnain Primary School, and Cannich Bridge Primary School.

The proposal also formalises the current arrangements relating to Gaelic Medium Education in Glenurquhart High School, under which the catchment area for Glenurquhart High School will apply to both Gaelic Medium and English Medium Education.

March 2022

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 catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education. 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 8 December 2021 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
- virtual 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](#). The formal consultation ran from 29 November 2021 to 4 February 2022. The proposal paper was distributed to a wide range of stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to respond to the statutory consultation by letter or electronically. Almost all of the responses were from those connected to Glenurquhart Primary School. There were three written responses. Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant supported the proposals. Children's views at the primary stages were sought. They articulated the potential benefits to their education from having more young people learn Gaelic. They felt that a larger catchment area may have the potential of increasing uptake for Gaelic Medium Education. In consultation discussions, the public meeting and in written responses, consultees expressed that the catchment area should be larger. In addition, consultees suggested that the catchment should not be restricted to that of Glenurquhart High School. They felt that the catchment areas should

enable as many children as possible, residing within a reasonable distance from the secondary school, to access Gaelic Medium Education.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The proposal from the council, if agreed, formalises the existing catchment area for Glenurquhart High School as also applying to Gaelic Medium Education. This catchment area would also apply to the Gaelic Medium provision at Glenurquhart Primary School. This helps the council meet the objectives of their Gaelic Language Plan. Consultees appreciate that the proposed catchment area offers 2-18 local provision through the medium of Gaelic. Currently, young people travel out with the local area to access secondary provision. The council has started to plan for Gaelic Medium Education to commence at Glenurquhart High School from August 2022. This is a well-received development that strengthens the educational benefits associated with the proposal. It was felt that local secondary provision assisted with the sustainability of Gaelic Medium Education within the catchment area. The council have consulted the headteacher of Glenurquhart High School on the proposal. They should also consult staff and young people.

3.2 Consultees felt that the proposals brought immediate clarity to how progressive Gaelic Medium Education is accessed by children and young people. A few longer term issues have been raised relating to future capacity at Glenurquhart Primary School. These are associated with a school roll that is increasing. A number of consultees are interested in discussing further with the council how a wider catchment area may help promote Gaelic Medium Education. The council expressed their willingness at the public meeting to engage in this discussion. This should now be taken forward.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors have considered The Highland Council's proposal to establish catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education at Glenurquhart High School and Glenurquhart Primary School. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has potential to result in educational benefits. In its final report, the council needs to confirm if they are increasing the catchment area as requested by consultees. Consultees are committed to growing Gaelic Medium Education. They view an increased catchment area as an important step towards growth. It would also be important to clarify concerns on the primary school's capacity to absorb an increase in pupil enrolments. In its final report, the council needs to detail how parents make future requests for establishing further Gaelic Medium Education as set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. They should do so with a particular regard to rural areas.

HM Inspectors
March 2022