



Ms Joan Mackinnon
Director of Education & Children's Services
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Sandwick Road
Stornoway Isle of Lewis HS1 2BW

13 Sept 2011

Dear Ms Mackinnon,

The Sgoil Nan Loch Parent Council met on Tuesday 06 September 2011 and we were highly concerned to learn that the Sgoil Nan Loch pupils will no longer be receiving physical education by a trained PE teacher. We understand that this is due to the itinerant physical education teacher having moved to another post and that it has been decided not to recruit a replacement. Instead a teacher without specialist qualification in physical education will be providing cover and either the cover or the class teachers will instruct in physical activities in Lochs, Balallan, Pairc, Seilibost and Leverburgh Primary Schools.

We would like to express our objection to this in the strongest terms.

- Obesity is on the increase, we should be catching our children young and getting them interested in sport which could lead to: a lifelong interest in keeping active, reducing obesity levels, staying healthy and thus passing this onto the next generation.
- Class teachers are not trained to the same level to deliver physical education, and many of our existing Primary teachers have not had to teach this subject for many years; this will have a significant impact on how up to date and current their knowledge is – a gap we feel will need more than a one day refresher to fill.
- Children who do not live near the sports centre or a community centre to be able to keep fit and learn sports are being disadvantaged.
- Specialist PE teachers represent an excellent role model for our children in aspiring to sporting excellence. This role is one which it will be far harder for some of our primary teachers to fulfil.
- A two tier system has now been created within our own primary schools.
- We feel this is creating an unfair divide among the communities.
- When schools play against another, this divide will be keenly felt as an unfair advantage.

We have also found out that there is now a policy to no longer replace any of the specialist itinerant teachers in the Western Isles as they leave their posts. Effectively, specialist input for our children not only in PE, but also Art and Music is being phased out, but in a rather inequitable, haphazard fashion.

This approach will mean that in future we will face similar situations, where specialist provision for these subjects will be made in some communities but not in others. Quite apart from the impact this action will have on the opportunity for our children to compete, for example in the Mod, it will again be a very unfair approach if the provision which is left, is not shared equally between schools.

c/o 9 Leurbost, Lochs, Isle of Lewis HS2 9NX

Representatives from Sgoil nan Loch Parent Council attended the meeting with Bernard Chisholm and Alan Smithyman at Balallan School on 06 September 2011. The points raised there by Bridget Maciver were very clear, and we await an update from the meeting.

We ask that consideration is given to the proposal to share out more fairly the specialist PE provision still available on the Islands to ensure no children are unfairly disadvantaged by the council's policy.

We look forward to your reply,

Yours sincerely

Sarah McIver (Chairperson)

cc: Head Teacher SnL
Parent Councils: Lochs, Pairc, Balallan, Shelibost, Leverburgh
Cllr. Annie Macdonald
Cllr Norman Macdonald
Cllr Alex Macdonald
Local GP Surgeries,
Angus Brendan Macneil, MP
Alasdair Allan, MSP