

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Inverclyde Council to establish a catchment area for secondary Gaelic provision in Inverclyde Academy.

November 2023

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 Inverclyde Council's proposal to establish a catchment area for Gaelic provision for secondary in Inverclyde Academy. 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school; 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 public meeting held on 1 November 2023 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
- visits to the site of Bun-sgoil Chnoc a' Chonaisg - Whinhill Primary School and Inverclyde Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The formal consultation process ran from 2 October to 10 November 2023. The proposal paper was made available to a wide range of stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to respond to the statutory consultation by letter or electronically. The council provided a survey, to which eight responses were received. Most respondents (87.5%) agreed with the proposal to establish a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Secondary Education. They also agreed with the proposal that the whole local authority should be the catchment area. Most respondents (75%) agreed that children should be provided with free transport if they live within Inverclyde but further than two miles from the school.

2.3 The council held two public meetings on 25 October 2023 and 1 November 2023 to enable further consultation on the proposal. One person attended the meeting on 25 October 2023. The meeting attendees supported the creation of a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Secondary Education.

2.4 Bòrd na Gàidhlig responded to the consultation and welcome the proposal. The proposal supports Inverclyde Council in addressing requirements of Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education (2017) to establish catchment areas. This will enable families in Inverclyde Council to access provision locally and do so without requiring application through the placing request system. There is also potential for the building of the infrastructure required to offer residents of Inverclyde the same services available in other local authorities.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors agree with the educational benefits detailed in the proposal. HM Inspectors consulted senior leaders, staff, parents and children and young people to gather views and discuss the educational benefits that may result from the proposal. We evidenced strong support for the proposed catchment area. Children, parents, and school staff welcome the proposal. They feel that the proposal has potential to increase the numbers of those learning through Gaelic. Stakeholders were positive about the availability of free transport for those who live further than two miles by an acceptable walking route. The proposal, if progressed, improves local access to Gaelic Medium Education at the secondary stages. It would provide some continuity in Gaelic Medium Education for children and young people from 3-18 within Inverclyde, and would remove the potential uncertainty created by the need for a placing request. The proposal would provide clarity with the same catchment areas established for primary and secondary Gaelic Medium Education. The primary school also has provision for Sgoil-àraich, (early learning and childcare provision), for Gaelic Medium Education. Parents appreciate the already established catchment for Gaelic Medium Education at Bun-sgoil Chnoc a' Chonaisg - Whinhill Primary School. They view the proposal as a natural progression, given Inverclyde Academy is already the associated secondary school for Bun-sgoil Chnoc a' Chonaisg - Whinhill Primary School. Parents recognise that the proposal would reduce potential barriers to continuing to access Gaelic Medium Secondary Education. These include financial considerations and considerable travel times to access provision out with the Inverclyde Council area. While parents welcome the commitment to Gaelic Medium Education demonstrated by the proposal, they have some anxieties about committing to a provision that is not yet established. Parents also recognise that the proposal replaces access to an all Gaelic school, with its resultant impact on fluency and attainment. It will be important that Inverclyde Council continue to work with all stakeholders in the development of Gaelic Medium Education at Inverclyde Academy. Children welcome the benefits of moving to secondary school with their peer group and the reduced travel times. They feel this would allow for increased time for after-school clubs and other activities.

3.2 The council asked a question in the consultation report about whether transport should be provided for young people who live within Inverclyde but further than two miles by acceptable walking route from the school. HM Inspectors recommend that young people in Gaelic Medium Education are treated with equity and equality and have access to free transport, within Scottish Government guidelines.

3.3 The proposal, if agreed, supports Inverclyde Council in their promotion of Gaelic and will help meet the objectives of their Gaelic Language Plan. Within Inverclyde Academy there is a well-established appreciation of, and respect for, different languages. There is enthusiasm about the proposal to provide secondary Gaelic Medium Education for young people of Inverclyde. Staff and young people welcome the opportunities this could bring, including exploring learning the language themselves.

4. Summary

Inverclyde Council are fulfilling their statutory duties when establishing a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Secondary Education. Almost all stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors support the proposal and recognise how it could strengthen the educational benefits of Gaelic Medium Education in Inverclyde. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has potential to result in educational benefits. At the primary stages in Gaelic Medium Education, children, their families, and staff have a strong pride in learning and using Gaelic and recognise the importance of bilingualism. The proposal has the potential to strengthen the Gaelic community within the Inverclyde area further. In the schools involved in the proposal, both at the primary and secondary stages, there is respect for the language and an enthusiasm to further develop provision. Inverclyde Council should continue to work with all stakeholders to develop a high-quality curriculum offer delivered in immersive environments that builds on children's learning at the primary stages. The council should meet the expectations set out in the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017 to maximise the educational benefits from their proposal.

HM Inspectors
November 2023