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Review of Education Provision
at
BRAGAR SCHOOL
Isle of Lewis

CONSULTATION REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2010

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR
Education and Children’s Services Department

Review of Education Provision
CONSULTATION REPORT FOR BRAGAR SCHOOL
Isle of Lewis

Index

Section:

1	Background
2	The Consultation Process
3	Consultation Meetings
4	Omissions and Inaccuracies
5	Representations
6	Summary of Representations and Comhairle Responses
7	HMle Report
8	Summary of Consultation with Pupils
9	Summary of Consultation with Staff
10	Conclusion
11	Recommendation

Appendices:

- A. [Proposal Document for Bragar School](#)
- B. [Note of Public Meeting](#)
- C. [Initial Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment](#)
- D. [HMle Report](#)

Review of Education Provision at Bragar School, Isle of Lewis Consultation Report

Report by Director of Education and Children's Services

CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL THAT :

- **Education provision at Bragar Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012**
- **That the pupils of Bragar Primary School continue their education at Shawbost School, from 16 August 2012**
- **That the catchment area of Shawbost School be extended to include the current catchment area of Bragar Primary School.**

BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Comhairle, at its Meeting on 29 April 2010, authorised the Director of Education and Children's Services to proceed to undertake the necessary statutory consultation with parents, staff, pupils and other interested parties affected by the proposal regarding the proposed closure of Bragar School as required by the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 1.2 This decision relates to the implementation of the Strategy for the Future Provision of Education in the Western Isles. The Comhairle is required to provide its statutory services as effectively and efficiently as possible. It is therefore necessary to be strategic in the delivery of education to ensure Best Value. School rolls in the Authority as a whole have been falling year on year for the last thirty years and this, based on population projections, is a continuing trend. This trend has resulted in there being more buildings in the school estate than are considered necessary for the delivery of high quality education.
- 1.3 In order to ensure appropriate investment in education at a time of financial challenges it is necessary that the Comhairle make the most efficient use of its finances and resources. The current level of over-capacity in schools combined with the high maintenance costs and poor condition of many of the school buildings throughout the Western Isles is a significant drain on resources and presents a major obstacle to investment in education and school buildings.
- 1.4 Bragar School is designated as a very remote rural school. In terms of Section 12 of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010, the Comhairle has given special regard to -
 - any viable alternative to the closure proposal,
 - the likely effect on the local community in consequence of the proposal (if implemented), with reference in particular to
 - (a) the sustainability of the community,
 - (b) the availability of the school's premises and its other facilities for use by the community;

- the likely effect caused by any different travelling arrangements that may be required in consequence of the proposal (if implemented) with reference in particular to
 - (a) the effect caused by such travelling arrangements including (in particular),
 - (i) that on the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities,
 - (ii) any environmental impact,
 - (b) the travelling arrangements are those to and from the school of (and for) the school's pupils and staff and any other users of the school's facilities.

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

2.1 The current requirements for consulting on proposed school closures are set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

- A proposal document was issued as a result of a decision approved by the Comhairle as detailed in Appendix A. A copy of this document was issued free of charge to the consultees as listed in the Proposal Document and was also published on the Comhairle website.
- An advert was placed in local newspapers on 13 May 2010 and the consultation ran thereafter for a period of 34 school days until 30 June 2010.
- A public meeting was held on Thursday, 10 June 2010.
- Pupils and staff were also consulted separately.
- HMle involvement included being sent a copy of the proposal document, their attendance at the public meeting and their visiting the affected schools and meeting with parents, pupils and staff. They also received a copy of all written representations. They then prepared a report on the educational aspects of the proposal (Appendix D)
- This Consultation Report is the Comhairle's response to issues raised during the consultation period, including a response to identified inaccuracies in the consultation information.
- This Consultation Report will be published at least three weeks before a final decision is taken by the Comhairle on the proposal.

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

2.2 An Initial Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment (Appendix C), in line with statutory legislation, was undertaken in relation to the proposal for the School. There were no discriminatory or detrimental consequences identified in relation to the proposal being implemented. Therefore a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

CONSULTATION MEETINGS

3.1 Consultation meetings were held as follows:

- Public meeting at Bragar Primary School on 10 June 2010
- Meetings with staff at both Bragar and Shawbost Schools were held separately.
- Meetings with pupils at both Bragar and Shawbost Schools were held separately.

OMISSIONS AND INACCURACIES

4.1 Within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 there is guidance on how errors or omissions should be addressed. In paragraph 9.1 of the Proposal Document Bragar School was described as an accessible rural school when in fact it is a very remote rural school. An advertisement to that effect was placed in local newspapers. Attention was drawn to the error at the Public Meeting and the correct definition was given. This error was not deemed to be material and therefore no further action was taken in relation to this matter.

REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 The written representations received during the consultation period are detailed below.

Representations from:	Number
• Petition from residents of Arnol and Bragar in support of Bragar School – 228 signatures	1
• Individuals written responses (3 letters with 2 signatures)	8
• Parent Council	1
• Staff Professional Associations	2
• Bòrd na Gàidhlig	1
• NHS Western Isles	1
• Fire Service	1
Total:	15

SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS AND COMHAIRLE RESPONSES

6.1 This section details the relevant points raised at public meetings and in the written submissions. A full transcript of the public meeting is included as Appendix B. A copy of all written representations will be published as part of the Report to Comhairle Members.

6.2 The responses to the issues raised are detailed below.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS																											
<p>ISSUE: A number of issues were raised regarding the financial information relating to Gaelic teaching costs, photocopying costs, saving accruing from the proposals, capital expenditure and transport.</p>																											
<p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bragar School is managed under a Shared Headship arrangement with Carloway School. Shared Headship costs are apportioned equally across the relevant schools. The Headteacher's previous post was as Gaelic Medium teacher paid from Gaelic Grant. The salary costs were shown against the Gaelic Specific Grant budget when this should have been shown against the Education and Children's Services core budget. This does not materially affect the overall running costs for Bragar School. • The annual budgeted school running cost per pupil, as reported to Scottish Government, is obtained by dividing the total budgeted school running cost by the school roll. The total revised cost for 2010/11 is detailed in the following table. 																											
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- Photocopying costs are attributed on a formula basis based on pupil numbers, i.e. Bragar Primary School has more pupils than Shawbost Primary School and thus has higher costs.
- The estimated savings for closing Bragar and Carloway Schools is approximately £340k. This is considered to be a materially significant sum.
- Over the last 10 years, the school has had approximately £30k of maintenance and security works undertaken, but there has been no planned capital expenditure.
- The Comhairle in common with all other councils and as required by the Scottish Government has a capital programme agreed by the Comhairle. This programme is to be delivered between 2008 and 2013. Within this, there is a commitment to carry out a £3.1 million programme of Core and Statutory work in schools. This work is prioritised, and was based on the collation of the various knowledge streams on condition, fire safety, health and safety, DDA compliance, Legionella surveys and the local knowledge of relevant Technical Services staff. The overall list of works required by schools was in the region of £9 million and subsequently prioritised in terms of condition and suitability, with the top £3 million of prioritised projects being approved by the Comhairle. No capital works for Bragar School were programmed as part of this exercise.
- The 2009/10 pupil cost figure for transport was calculated based on a historical formula, which has now been revised to reflect a more up to date position. The formula for any bus journey is based on a combination of distance and numbers travelling on the route. The formula has now been updated to reflect changes in the service and has been recalculated at £14,990.

BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

ISSUE: A range of concerns were raised regarding capacity of Shawbost School, DDA compliance, Suitability Survey and playground facilities.

RESPONSE

- Classroom capacity is calculated using Regulation 8, The Schools (Scotland) Regulations 1975 along with Core Fact 4 "Standard teaching room is $m^2 / 1.75$ capped at 25 for composite, Gaelic and P1, 2 and 3 and at 30 for single year groups P4-7".
- Shawbost School has the capacity to accommodate Bragar School and/or Carloway School based on current enrolments and future projections, even if the S1-2 provision were to continue after 2012.
- The school is not fully DDA compliant. However, all Health and Safety requirements based on the needs of individual pupils have been met. Outstanding works based on the 2006 audit would cost approximately £67,399.
- The Proposal Documents were prepared before the Schools Estate Management Plan was completed.
- The building is Condition C. This category is determined by independent audit, against national criteria. Suitability Category B is a subjective evaluation based on teacher rating of the suitability of the school, for the purposes of learning and teaching.
- The small area of playground around Bragar School is well designed and used. However, it does not compare with the extensive indoor and outdoor recreational areas available to young people at Shawbost School.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

ISSUE: There was a feeling that the educational benefits had not been clearly defined, and there did not appear to be any criteria for assessing the likely effects of the proposal. Some concerns were raised regarding the potential for the roll in Bragar to increase.

RESPONSE:

- Effective learning and teaching is highly dependent on children's ability to interact with their peer group and teacher in relation to their learning. There is no evidence to suggest that very small composite classes do better than the maximum composite class size of 25 pupils.
- Some of the specific benefits of attending a school with a larger roll in the context of the Western Isles are:
 - Increased opportunities for pupils, including both curricular and extra curricular
 - A larger pupil population will enable greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teaching
 - There will also be greater flexibility in the development of staff to meet the learning needs of pupils
 - The pupils will have access to a wider range of activities than are available to them at present. This will be in larger groupings, alongside pupils of similar ages.
- In the event of Bragar School amalgamating with Shawbost and Carloway Schools, class sizes would still be considered to be small, and would be within the maximum composite class size of 25.
- If Bragar and Carloway Schools were to close, there would be 3 class groups in English Medium and 1 class group in Gaelic Medium in Shawbost School. Estimated groupings are as follows:

English Medium P 1-3	19
English Medium P 4-5	23
English Medium P6-7	22
Gaelic Medium P1-7	16
- Over a 9 year period, Bragar School roll has gone from 24 to a maximum of 35. This is still considered a small school. With a growth of 6 in the period 2003-06 and a growth of 4 in the period 2007-11 this is not considered by the Department as representing significant or sustainable growth.
- It is the view of the Education and Children's Services Department that quality of teaching is the single most important factor, not the class size. This view is supported in the recent 'Review of Class Size Control Mechanisms' as reported in August 2010 by the Working Group set up by the Scottish Government.
- Douglas Cairns, HMIe Assistant Chief Inspector advised the Scottish Government's Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee (2010) that "by and large, the spectrum of quality across small rural primary schools seems to be much the same as the national average." It can be seen from the above comments that there is no definitive advantage to be gained from pupils being educated in a smaller school.

GAELIC

ISSUE: The opinion was expressed that Gaelic Medium provision in a school was divisive and created a two-tier system.

RESPONSE:

- There is no evidence to support the idea that the provision of Gaelic Medium education is divisive. In the 22 primary schools that offer Gaelic Medium Education pupils in both provisions interact well together
- The School Estate Review will ensure that all school provision in the Western Isles will have Gaelic Medium Education provision. The Department currently has Gaelic Medium provision in schools where a number of staff do not speak Gaelic and there is no evidence that this results in impairment in language acquisition. The Department is committed to the Comhairle's Gaelic Plan and is working to ensure that increasing numbers of staff have a basic competence in Gaelic language. Increasing emphasis is being placed on encouraging staff to take up available CPD opportunities, e.g. Ulpan, evening classes, in-house, etc.

CARE AND WELFARE OF PUPILS

ISSUE: Parents expressed the view that Bragar School was preferable because it did not have secondary pupils and was therefore safer.

RESPONSE:

- There is no evidence of secondary children in Shawbost School being a threat in any way towards younger children. Shawbost School currently provides P1-S2 education very effectively with the support of the community. Secondary pupils provide positive social and learning role models to primary-aged children, and have in many situations effectively provided buddying systems. This must be seen as an added protective factor to young children.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

ISSUE: The Educational Benefits Statement indicated that there is a more extensive range of ICT resources at Shawbost School. Parents wanted to know the range of ICT resources at Shawbost School.

RESPONSE

- In relation to ICT the main enhancement relates to the bandwidth of the internet connection - Bragar has 1 MPBS while Shawbost has 4 MPBS. Bandwidth provision is related to pupil rolls, and range of provision, i.e. primary/secondary. Shawbost School has wireless laptops supported by a wireless network. This is in addition to 6 network connections. Shawbost also has a 20 laptop 'Classroom in a Box' and there is an interactive whiteboard in each primary classroom and also in the GP room.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

ISSUE: Concern was expressed that there would be reduced opportunity to participate in competitive sports alongside pupils of similar ages due to the fewer number of schools. There would also be more limited access to after-school activities.

RESPONSE

- More schools may well encourage more participation and more opportunities for competition. It is recognised that where there are larger numbers of pupils, this presents more challenges in terms of competition and range of ability. However, this would mean very small schools having the participation of possibly all pupils, but often having to play teams in competitive matches, where there is a significant difference in ability. The key issue for an education system is to ensure that there is balance in the curriculum between sports and creative arts, participation and appropriate competition.
- After-school activities will be the subject of planning by individual schools. Any proposals will ensure the inclusion of all young people.
- If children want to participate in after-school activities, schools usually make arrangements for children to get passes for the service bus, or where possible, arrange other transport.
- After school activities will also continue to be supported through Community Education, Sport and Health and the Voluntary Sector in local communities.

LEGISLATION

ISSUES: Reference was made to the Scottish Government document ‘Safeguarding our Rural Schools 2008’ regarding the presumption against rural school closure.

RESPONSE

- The current position is that there is no moratorium on school closures. There is a presumption against the closure of rural schools, and the Comhairle, in its School Estate Review, supports this and is attempting to ensure an appropriate distribution of rural schools that are viable and sustainable in the future, and which can be delivered:
 - Provide quality education in quality buildings
 - At a price that the community can afford
 - That are accessible and have the minimum distance to travel

COMMUNITY ISSUES

ISSUE: There were a number of concerns raised regarding the school and its relationship with the community, the impact of closure, future use of the building, and whether an impact assessment had been undertaken.

RESPONSE:

- A school is only one of a number of services in any community and like any other service it can only exist where there is a viable demand. The level of service provision in a community more frequently reflects the demands placed upon it by demographics, population and the economy.
- Over a period of 30 years with significantly more schools than we currently have, there has been an annual decline in the pupil population and there is no evidence within the Western Isles, that having a school in a community increases inward migration
- The decline in population is not always greater in communities where schools have already closed. In some communities, the population has increased despite of the closure of the local school.

- The Education and Children's Services Department is proud of the education provision in the Western Isles. The Comhairle has always prioritised investment in education and children. Consequently, over the largest part of the Comhairle's history the expenditure in education has always exceeded grant-aided or revenue support grant income. Current management of the Education and Children's Services Department has ensured that the majority of education expenditure is directed towards front-line services in schools. Over the last 2 years the Department has systematically reduced its central cost budget.
- With the improved road infrastructure in the islands, there is evidence that people's choice of where to live may be determined by factors, other than the presence of a school.
- The Education and Children's Services Department recognises that many parents choose to move to the Western Isles for very positive reasons, such as an opportunity to live in a small town, small villages and very rural areas.
- It is not possible to provide schools in every location where people choose to live, in order that children can walk or cycle to school.
- Since 1997 the Comhairle remains committed to the concept of an Area School being the most cost-effective method of delivering education within a community setting.
- The school is used for very few functions other than education. The community has other facilities at Shawbost which are more suitable for sport, leisure and recreational purposes. For the last number of years, Bragar School has held its annual school concert in An Seann Sgoil at Shawbost.
- The Comhairle, in addition to the statutory requirements of the Schools Consultation Act, has undertaken community conversations. The School Estate Review has also been the subject of a Member Officer Working Group and a matter of extensive debate and discussion by the Comhairle.
- The Disposal of Surplus Buildings Policy provides an opportunity for communities to make proposals on how buildings could be used. Based on issues raised in the consultation process, the Education and Children's Services Department has developed a European Social Fund application which is currently at stage 2. This proposes community-based economic regeneration projects, together with the appointment of community development workers who would be based in communities affected by school closures.
- Any vacant building will be maintained at the level of it being wind and water tight with minimum heating, representing a reduced cost until time of disposal, where a capital asset may be received.
- All schools are subject to Equality Impact Assessments which are appended to the Consultation Report.

TRAVEL
ISSUES: A number of parents expressed concerns regarding travel issues and the fact that children will not be able to walk or cycle to school.
RESPONSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils will be picked up and dropped off adjacent to their home. Parents are responsible for the safety of their child at pick-up and drop-off points. This is consistent with practice across the country. However, contractors could be asked to use hazard warning lights as an added safety measure, when picking up and dropping off pupils. • More than half of the children currently enrolled, use the bus service. • The bus arrives at North Bragar at 8.45am, at South Bragar at 8.53am and at Shawbost School at 9.00am. The bus departs Shawbost School at 3.00pm, drops off in South Bragar at 3.07pm and in North Bragar 3.10pm.

- In order to meet the National Walk to School initiative, consideration is being given to a review of the Comhairle's Home to School Travel policy (currently 1 mile). Consideration may be given within the review, to ensuring pick-up/drop-off points to provide an opportunity to walk or cycle.
- In order to give young people the opportunity to walk or cycle to school in line with the National Walk to School initiative, a review of the Comhairle's Home to School Travel policy will be undertaken. Consideration may be given within the review to ensuring pick up/drop off points, to provide an opportunity to walk or cycle.

HMIe REPORT

7.1 In line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, a report was provided by HM Inspectorate on the educational aspects of the proposed closure of Bragar School and the transfer of pupils to Shawbost School . This report is attached as Appendix D.

7.2 The Report also identifies issues for consideration by the Comhairle as follows.

HMIe REPORT	
ISSUE:	The Comhairle should assess population trends in the area for Bragar Primary School to inform its view on the school's future viability and its place in the community.
RESPONSE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over a period of 30 years, with significantly more schools than we currently have, there has been an annual decline in the pupil population. • The population on the Westside of Lewis has continued to decline. The current situation is that we have 3 schools, sharing a small and reducing primary population, within 8 miles of each other. • Within this area, Bragar School has maintained an average pupil population of 30. The current population trend suggests that this will not increase, and there are currently no housing or economic developments which would suggest a significant increase in population. 	
ISSUE:	The Comhairle should assess the sufficiency and suitability of the primary classroom accommodation at Shawbost School, particularly within the context of Curriculum for Excellence.
<p>In particular, the Comhairle requires to address the implications for accommodation should its proposals for Carloway Primary School also go ahead and if secondary education continues at Shawbost School beyond June 2012.</p>	
RESPONSE:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Comhairle has assessed the sufficiency and suitability of primary classroom accommodation at Shawbost School against the national standards and is satisfied that there is capacity to accommodate both Carloway and Bragar pupils, should the secondary department continue beyond 2012. • The Learning Community Principal and the Headteacher have undertaken a review of the accommodation based on projected pupil rolls. This review demonstrates how classes would be accommodated and Curriculum for Excellence delivered, in the event that S1-2 provision continues beyond 2012. 	

<p>ISSUE: The Comhairle should consider further its arrangements for transporting children, particularly the very young, from Bragar Primary School to Shawbost School, particularly levels of supervision and the presence of other passengers on buses taking children to and from school.</p>
<p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Comhairle will continue to provide transportation that meets all contract specifications and ensures safe travel for all its pupils. • All bus contractors meet rigorous contractual obligations. All bus drivers have appropriate SCRO checks and the service is delivered to a high standard. Where concerns have been raised regarding passenger behaviour, buses have been fitted with CCTV cameras. Drivers and the public have, where appropriate, made referrals in terms of any nuisance behaviour on buses or child protection concerns. All of these are robustly investigated and dealt with. • In practice it is observed that on some routes, the adult presence on the bus has a positive effect on pupil behaviour and may reduce bullying or other nuisance behaviour. This makes travel for young people safer.
<p>ISSUE: The Comhairle should take full account of the composite response submitted by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bòrd na Gàidhlig commented on areas where the Education and Children's Services Department should do further work to promote Gàidhlig and, in particular, the uptake of Gaelic Medium Education. • As a result, the Education and Children's Services Department has re-focused its bid proposal for Gaelic Specific Grant to work with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and partners to increase the primary enrolment numbers and maximise opportunities for Gaelic Medium Education. This will also include the possibility of later entry to Gaelic Medium Education and an emphasis on Gaelic Medium Education in all pre-school provision associated with local primary schools. • The Comhairle in recent years has seen a steady growth in its enrolment in Gaelic Medium Education. The Education and Children's Services Department's revised Gaelic Plan will set a target of at least 50% of P1 enrolments in Gaelic medium education over the next 3 years. This is considered realistic on the basis that many parents, whose children are enrolled in Croileagan do not enrol their children in Gaelic Medium Education, where their local school only provides education through the medium of English.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH PUPILS

- 8.1 Dependent on the size of the school, consultation with pupils was carried out on the basis of a representative focus group and a cross section of stages or whole school. In each school the children and young people were asked to work in groups to identify:
- Benefits in bringing the schools together
 - Issues of concern
 - Areas they felt they might need help with

- 8.2 In this consultation it was the unanimous view of all pupils that they wanted to retain their own school.

Summary of Consultation with Bragar School Pupils

Benefits:

- Good chance to make new friends
- Get to have new and more teachers
- We already know friends and will get to know them better
- Better community and life when you know more people
- Get more things e.g. equipment
- Don't have to travel for swimming and gym

Issues of Concern:

- Pupils would miss Bragar School and playground
- Pupils do not feel that they are used to Shawbost School and they really like Bragar
- Bragar is the best school ever
- Teachers could lose their jobs
- Playground in Shawbost will get overcrowded
- A lot more people in Shawbost classes
- More travel
- Less chance to participate in competitions
- Not as many school trips
- Wouldn't be able to walk to school
- School would need extension which will cost more money which could be better invested in Bragar
- More in the canteen
- People might not come to Bragar as it would now only be left with a skip, a shop and a school
- Would not know the name of everyone in the school
- They may need help with area
- Provision of induction days to allow them to get to know Shawbost School
- Allow teachers from Bragar to go to Shawbost with them
- Put more equipment in the Shawbost school playground
- Provide a dedicated bus
- Allow the same people into the same classes with buddies

RESPONSE:

These issues were discussed with the pupils and where possible answers were provided.

Areas where we might help

- Could provide induction days to allow them to get to know the new school.
- Teachers from Bragar could go with them to Shawbost
- Put more equipment in the playground
- Provide a bus to get them to school
- Same children in the same classes from Bragar

RESPONSE:

Most of the suggestions provided by pupils were reasonable and an undertaking was given that should the proposal be accepted, there would be further discussion with the pupils in order to prepare a transition plan.

Questions that pupils wanted to ask were in relation to:

- What would happen to Bragar School?
- Families have been coming to the school for 100 years and did we know that this upsets people?
- When would this happen?
- This is the best school and the best year they have ever had in the school
- We have a grass pitch and good play areas in Bragar.

RESPONSE:

- These questions were discussed with the pupils and where possible answers were provided.

Summary of Consultation with Shawbost School Pupils as the receiving School

Benefits

- More friends to play with
- Meet more people
- Be able to ask more people for help
- Other schools don't have to then travel for PE and swimming
- Would have more people interested in competitions
- More children to give you advice or their opinions
- Bigger groups and therefore more people to play games

Issues of Concern

- Teachers would lose their jobs
- Not enough space
- Might not be enough classrooms
- Classrooms might be overcrowded
- There might not be enough equipment or books
- Might cost too much
- More time to get lunch
- Canteen might not be big enough and you would have to sit with people you don't like
- Too many people means too much noise
- Teachers might not be able to cope
- You would need more buses to collect people
- There would be no use for the other school buildings
- More fights
- Might be hard to keep children under control
- Carloway and Bragar would have to do a lot of travelling

RESPONSE:

These issues were discussed with the pupils and where possible answers provided.

Areas where we might help

- Provide more table and chairs
- Provide more equipment and books
- Raise money for the school like coffee mornings
- Make a bigger school
- Have more activities
- Provide more facilities and a bigger playground
- Organise a fun day to welcome pupils
- Have a person at lunch time to get everybody together to play a game
- Tell them to be quiet and not fight with each other
- Tell them to ask the teacher for help
- Encourage people to help other children
- Use more classes at a time so not as many teachers would lose their jobs
- Separate classes go to the lunch line at different times
- Have more fun days

RESPONSE:

Most of the suggestions provided by pupils were reasonable and an undertaking was given that should the proposal be accepted, there would be further discussion with the pupils in order to prepare a transition plan.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION WITH STAFF

- 9.1 All teaching and non teaching staff were invited to attend consultations regarding the Comhairle's proposals. The staff made the following observations which they wished to be recorded.

- No one wants to see a village school closed as everyone recognises that youth in a community make a difference
- People may move to be closer to the school or centres of employment
- The school had a very positive and good inspection
- All the evidence shows it is a successful thriving school
- The role is stable and it has capacity for growth
- In the next 2 years there is an equal number of children coming in as leaving
- The school provides employment in a rural area and through the school a network of employment
- Staff are concerned that not everyone can be accommodated in Shawbost
- The reduction in rural schools provides another form of clearance

In relation to the Proposal Document staff wished to make specific comments on the followings sections.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Staff feel that effective CPD can and does happen, irrespective of the size of schools. Staff do not believe that bigger numbers always lead to better provision. Sometimes the smaller the group, the more effective, as small groups require everyone's involvement. The development of Shared Headships and Learning Communities have provided a significant resource to the area.

Additional Support Needs (ASN)

Staff challenge that integrated schooling offers a better ASN provision than Bragar School. Staff believe that they meet their statutory obligations for ASN and do so for Curriculum for Excellence. Staff feel that Bragar School has good access to white boards and the number of lap tops available to each student is not necessarily relevant to their Education and Learning

CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Throughout this consultation the Comhairle has given special regard to the provision for rural schools within Section 12 of the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010,
- 10.2 In recognition of the impact of school closures on local communities, the Comhairle undertook, in addition to statutory consultation, community conversations in order to share with stakeholders the challenges for education together with its aspirations for a review of educational provision designed to provide 'Quality Education in Quality Buildings'.
- 10.3 The consultation process was robust and provided an opportunity for all stakeholders to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered and the Comhairle's response detailed in sections 6, 7, 8 and 9 above.
- 10.4 The Standards in Schools (Scotland) Act 2000 requires local authorities "*to secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential*". (Para 2.1)
- 10.5 HMIe visited Bragar School to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They attended the public meeting on 10 June 2010 and had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses.

- 10.6 In summary, the HMIE Report recognises the merits of the closure proposal.
“The proposal from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to close Bragar Primary School and transfer children to Shawbost School with effect from August 2012, offers some educational benefits to children directly affected by the proposal and more widely across Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Children would have more opportunity to learn and engage in social activities with others of the same age and stage. They would have access to a more modern and well-maintained building, although concerns exist about the current size and suitability of primary classroom accommodation. Children’s learning would be supported through access to the wide range of information and communication technology available at Shawbost School. They would be able to take part in a wider range of out-of-school activities. The Comhairle’s proposal would mean that all children would have greater access to Gaelic language and culture. However, travel could restrict some children’s participation in after-school activities.”
- 10.7 The HMIE report provides evidence that the proposal to amalgamate Bragar School with Shawbost School will produce:
Educational benefits:
- Can deliver Curriculum for Excellence effectively
 - Will assure more effective use of resources – financial, staffing and estate
 - Will ensure that pupils are educated in buildings fit for the 21st Century
- 10.8 In its submission in response to the consultations, Bòrd na Gàidhlig commented on areas where the Education and Children’s Services Department should do further work to promote Gàidhlig and, in particular, the uptake of Gaelic Medium Education. However, the Bòrd welcomed Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s aspiration that Gaelic Medium Education should be available in all primary schools in the Western Isles through the implementation of the Schools Estate Strategy. In particular, Bòrd na Gàidhlig would not oppose the closure of Bragar School.
- 10.9 The Director of Education and Children’s Services, on reviewing all of the submissions, the HMIE report, Bòrd na Gàidhlig’s response and the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix C) recommends that the best and most sustainable educational provision for the current catchment area of Bragar Primary School would be provided at Shawbost School and that the education provision should be discontinued at Bragar Primary School from 29 June 2012.
- 10.10 The Director of Education and Children’s Services recommends that a transfer of pupils from Bragar School to Shawbost School will have educational benefits and that the learning opportunities and experience for pupils will be significantly widened. There will be:
- increased opportunities for pupils, both curricular and extra-curricular activities;
 - greater flexibility in grouping children for learning and teaching;
 - greater flexibility in the deployment of staff to meet learning needs;
 - a larger staff will offer a wider range of expertise resulting in increased opportunities for sharing effective practice, more collegiate support and a wider range of learning and teaching approaches;
 - more management support to promote school improvement.
- 10.11 Pupils and parents of Bragar School would have access to a modern educational establishment, which is fully equipped and designed to meet the needs of pupils and fully deliver a Curriculum for Excellence. There is an opportunity for the pupils, staff and parents of both schools to benefit from working together to ensure that the very best quality of learning and teaching is available to all pupils, irrespective of their needs or abilities.
- 10.12 The proposal will result in pupils at Bragar School attending a building that is modern and better designed for the delivery of a 21st Century curriculum.
- 10.13 The closure of Bragar School will both improve efficiency of the school estate and enable investment in education and provide a better educational experience for pupils.

- 10.14 Should the proposal be approved the Director of Education and Children’s Services will work with parents and staff in Bragar and Shawbost Schools to develop a transition plan that will ensure an effective transition for pupils and staff to Shawbost School.

RECOMMENDATION

- 11.1 It is recommended that
- a) the Education provision at Bragar Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012;
 - b) the pupils of Bragar Primary School continue their education at Shawbost School, from 16 August 2012; and
 - c) the catchment area of Shawbost School be extended to include the current catchment area of Bragar Primary School.