



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

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Education Provision Consultation Document – February 2006

GAELIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: PILOT PHASE

Roinn an Fhoghlaim



EDUCATION PROVISION: CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT - FEBRUARY 2006**GAELIC POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: PILOT PHASE**

Report by Director of Education

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Comhairle, at its meeting of 15 December 2005, agreed that the necessary statutory consultations be undertaken on a proposal to establish a pilot phase in respect of the implementation of the Gaelic policy aspiration to provide Gaelic as the principal means of education in the first two years of primary education, while maintaining the capacity to offer English medium education on an area basis.
- 1.2 The schools in the proposed pilot phase are Breascleite School, Stoneybridge School and the three North Uist primary schools; Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible.
- 1.3 The proposal would entail the discontinuation of English Medium education in Breascleite, Stoneybridge, Carinish and Lochmaddy. All pupils in these schools would experience immersion in Gaelic for the first two years, with English being introduced incrementally from P3-P7, but with the ethos of the school and the medium of communication remaining predominantly Gaelic.
- 1.4 English medium education would be available in designated area schools.
- 1.5 The proposed date of implementation of the pilot phase is 17 August 2006. The parents of potential pupils in the schools involved and the appropriate School Boards are being consulted in terms of The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended and The Education (Publication and Consultation) Regulations 1981, as amended.

CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

- 2.1 This document outlines the Comhairle proposal in detail and provides information on the proposed arrangements for education provision in the 5 schools as from August 2006.

FUTURE TIMETABLE

- 3.1 The future arrangements for the education provision in the 5 primary schools will be considered by the Education and Children's Services Committee at its meeting on 22 March 2006 following consultations with the parents of potential pupils in the catchment areas of Breascleite, Stoneybridge, Carinish, Lochmaddy and Paible schools.
- 3.2 The recommendation of the Education and Children's Services Committee will be considered by the Comhairle at its meeting on 30 March 2006. The relevant school boards are also being consulted, as well as the relevant staff associations.

3.3 Consultations with parents will take the form of **public meetings** as follows:

School Catchment	Location of Meeting	Date of Meeting
Stoneybridge	Stoneybridge School	21 February 2006
Carinish	Carinish Hall	22 February 2006
Paible		
Lochmaddy		
Breascleite	Breascleite School	23 February 2006

3.4 The Comhairle proposals will be explained in detail at these meetings. All parents and other persons who are interested are invited to attend.

3.5 Written representations on the proposals may also be made. The Comhairle will consider these in reaching its decision. These written comments must be submitted to the Director of Corporate Services at the Comhairle offices, Stornoway, by 9 March 2006 to ensure that they are considered with the other papers.

BACKGROUND

4.1 The Comhairle Gaelic policy incorporates a policy aspiration to provide Gaelic medium education as the principal means of tuition in the first 2 years of primary school, whilst maintaining a capacity for English medium education on an area basis.

4.2 Previous policy decisions taken are applicable until such time as this policy aspiration is met. These policy decisions are:

- that in the medium term, resources available for Gaelic medium education be devoted to the establishment of an area pattern of provision based, where appropriate and possible, on combined primary and secondary schools (December 1993),
- that there would be flexibility in the case of non-area schools where pupils would be particularly disadvantaged by the area provision on the basis of the exemplar criteria, namely:
 - A distance of more than 10 miles from the nearest Gaelic medium unit;
 - Other travel difficulties e.g. ferry journey;
 - Accommodation not available in the area school (December 1993).
- That the policy requirements for the establishment of a Gaelic medium unit be extended to include a requirement for a minimum of 3 pupils (March 1995).

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

5.1 The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and the Education (Publication and Consultation) Regulations 1981 outline the procedure for consultation in respect of changes to educational provision such as a proposal to discontinue a stage of education in a particular school.

It is necessary to consult:-

- (a) the parent of any pupil who may be required to change school as a result of the proposal;

- (b) the parent of any pupil at a primary school who is expected to transfer to secondary school within 2 years of the date of the proposal and may be expected to transfer to a different school as a result of the proposal;
 - (c) the parent of any pupil due to enter an affected primary school within 2 years (not relevant to this case);
 - (d) the school board of any affected school;
 - (e) provision in relation to denominational schools (not relevant).
- 5.2 Although not a requirement of the legislation it has been the Comhairle practice in the past to consult the schools and staff affected and it is considered appropriate that this good practice should continue.
- 5.3 The authority is required to notify all persons referred to above and then, either provide details by advertisement of a meeting or meetings where views can be made known, or provide a name and address to which written representations can be made. It has been the Comhairle's practice in the past to implement both methods.
- 5.4 There is a requirement to obtain the consent of the Scottish Ministers to such a proposal, if it would result in children having to attend a different primary school 5 miles or more away from the original school.

CONTEXT

- 6.1 Gaelic medium education has been in place in the Western Isles since 1986, operating within designated Gaelic medium units in 25 primary schools.
- 6.2 The total number of pupils currently in Gaelic medium education is 494 pupils, which represents 23.15% of the total primary roll.
- 6.3 External research and the Department of Education's own assessment procedures provide ample evidence of the educational benefits of the Gaelic medium approach. The pre-school strategy now in place in respect of Gaelic will underpin an approach which makes Gaelic medium the natural progression route from the pre-school experience.
- 6.4 The Comhairle, in conjunction with Comunn na Gaidhlig, has a strategy in place to promote uptake of Gaelic medium education. This includes distribution of leaflets, meetings with groups of parents, and a home-visiting scheme among parents of pre-school children. Further events are planned for 2006 to commemorate 20 years of Gaelic medium education.

DELIVERY OF GAELIC MEDIUM EDUCATION

- 7.1 From P1 to P7, the curriculum follows the 5-14 Curricular Guidelines across the 5 key areas. For the first 2 years the delivery of this curriculum is through Gaelic, except when non-Gaelic speaking visiting teachers are involved, e.g. PE, Art, and where English may be used for matters of health and safety.
- 7.2 Across the 7 years of primary education, Gaelic is the principal language through which language skills are first developed.

7.3 Comhairle guidelines relating to the incremental introduction of English are:

P1-2	Gaelic	
P3	90% Gaelic	10% English
P4	80% Gaelic	20% English
P5	70% Gaelic	30% English
P6	60% Gaelic	40% English
P7	50% Gaelic	50% English

7.4 Where additional support for learning is required, the authority is committed to providing the appropriate level of support in Gaelic, provided Gaelic speaking staff can be identified/recruited.

BENEFITS OF GAELIC MEDIUM EDUCATION

8.1 It is widely known that bilingualism confers educational and intellectual advantages. There is evidence that pupils who are bilingual gain cognitive, cultural and psychological advantages. These additional advantages include a greater capacity for “cognitive flexibility” (creative problem-solving). This is considered to be the result of drawing on 2 different linguistic and cultural systems of representation to interpret the world around them.

8.2 Being bilingual in the world of work is also an advantage. Research done on the comparative advantages of bilingualism on the job market shows that bilingual candidates can enter the job market more easily and can change jobs more easily than can unilingual persons. In this context, an employer is quoted as saying that “having bilingual skills in a rapidly changing world made the employee much more flexible and more valuable to the company in their capacity to adapt.”

PILOT PHASE IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Issues to be considered in implementation of the proposed pilot are outlined below:

Identification of area schools

9.2 Schools need to be designated as the area schools in which English medium education will be available. The school designated as the area school would usually be the secondary school in whose catchment the primary school is located. However, this may not be appropriate in all instances, in particular where the secondary school does not have a primary department, and where the distance can be significant.

9.3 The parents of pupils attending the designated area school instead of their local school, for the specific purpose of receiving English medium education, would be required to submit a placing request to the Department of Education, in accordance with the provisions of The Education (Scotland) Act 1980. Such pupils would be entitled to free transport, in terms of Comhairle provision for home to school transport.

Staffing

9.4 As schools which currently do not provide Gaelic medium education move to meet the policy aspiration, it is likely to involve the provision of an additional teacher to allow the immersion phase to be established in the school, unless classes can be configured in such a way that implementation can be managed within existing staff.

- 9.5 As all the schools in the proposed pilot, with the exception of Lochmaddy School, currently provide Gaelic medium education, the only school likely to require an additional teacher would be Lochmaddy School.
- 9.6 The policy aspiration makes specific reference to the first 2 years of primary education. However, in order to ensure fluency in Gaelic, the Gaelic medium approach needs to be maintained throughout primary school and into secondary school.
- 9.7 This may involve, in some instances, the transfer of staff between schools, as English medium provision is phased out.
- 9.8 Vacant posts in these schools would be designated as “Gaelic Essential” for recruitment purposes.
- 9.9 The following table gives information in respect of the proposed pilot, showing the rationale for selection of these schools, and identifies the schools proposed for placement of pupils opting for English medium education.

School	Suggested Area School	Rationale
Breascleite Stoneybridge	Carloway Daliburgh/lochdar	<p>These schools currently have all recent entrants opting for Gaelic medium education, or have had very few pupils over the past number of years opting for English medium education. The staffing is in place to allow implementation to commence.</p> <p>There could be transport implications if some parents wished to send their children to the English medium provision.</p> <p>Stoneybridge is a feeder primary for Sgoil Lionacleit, and Breascleite is a feeder primary for the Nicolson Institute. Neither of these schools has a primary department, and primary schools close to the catchment area have been identified as possible area schools in respect of English medium.</p>
Carinish Lochmaddy Paible	Paible Paible Paible	<p>During the operation of the joint Comhairle/Comunn na Gaidhlig home visiting scheme in North Uist during 2004/05, a significant number of parents indicated interest in opting for Gaelic medium education for their children. The information gathered as part of this initiative, in respect of pupil numbers, is given in 10.6 below. It can be seen from this information that the majority of parents in North Uist wish to opt for Gaelic medium education for their children. Provision for Gaelic medium education is currently available in both Carinish and Paible schools.</p>

School	Suggested Area School	Rationale
cont'd		There is currently no Gaelic medium provision in Lochmaddy school, but current information is that there is no P1 intake expected in August 2006. Staffing is in place to allow implementation, subject to a further assessment of need for Lochmaddy for the first Gaelic intake in 2007. An additional teacher may be required when Gaelic medium is introduced.

School rolls 2005-06

9.10 The tables below show the rolls of the schools in the current session, and the projected total intake for 2006-07 based on current information.

School	Gaelic Medium								English Medium							
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
Breascleite	1	3	1	2	3	2	4	16	0	0	1	0	1	4	3	9
Stoneybridge	3	0	3	3	0	5	2	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carinish	0	2	1	1	4	0	1	9	3	3	1	5	4	3	7	26
Lochmaddy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	9	5	19
Paible	2	0	1	1	6	2	3	15	3	4	7	7	2	11	8	40

Projected intakes 2006-07

9.11 The projected intake is as follows:

School	P1 intake
Breascleite	5
Stoneybridge	2
Carinish	7
Lochmaddy	0
Paible	4

REQUEST FOR A GAELIC SCHOOL – NORTH UIST

- 10.1 Comann nam Parant Uibhist-a-Tuath has submitted a written request for a Gaelic school in North Uist. The preferred location of this school would be Carinish School.
- 10.2 The Comhairle policy does not specifically mention the setting up of Gaelic schools, although the implementation of the policy, as outlined in this document, would in effect result in a number of all-Gaelic primary schools in the Western Isles once the current cohort of English medium pupils have moved to secondary education.
- 10.3 The rationale put forward in respect of setting up a Gaelic school in Carinish includes the following:
- The total pupil population in North Uist is low, and that concentration of pupils in one location would ensure more viable class sizes, thereby protecting the integrity of the P1-2 immersion phase.

- The level of demand from the Lochmaddy area is low.
 - The perceived benefits in terms of increased contact with Gaelic in all areas of school life in a school with a Gaelic ethos.
 - Ninety per cent of parents who wish Gaelic medium education for their children would consider a Gaelic school. Carinish School is given as the location preferred by most.
- 10.4 The request suggests that from August 2006 all entrants to Carinish should be Gaelic medium and that existing English classes should be phased out over the next few years.
- 10.5 In parallel with this is the suggestion that Gaelic medium classes at Paible could likewise be phased out, with pupils having the option to transfer to Carinish if desired.
- 10.6 As can be seen from the tables below, which are compiled from information submitted by Comann nam Parant Uibhist-a-Tuath, the points made regarding the total Gaelic medium roll is valid. The current projected total rolls in Gaelic medium for the individual schools are low. The table indicates that there will be a significant drop in school rolls over the next few years.

TOTAL PROJECTED ROLL 2006-07																
School	Gaelic Medium								English Medium							
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
Carinish	4	0	2	1	1	4	0	12	0	3	3	1	5	4	3	19
Lochmaddy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	9	14
Paible	2	2	0	1	1	6	2	14	2	3	4	7	7	2	11	36

PROJECTED P1 INTAKE 2006-2009								
Year	Lochmaddy		Paible		Carinish		Total	
	GM	EM	GM	EM	GM	EM	GM	EM
2006	0	0	2	2	4	0	6	2
2007	2	2	3	2	5	0	10	4
2008	2	1	2	1	5	1	9	3
2009	0	1	5	1	4	0	9	2
Total	4	4	12	6	18	1	34	11

- 10.7 The points made regarding the advantages of a school having a more Gaelic ethos would be applicable to Lochmaddy and Carinish, in the context of the implementation of the Comhairle policy aspiration, as these schools would be totally Gaelic within 7 years.
- 10.8 The request implies that pupils currently in English medium education in Carinish would not necessarily remain in Carinish until the completion of their primary schooling, and states that Gaelic medium pupils from Paible School could transfer to Carinish. Transfer in the middle of primary schooling would probably be unacceptable to parents.
- 10.9 The distance from Carinish School for travel from Berneray, for example, could militate against the choice of Gaelic medium in some cases, if Gaelic was only available in Carinish.

CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The information given in this document is provided to allow parents, school boards, and other interested parties to consider the proposed pilot for Gaelic medium education with a view to submitting views, either at public meetings or as written responses. All views submitted will be presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee as part of the report on the outcome of the consultation process.

Catherine Dunn
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