

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to revise the catchment boundary for Leverhulme Memorial School and Sir E Scott School, Isle of Harris.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's proposal to revise the catchment boundary for Leverhulme Memorial School and Sir E Scott School, Isle of Harris. 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 comhairle to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The comhairle's final consultation report should include a copy of 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 comhairle's response to them. The comhairle has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a comhairle is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

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 comhairle area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the comhairle intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the comhairle believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the comhairle'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 comhairle in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, and

- visits to the sites of Leverhulme Memorial School and Sir E Scott School, Isle of Harris, including discussions with parents, staff and children at both schools.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The initial consultation was planned to run from 20 November 2014 to 23 January 2015. However, to ensure the comhairle had consulted fully with staff, children, young people and parents it extended the consultation period to 5 February 2015. The comhairle made the proposal paper available to consultees and held public meetings in both Sir E Scott School and Leverhulme Memorial School on 16 December 2014. The comhairle received no submissions on the consultation from consultees.

2.3 In late 2013, the comhairle consulted previously on the catchment areas for Sir E Scott and Leverhulme Memorial Schools under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. During this consultation, parents from the villages of Geocrab and Manish expressed the view that they would prefer the villages to be included in the catchment area of Sir E Scott School. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has responded positively to these suggestions by putting forward the current proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is proposing to revise the catchment areas for Leverhulme Memorial School and Sir E Scott School by including the villages of Lickisto, Manish and Geocrab in the catchment area of Sir E Scott School from August 2015. The proposal is of clear educational benefit. In taking forward the proposal, the comhairle needs to clarify whether the Flodabay area to the south of Manish is included within the amended catchment area for Sir E Scott School. The villages of Lickisto, Geocrab and Manish are closer to Sir E Scott School than they are to Leverhulme Memorial School. The route from these villages to Sir E Scott School also involves less travel on narrow single track roads. The proposal addresses a historical anomaly where the catchment areas within which some children and young people live results in them having to travel to school a significant distance from their home when there is a closer school available. Parents from the villages of Lickisto, Manish and Geocrab who wish their children to attend Sir E Scott School currently make placing requests to the comhairle and then either transport their children to the school or meet the costs of public transport themselves. If implemented, the proposal will address this anomaly. It will reduce the travel time to school for the children directly affected by the boundary change. It will also ensure the children have free transport to school and travel to school on a route that involves less travel on narrow single track roads. All parents, staff and children who met with HM Inspectors fully supported the proposal.

3.2 The comhairle has undertaken a fair and reasonable assessment of the impact of the proposal on the local community. The comhairle is confident that the number of pupils affected by the boundary change will not affect the rolls of either school. As such, there will be no adverse impact on the community from implementation of the proposal.

4. Summary

The proposal by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to revise the catchment areas for Leverhulme Memorial School and Sir E Scott School is of clear educational benefit. If implemented it will address a current historical anomaly. In its final consultation report, the comhairle needs to clarify whether the Flodabay area to the south of Manish is included within the amended catchment area for Sir E Scott School. The proposal has the full support of the parents, staff and children directly affected by it. Implementation of the proposal will reduce the travel time to school for the children directly affected by the catchment boundary change. It will ensure the children have free transport to their nearest school with less travel on narrow single track roads.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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