

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HM Inspectors of Education addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Inverclyde Council to establish a Gaelic Medium Education catchment area for primary Gaelic provision in Whinhill Primary School.

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 Inverclyde Council's proposal to establish a catchment area for primary Gaelic Medium Education at Whinhill Primary School. Section two of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section three of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section four 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:

- 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 Inverclyde Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#). The formal consultation ran from 1 February 2022 to 18 March 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. The council provided a survey, to which 31 responses were received. The following is high-level summary of the views expressed by respondents in this survey.

- The majority (71%) agreed with the proposal to establish catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education.
- Most (81%) agreed that the whole of the local authority should be the catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education.
- Most (77%) agreed that children should be provided with free transport if they reside further than a mile by an acceptable walking route.

The council held two public meetings to enable further consultation on the proposal. Stakeholders could choose to attend these meetings in person, or by using digital technology. Fewer than ten attended these meetings. The meeting attendees supported the proposal. They used the meeting to clarify a few points with the local authority. HM Inspectors consulted senior leaders, staff, parents and children to elicit views and discuss the educational benefits that would result from the proposal, should it be enacted. We evidenced strong consensus for the proposed catchment area. Stakeholders were positive about the availability of free transport for those who resided further than a mile by an acceptable walking route. Parents had a few concerns that included the council having a progressive strategy for Gaelic Medium Education to provide continuous 3-18 learning opportunities. Bòrd na Gàidhlig did not respond to the consultation. However, they are working with the council on their long-term strategy for Gaelic. Currently, Renfrewshire Council use the council's Gaelic Medium services. They have not responded to the consultation.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The proposal from the council, if agreed, improves access to Gaelic Medium Education at the primary stages. This supports equity, equality and inclusion outcomes at the primary stages through the medium of Gaelic. This has potential to help the council meet the objectives of their Gaelic Language Plan. Parents feel that the proposal has potential to increase the numbers learning through Gaelic. They also felt that the service could be better promoted. This is a legislative requirement.

3.2 Parents value that this proposal would reduce barriers for them in accessing Gaelic Medium Education. These reduced barriers are financial, security of travel, being better able to balance commitments to their employment and their children's access to Gaelic Medium Education. Importantly, the more streamlined process for enrolment into P1 Gaelic Medium Education, without having to make a placing request to the council, provided better parity with the English medium sector. Parents felt that the proposal was part of the strategic approach required to provide progressive 3-18 Gaelic Medium Education.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors evaluated Inverclyde Council's proposal to establish a council-wide catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education at Whinhill Primary School. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has potential to result in educational benefits. The proposal is well-received for its potential to strengthen the educational benefits associated with Gaelic Medium Education. HM Inspectors recommend that educational benefits would be enhanced further with clarity on secondary provision within the proposed catchment area.

HM Inspectors
March 2022