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Review of Education Provision
at
SANDWICKHILL SCHOOL
Isle of Lewis

CONSULTATION REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2010

Roinn an Fhoghlaim is Seirbheisean Chloinne

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

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

Report by Director of Education and Children's Services

CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL THAT :

- **Education provision at Sandwickhill Primary School be discontinued with effect from 29 June 2012.**
- **That the pupils of Sandwickhill Primary School continue their education at Stornoway Primary School, from 16 August 2012.**
- **That the catchment area of Stornoway Primary School be extended to include the current catchment area of Sandwickhill 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 Sandwickhill 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 Sandwickhill 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, 27 May 2010.
- Pupils and staff were also consulted separately.
- HMIe 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 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 Sandwickhill Primary School on 27 May 2010.
- Meetings with staff at both Sandwickhill and Stornoway Primary Schools were held separately.
- Meetings with pupils at both Sandwickhill and Stornoway Primary 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, Sandwickhill 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
• Individual written representations	5
• Parent Council	1
• Staff Professional Associations	2
• Bòrd na Gàidhlig	1
• NHS Western Isles	1
• Fire Service	1
TOTAL:	11

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.

CLASS SIZES/SCHOOL ROLL
<p>ISSUE: A number of issues were raised concerning class sizes, capacity, impact on vulnerable children and catchment area.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In looking at the potential class sizes for the coming session there would be an increase in average class sizes of between two and four pupils, if all the pupils in Sandwickhill School were to transfer to Stornoway Primary. • 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased opportunities for pupils, including both curricular and extra curricular ○ A larger pupil population offers 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 in larger groupings alongside pupils of similar ages. • The Education and Children's Services Department is required to provide appropriate support for all young people with ASN as detailed in legislation. Support is provided irrespective of the school, and currently the Education and Children's Services Department supports approximately 1100 children in 38 schools by being compliant with current legislation and best practice guidance. The Authority's ASN provision has been positively evaluated by HMIe inspection processes. • Stornoway Primary School has the facilities to cater for the needs of all children with additional support needs, similar to those at Sandwickhill School. • Where a school is at 70-75% capacity, then it is less likely to be considered for closure/amalgamation.

- At present Sandwickhill school is at 29% capacity, 31% with the inclusion of the Nursery pupils. Stornoway Primary is at 59% capacity. It is for these reasons that it is proposing that Sandwickhill School and Stornoway Primary School are amalgamated.
- As yet there is no decision on changing the catchment area for Stornoway Primary School. Even if the catchment area were to change there would still be capacity for all pupil from Sandwickhill.
- Parental choice is not being removed, although it may be more limited. Of the placing requests from Sandwickhill School over the last 3 sessions, 16 were to Stornoway Primary School, representing 13% of Sandwickhill School population.
- In terms of economic development, research suggests that for every 100 houses built we might expect approximately 28 primary enrolments and 20 secondary enrolments. 28 pupils in addition to the current roll of 18 would not significantly affect our recommendation. We are not aware of any firm proposals yet for 100 houses to be built in the area.
- Over 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. With the improved road infrastructure in the islands, there is evidence that people's choice of where to live is determined by factors other than school.
- The school roll in Sandwickhill School has declined from 94 pupils in 2002 to 37 pupils in 2008 rising slightly to 44 pupils this session (2010). However, the trend is downwards, leaving the school operating well below its potential capacity.
- The decline in population is not always greater in communities where schools have already closed. In some communities, the population has increased despite the closure of the local school.
- All of our schools are designated very remote rural schools. Our strategy is focused on sustaining and strengthening schools in very remote rural locations.
- The Outer Hebrides Migration Study 2008, identified key factors of sustainable communities which included sustainable employment, private sector led economic diversity, housing provision, self determination and clean energy. It is development in these areas that sustains local communities.
- In light of issues raised at the consultation regarding migration and community viability, a European Social Fund (ESF) application supporting community regeneration and economic development, targeting youth and young people has been developed, and is currently being considered at stage 2.
- The School Estate Review does not seek to remove schools from rural communities but rather to provide schools, on a community basis, that are viable and able to deliver a quality education in quality buildings. This is consistent with the Comhairle's policy on community schools, and with the Economic Development definition of sustainable communities.
- 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. Service provision in a community more frequently reflects the demands placed upon it by demographics, population and the economy.
- Across the Western Isles schools successfully serve multiple communities.
- The community has access to community facilities other than the school which are used in preference to the school. In the event that the school is to close, the community would have an opportunity to make a business case for the use of the facility.
- The School Lets Policy is currently being reviewed in light of changes in government policy and will reflect some of the concerns raised.

- All Western Isles schools are required to include studies of their local community within the curriculum and, on this basis, opportunities would be built into the curriculum for both community participation in the school and school participation in the community. It is accepted that the increased distance will provide a greater challenge, but evidence would suggest that a distance of 2 miles does not provide a barrier to community engagement.
- Any recent housing developments in the school catchment area have not resulted in significant increases in the roll of the school.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

ISSUE: A number of issues were raised in relation to the school, school house and costs of DDA compliance.

RESPONSE:

- The Council has made a commitment that in the case of an amalgamation taking place, the pupils from the closing school, would be moving into a building that is better than the one they are in.
- Previously both Stornoway Primary and Sandwickhill were Condition C buildings. Stornoway Primary school has recently been reclassified as a Condition B building.
- The school would be disposed of in accordance with the Comhairle's Policy for the Disposal of Surplus Assets. This policy sets out the process for the disposal of any building that the Comhairle no longer has any use for.
- It is likely that the community would continue to use the schoolhouse as they do at present.
- The full list of the works that would be required to make the school fully DDA compliant have been supplied to the Parent Council. The cost of these works is estimated at £55-£60k.
- The Education and Children's Services Department is committed to working with the community, community hall committee and other Comhairle departments, to develop a strategy to ensure the viability of the community hall.
- In response to the issues raised in the community consultations, the Department is actively looking at ways of providing a community development resource in each area where a school may close. This is with a view to encourage and support local communities to develop and use local resources for recreational, learning and other community uses. A stage 2 ESF application has currently been submitted.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

ISSUE: Parents felt that Sandwickhill had better ICT facilities than Stornoway Primary.

RESPONSE:

- The ICT facilities at Stornoway Primary are as follows.
 - 2Mbps broadband link - being upgraded to 8Mbps this year. Sandwick has a 1Mbps link.
 - Interactive SmartBoards in all classrooms including the nursery unit.
 - An ICT suite plus wireless connectivity for 'Class in a Box' Netbook Units.

- 3 x multi-function, full colour, print-copy-scan, networked devices throughout the school.
- ICT strength in depth in their teaching staff - including 3 staff mentors trained in supporting colleagues in Glow Technologies
- Currently at Stornoway Primary School there is more than one computer allocated for every 3 pupils and in session 2010/11 this will increase to one computer for every 2 pupils.
- Sandwickhill School has one computer allocated for every 2 pupils.

PUPIL WELFARE ISSUES
<p>ISSUE: Some parents expressed concern that Stornoway Primary School would not provide the same security for their children, being a larger school.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils are visible and cared for in all Western Isles schools. • The ASN legislation provides a mechanism to ensure that any barrier to learning can be identified as an additional support need. All schools in the Western Isles operate staged levels of intervention, and have in place appropriate inputs to address needs. • HMIe inspections of almost all schools in the Western Isles highlight a good standard of personal and social support to young people. • The Education and Children's Services Department operates to a robust set of quality improvement procedures and guidance. These procedures require all schools to undertake the following quality assurance activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that all teachers have appropriate plans; • that monitoring of classroom observations take place; • that cross-checking of pupils' work is carried out; • that pupils' jotters are checked regularly; and • that appropriate teaching methodologies are used. • On this basis, the Education and Children's Services Department is confident that it is maintaining high standards of professional competence across all schools.

PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION
<p>ISSUE: A number of issues were raised in relation to the nursery provision at Sandwickhill Primary and Stornoway Primary including issues of capacity and extent of provision.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity will be made in Stornoway Primary for all the pre-school children from Sandwickhill. • The nursery currently provides 16 places for the statutory 12.5 hours, morning only. Parents pay for an additional 1.5 hours per day. If there was an increase in demand, consideration would be given to providing afternoon places. The nursery numbers will not significantly increase pupil enrolments. • The existing Home to School Travel Policy excludes pre-school provision. Sandwickhill School is two miles from Stornoway Primary, and this would be considered an accessible pre-school provision.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

ISSUE: Parents were keen to be included within the Stornoway Primary School Parent Council.

RESPONSE:

- If a decision was made to close Sandwickhill School, the Parent Council would be encouraged to work with the Parent Council of Stornoway Primary School to participate in planning for an effective transition of pupils and staff to Stornoway Primary School.
- Stornoway Primary Parent Council is constituted in accordance with statutory guidance and all members of the parent forum would have the opportunity to stand for election to the Parent Council.

AFTER-SCHOOL CLUB

ISSUE: Information was sought about the costs of Stornoway Primary Afterschool Club. Clarification was also sought as to why is there currently no after-school club in Sandwickhill School.

RESPONSE

- Stornoway After School Club was historically provided by Little Teddies. It is now provided by Stornoway Primary School and designed to meet the needs of working parents in Stornoway. Costs of this resource were part of a Service Level Agreement with NHS Western Isles. The provision can accommodate up to 20 children and is open to all children subject to availability of places.
- There is no after school club provision in Sandwickhill School, as there is not the critical mass of pupils who would make such a provision viable.

TRANSPORT

ISSUE: A number of issues were raised in relation to transport including the possibility of placing requests to Bayble School.

RESPONSE:

- Where capacity exists in a school, placing requests would be considered favourably. Placing requests and transport provision for Bayble School would be considered by the Department on an individual basis.
- The Comhairle's Home to School Travel Policy provides transport for primary children who have to walk more than 1 mile.
- The distances that pupils have to travel to and from school are clearly important in any assessment of appropriate transport provision. Distances of themselves have to be set in the context of road conditions, and the time that such travelling takes.
- The Comhairle's Policy states that Primary pupils should not, as a rule, have to travel more than 30 minutes on a bus.
- All pupils at Sandwickhill will either be able to walk to school or travel on a bus, within the constraints of this policy.

COMMUNITY HALL

ISSUE: Concern was expressed about the potential impact on the community if the hall were to be closed.

RESPONSE

- The Education and Children's Services Department is committed to working with the community, community hall committee and other Comhairle departments to develop a strategy to ensure the viability of the community hall.
- In response to the issues raised in the community consultations, the Department is actively looking at ways of providing a community development resource in each area where a school may close. This is with a view to encourage and support local communities to develop and use local resources for recreational, learning and other community uses. A stage 2 ESF application has currently been submitted.
- The current consultation relates only to the school. The Comhairle is committed to exploring the issues around the sustainability of the Hall and a meeting has already taken place with representatives of the Hall Committee.

ATTAINMENT

ISSUE: There were a number of questions focused on Sandwickhill School's HMle Inspection Report and pupil attainment - "Why close a good school".

RESPONSE:

- The consultation exercise, arising from the School Estate Review, is not based on a criticism of the attainment profile of the individual schools, but rather on its viability and the ability of the Comhairle, to provide quality education in quality buildings, more efficiently.
- There is no evidence to suggest that the amalgamation of Stornoway Primary School and Sandwickhill School would result in any detriment to levels of educational attainment. It will provide a better learning environment with more resources and better class groupings to facilitate learning and teaching.

STAFFING

ISSUE: Concern was expressed over the staff that would be made redundant if the school were to close. Would they be surplus?

RESPONSE

- In the event of school closure which could result in redeployment or displacement of staff, the Comhairle would implement its Human Resources Strategy.

TRANSITION

ISSUE: Concern was expressed about the transition plans if the school were to close.

RESPONSE:

- There would be a planned process of familiarisation for pupils to ensure that the transfer to another school was as seamless and smooth as possible. Pupils would be engaged in planning of the transition and they would be fully engaged along with their parents in a series of events and activities that would make the transition process a positive one.

FINANCE

ISSUE: A number of issues were raised in relation to finance, cost per pupils and school meals.

RESPONSE:

- 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.

Sandwick School 2010	
DESCRIPTION	TOTAL BUDGET
Employee Expenses	225,939
Premises Related Expenditure	24,607
Utilities Related Expenditure	14,057
Resources Related Expenditure	8,706
Transport Related Expenditure	6,996
Catering Related Expenditure	12,100
Net Expenditure	292,405
Parent Council Funding	454
TOTAL	292,859
Number of Pupils	44
COST PER PUPIL	6,656

- The school meal costs reflect staffing levels, staff grading and contractual obligations. It is as a result of 'historic' staffing from a time when the school roll was much higher. Because the number of pupils has fallen but the staffing has remained the same for contractual reasons the unit cost per meal is high.
- Even if the cost per pupil was the same for Stornoway Primary School and Sandwickhill School, the Education and Children's Services Department would still consider the educational benefits to support a transfer of pupils to Stornoway Primary School.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

ISSUE: There was also concern that the closure of the school would result in the reduction in participation in the Mod and rural sports competitions.

RESPONSE

- School sports and participation in the Mod will continue for all primary pupils. All children will continue to have the opportunity to compete in sports and Mods, at both a local and national level.

VULNERABLE CHILDREN
<p>ISSUES: Many parents feel that the small school provides good support for children with additional support needs. Concern was also expressed about the adequacy of the provision in the receiving school.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Education and Children's Services Department is required to provide appropriate support for all young people with ASN as detailed in legislation. Support is provided irrespective of the school, and currently the Education and Children's Services Department supports approximately 1100 children in 38 schools and is compliant with current legislation and best practice guidance. The Authority's ASN provision has been positively evaluated by HMIe inspection processes. • Stornoway Primary School has the facilities to cater for the needs of all children with additional support needs similar to those at Sandwickhill School.

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 Sandwickhill School and the transfer of pupils to Stornoway Primary School. This report is attached as Appendix D.
- 7.2 The Report also identifies issues for consideration by the Comhairle as follows.

HMIe REPORT
<p>ISSUE: The increasing numbers of pre-school children and the potential benefits for them arising from the transfer to Stornoway Primary School, require further consideration by the Comhairle. The Comhairle should accurately determine the demand for pre-school provision in the area, taking account of the potential impact of new housing.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Education and Children's Services Department, through its early years framework has determined demand for pre-school provision in all areas of the Western Isles, and has put in place provision that is considered viable and accessible. • The Comhairle, in order to support providers and prevent the collapse of groups in rural areas, has undertaken to incorporate independent providers within school provision, and to integrate pre-school education with mainstream primary education.
<p>ISSUE: Some stakeholders expressed strong concerns about the proposal, including the impact on children's learning, class sizes and transport arrangements. The Comhairle should reassure stakeholders by providing further information for them on these aspects of the proposal, including the arrangements for all children to receive two hours of high-quality physical education.</p> <p>RESPONSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stornoway Primary School delivers two hours of high quality physical education to all pupils. Classes are scheduled for input from professional physical education teachers and their class teachers. Stornoway Primary School will inform all parents of the PE provision. • 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 offers 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 Sandwickhill School amalgamating with Stornoway Primary School, class sizes would still be within the maximum composite class size of 25.
- 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." Therefore it can be seen from the above comments that there is no definitive advantage to be gained for pupils being educated in a smaller school.

ISSUE: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar should take full account of the composite response submitted by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

RESPONSE:

- 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 all consultations, it was the unanimous view of all pupils that they wanted to retain their own school.

Summary of Consultation with Sandwichhill School Pupils

Benefits

- More pupils, More teachers, More choice
- Different option
- Better preparation for transfer to Nicolson Institute
- Opportunity to make more friends
- Bigger school environment
- Better chance to see some of your friends who already go to Stornoway Primary.

Issues of Concern

- Might not get public transport
- Friends may choose another school
- Get lost easier in bigger school
- More difficult for older children who have been in Sandwich longer to make new friend
- More people might mean less learning i.e. those with ASN might not get the same help
- New school might cause fears
- Work might not be different or it could get repeated
- Change is unsettling
- Too many people so it will be harder to make friends
- More bus travel
- Not as close to home
- Don't know the teachers
- May be more bullying than in Sandwich
- Don't want to leave Sandwich
- We might not see friends who move to another school

RESPONSE:

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

Areas where we might help

- Stornoway Primary visit Sandwich School and tell them about their school i.e. Stornoway Primary pupils and staff visit Sandwich to tell them about their school
- Organise induction to Stornoway Primary
- Stornoway Primary pupils prepare a leaflet telling the Sandwich pupils about their school
- Stornoway Primary to provide Sandwich some of the work that they are doing
- Teachers from Stornoway Primary to visit and teach in Sandwich so that the pupils can become familiar with them
- Pupils at Sandwich to spend a day at Stornoway Primary
- Phase the visits over a period of time from Sandwich to Stornoway Primary
- Organise some social activities
- Give all the pupils from Sandwich a map of Stornoway Primary
- Don't close our school

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 Stornoway Primary School Pupils as the receiving School

Benefits

- More space in a bigger building;
- More school events in which to participate;
- More, and different, teachers;
- More access to equipment and facilities;
- More after school clubs;
- New friends;
- A wider circle of friends;
- More and different experiences

Issues of Concern

- Two schools might have different approaches and different rules;
- Incoming pupils might miss particular aspects of their school;
- There may be tensions between the two groups of pupils;
- Incoming pupils might be bullied;
- Incoming pupils may worry about keeping existing friendships going;
- Pupils in both incoming and receiving schools might be puzzled by the closure;
- Parents' negative views might be transmitted to pupils;
- Incoming pupils might be worried by size of receiving school;
- Incoming pupils might not know to whom to go with a problem;
- Incoming pupils might get lost;
- Incoming pupils might have transport difficulties.

RESPONSE:

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

Areas where we might help

- All pupils to ensure that they smiled at newcomers and offered help;
- Parents of incoming pupils to be shown round school prior to start date;
- School website to be used to display plan of school and other important information;
- Buddy system, which currently works well, to be used and extended.

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.

Sandwickhill Primary School Staff

- It may save money and reduce the cost per pupil
- Staff like the learning and teaching environment of Sandwick school
- Staff feel that it is a small village school and that they have intimate relationship with the community, that is beneficial to education
- Staff feels that it provides extra-curricular in line with pupil needs and interests
- Staff feel that the smaller the school, the greater the level of support they can provide young people
- What would happen to the community hall associated with the school?
- What if demographics change and there was new housing?
- Staff are concerned that the costs of meals did not seem accurate
- More children were able to walk to school
- Concerns regarding redundancy for staff
- Concerns regarding employment of staff
- How would the empty school building be used or would it be knocked down?
- Do pupils have to go to Stornoway Primary or could they choose another school?
- What would we do with the resource?
- Is the nursery part of the proposed integration with Stornoway Primary?
- What would happen to the school house and old canteen?
- Would fundraising for new equipment remain?

- New families and enrolments for the nursery have come to the area. Would the increased numbers make a difference on the decision of the council?
- What would happen to the current school account?
- Could Sandwick be converted to a Gaelic school?
- More discussion and early notification to staff of redundancy and employment issues

Stornoway Primary School Staff

- There were a number of comments relating to the implications on capacity of the recent decision to house Little Teddies in Stornoway Primary and the possible future effect of redrawn catchment area; it was stressed that these were quite separate developments, the effects of which could not inform the present discussion;
- There were comments relating to pressure on resources if the school roll increased; the redeploying of resources from the incoming school was discussed, but the need to exercise sensitivity over this issue was also recognised at this point;
- It was felt that the process of integration was, to some extent, underway already, with a number of children arriving on placement requests; this process had been handled well in the school, and staff were generally positive about the prospect; there was a feeling that the planned arrival of a group of incoming pupils would be preferable to pupils arriving as a result of placement requests throughout the year as had been happening; however, it was also recognised that parents could continue to make such requests in the interim period;
- Concerns about staffing in the receiving school were expressed; staffing would continue to be appropriate to national levels;
- Transport arrangements for incoming pupils were discussed, with a possible effect on the timing of the school day considered; local knowledge indicated that present bus times would accommodate incoming pupils without any change.

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 HMle visited Sandwickhill School to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They attended the public meeting on 27 May 2010 and had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document and all written responses.
- 10.6 In summary, the HMle Report recognises the merits of the closure proposal.
"On balance, the proposal from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to close Sandwickhill Primary School and transfer children to Stornoway Primary School with effect from August 2012, offers some educational benefits for children directly affected by the proposal and more widely across Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. They would have access to Gaelic medium education and increased interaction with others of the same age and stage. They would have access to a wider range of extra-curricular opportunities, although participation may be restricted by travel arrangements. The proposal would not adversely affect the quality of education for children already attending Stornoway Primary School provided the planned refurbishment programme is complete in time to receive the Sandwickhill children in August 2012. Staff at both schools would benefit from more opportunities to work and plan with a greater number of colleagues.

The alternative of maintaining and upgrading the Sandwickhill Primary School building would not necessarily increase the roll and provide children with the full range of learning and social experiences that lie at the heart of Curriculum for Excellence. The Comhairle has set out a case that the savings resulting from implementation of the proposal would contribute to its actions to secure best value. This argument is strong in the context of over-capacity within schools in the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The Comhairle would be able to make more efficient and effective use of its resources to the benefit of learners throughout its area.”

- 10.7 The HMIE report provides evidence that the proposal to amalgamate Sandwickhill School with Stornoway Primary 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 GME 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 Sandwickhill 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 Sandwickhill Primary School would be provided at Stornoway Primary School and that the education provision should be discontinued at Sandwickhill Primary School from 29 June 2012.
- 10.10 The Director of Education and Children’s Services recommends that a transfer of pupils from Sandwickhill School to Stornoway Primary 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 Sandwickhill 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 Sandwickhill School attending a building that is modern and better designed for the delivery of a 21st Century curriculum.
- 10.13 The closure of Sandwickhill 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 Sandwickhill and Stornoway Primary School to develop a transition plan that will ensure an effective transition for pupils and staff to Stornoway Primary School.

RECOMMENDATION

11.1 It is recommended that:

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