
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	25 January 2022
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/07/22/RB
Contact Officer:	Ruth Binks	Contact No:	01475 712748
Subject:	Gaelic Secondary Education in Inverclyde		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Education and Communities Committee with proposals for the future of Gaelic secondary education in Inverclyde.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Education and Communities Committee in November 2021 agreed that officers continue to explore options for Gaelic medium secondary education for pupils currently attending Whinhill Primary School in the immediate future, medium and longer term. This was in response to the Glasgow Gaelic school reaching capacity and being unlikely to accept pupils from Inverclyde in the future.
- 2.2 Education Services have undertaken comprehensive work to pursue options for Gaelic medium secondary education in Inverclyde. This includes meetings with other authorities, meetings with parents, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Education Scotland. A letter from the parents from the most recent December meeting is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.3 Work to date and research undertaken by the Education Department has identified that the preferred option for the immediate term is to set up Gaelic provision in an Inverclyde Secondary School (Inverclyde Academy) from August 2022/23. This means that certainty over continuity of secondary Gaelic provision can be guaranteed and avoids the ongoing uncertainty linked to placing requests.
- 2.4 There is a need to establish a catchment area for both Whinhill Gaelic primary provision and the new proposed secondary provision. Any catchment area needs to be established through a statutory consultation. The proposal would be to establish the whole of Inverclyde as the catchment area, and the proposed timetable for consultation is attached as Appendix 2.
- 2.5 Given that a catchment area will be established for both primary and secondary Gaelic provision, it is proposed that if they meet the distance requirements, all pupils within Inverclyde will be transported to primary and secondary Gaelic medium provision. Because the authority is offering secondary Gaelic provision, the proposal is not to fund transport for placing requests to Glasgow from August 2022/23 but to continue to fund transport for those who are currently at the school.
- 2.6 The Education and Communities Committee also asked that options for medium and longer term secondary Gaelic provision to be explored and all options considered through an options appraisal. To this end it is proposed to set up an advisory group to consider the future of Gaelic education in Inverclyde. This would include Inverclyde based parents of Comann nam Parant, Education Officers, head teachers, members of Parent Councils and CLD providers. The advisory group would be supported by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Education Scotland where necessary and bring back further reports of developments and proposals to the Education and

Communities Committee

- 2.7 The draft Inverclyde Gaelic Language Plan has been out for public consultation. Feedback received from the draft Gaelic Language Plan will be used to shape the final Plan which will be presented to the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on 1st February 2022, prior to being submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for final approval.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Education and Communities Committee is asked to:
- Approve the provision of Gaelic medium secondary education at Inverclyde Academy from August 2022/23
 - Approve that officers undertake statutory consultation for the creation of an Inverclyde wide catchment area for primary and secondary Gaelic provision as outlined in the timeline in Appendix 1
 - Approve that transport for any new pupils attending Glasgow Gaelic School will not be provided from August 2022/23
 - Approve the creation of a Gaelic advisory group to consider options for medium and longer term Gaelic provision in Inverclyde.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Whinhill Primary school has a very strong and well respected Gaelic unit and nursery class. Pupils from the school wishing to continue Gaelic into secondary education currently put a placing request into Glasgow Gaelic school. Inverclyde Council still provides transport for pupils attending the Gaelic school, whilst some other Councils have opted not to do so. Initially, for the academic year 2020/21 Glasgow Gaelic School turned down the placing requests from Inverclyde, although subsequently the school accepted them. As Glasgow Gaelic school continues to expand – it is highly likely that the school will not be able to accommodate placing requests in the future.
- 4.2 Whilst there is no statutory requirement for a local authority to provide secondary Gaelic, Education Services are extremely keen for the pupils to continue in Gaelic medium. One solution could be to provide a secondary Gaelic provision in one of our secondary schools.
- 4.3 The Education and Communities Committee in November 2021 agreed that officers continue to explore options for Gaelic medium secondary education for pupils currently attending Whinhill Primary School in the immediate future, medium and longer term.
- 4.4 To date two meetings have been held with parents from Gaelic provision at Whinhill Primary School, the most recent being on December 15 where draft proposals were shared.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 Education Services have spoken to surrounding authorities including Argyll and Bute, Renfrewshire, North Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire, Glasgow and North Lanarkshire about their Gaelic provision. This has given a comprehensive overview of what is currently offered by other authorities and the possibilities of partnership working in the future.
- 5.2 Meetings have taken place with both Bord na Gaidhlig and Education Scotland to seek advice on how Inverclyde could progress the delivery of a high quality curriculum in secondary Gaelic Education. Liaison has also taken place with the Scottish Government about the application for a Gaelic grant for secondary provision.
- 5.3 Meetings have taken place with parents, both the wider parent body and also specifically the parents of the youngsters in P7 who will attend secondary school in the academic year 2022/23. Two meetings have taken place with Comann nam Parant from Whinhill, the first in September 2021 and a subsequent follow up meeting in December 2021. At the December meeting, rather than contribute during the meeting Comann nam Parant asked for proposals to be submitted in writing to them so that they could respond. This was undertaken and Comann nam Parant were assured that their views would be represented to elected members. The full letter from Comann nam Parant with responses is attached as Appendix 1 to this paper.
- 5.4 During conversation with Bord na Gaidhlig it became apparent that a catchment area for the Gaelic provision at Whinhill Primary school has never been established. The Bord suggested that this should be remedied as soon as possible.
- 5.5 The consultation on the Inverclyde Gaelic Language plan 2022-27 ran from 29 October to Friday 10 December 2021. The plan has the following as a high level aim:

Explore opportunities, in partnership with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and with neighbouring authorities, within the first 18 months of the plan and make appropriate recommendations for the development of Gaelic Medium Education provision at secondary level within the Inverclyde Council area.

6.0 PROPOSALS

- 6.1 Work to date and research undertaken by the Education Department has identified that the

preferred option is to set up Gaelic provision in an Inverclyde Secondary School (Inverclyde Academy) from August 2022/23. This means that certainty over continuity of secondary Gaelic provision can be guaranteed and avoids the ongoing uncertainty linked to placing requests. An application for a Gaelic grant for 1.0 teacher and 0.2 management has been made and the remainder of any funding shortfall for staffing will be resourced through the current teaching budget.

- 6.1.1 Inverclyde Academy is the secondary school linked to Whinhill Primary so provides the most obvious transition for pupils to progress on with their primary school peers. Inverclyde Academy has committed to provide Gaelic learner provision and the pupils who have learned Gaelic as a second language during primary school will also be able to continue into secondary school. In this way Inverclyde will be able to increase the use and learning of Gaelic in line with both our own and the national Gaelic Language plan.
- 6.1.2 A further advantage of Inverclyde Academy is that it has the space to offer a wider Gaelic curriculum as numbers increase. The senior leadership team in the school are also committed to working with their feeder primary school of Whinhill to promote Gaelic culture and provide opportunities for joint working promoting Gaelic arts and culture.
- 6.1.3 Parents had asked officers to explore the possibility of Dunoon Grammar and officers met with Argyll and Bute to explore this. Dunoon would have places for young people from Inverclyde and currently have 1.0 teaching staff for Gaelic. Argyll and Bute were very open to working with Inverclyde and stated that it was unlikely that the school would fill up with increased places and that it is highly likely that the school would cope with increased numbers in the future. Argyll and Bute would seek to increase their teaching provision to 1.6 in the future to provide for expansion if required.

The option of Dunoon is not one that is recommended at this time for the following reasons:

- Pupils in Inverclyde would remain as placing requests and there would never be a guarantee of secondary provision, relying on year upon year placing requests. This was the situation with Glasgow Gaelic School and recreates the same circumstances that lead to the issues parents faced last year.
- There are also issues with transporting children on the ferry and emergency arrangements and disruption to education if the ferry did not run.
- Inverclyde will be able to closely match the curriculum offer currently offered by Dunoon
- The Dunoon option would provide little opportunity for the wider promotion of joint working with the Gaelic provision within Whinhill Primary School

Given that the view of Bord na Gaidhlig is also that Local Authorities establish their own provision, so there is a 3-18 vision for a GME service in the area, officers would not recommend Dunoon Grammar at this point in time. Like Glasgow Gaelic school, if parents wish to put in a placing request to the school then they would be entitled to do so.

- 6.1.4 Research has taken place as to how other authorities have set up secondary provision. In all cases, the approach is very similar to the approach being proposed for 2022/23 in Inverclyde. Bord na Gaidhlig, who have experience in advising other authorities have provided examples of approaches taken and the types of issues to think about as numbers increase. It is very much hoped that this will help to inform thinking as medium and longer term options are explored.
- 6.2 If agreed by Committee, Inverclyde will be offering a secondary provision from 2022/23. It is proposed that this becomes the default option for all future secondary pupils rather than providing transport to Glasgow Gaelic School. Given that opportunities to speak Gaelic should be offered on a daily basis it is not recommended that provision for secondary is split once the authority has committed to provide secondary Gaelic provision. Not only would this be a difficult option to justify financially but also it could mean that there is no continuity / build-up of year groups as the provision hopes to expand. Of course families can exercise their right to put placing requests into any school, but in such cases the authority would not normally provide transport.

- 6.2.1 It would be disruptive to pupils currently attending the Glasgow Gaelic School to stop transport, therefore the proposal in this paper is to continue to provide transport for pupils who currently attend the school until they leave.
- 6.3 There is a need to establish a catchment area for both Whinhill Gaelic primary provision and the new proposed secondary provision. Any catchment area needs to be established through a statutory consultation. The proposal would be to establish the whole of Inverclyde as the catchment area, and the proposed timetable for consultation is attached as Appendix 2.
- 6.3.1 If an Inverclyde wide catchment area is created then all primary pupils within Inverclyde will be entitled to transport if they live further than one mile from the school and all secondary pupils will be entitled to transport if they live more than two miles from the school providing they live in Inverclyde. This will be a cost to the authority which will be managed within budgets, but it is hoped that the decrease in need for secondary transport to Glasgow will eventually cover the increase of provision within Inverclyde.
- 6.4 The Education and Communities Committee also asked that options for medium and longer term secondary Gaelic provision be explored and all options considered. To this end it is proposed to set up an advisory group to consider the future of Gaelic education in Inverclyde. This would include Inverclyde based parents of Comann nam Parant, Education Officers, head teachers, members of Parent Councils and CLD providers. The advisory group would be supported by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Education Scotland where necessary and bring back further reports of developments and proposals to the Education and Communities Committee
- 6.5 There is always the possibility of individual choices on a year by year basis meaning that the establishment of a secondary Gaelic provision in the initial stages takes time to embed. For instance if the children in P7 this year were awarded places at Glasgow Gaelic School then the status quo could continue for another year. This is an option for the committee to consider and would give time for the advisory group to be established. Keeping the status quo would not give the settled and guaranteed position for secondary Gaelic that parents had requested. There is no statutory requirement to provide secondary Gaelic medium education.
- 6.6 The feedback received from the draft Gaelic Language Plan will be used to shape the final Plan which will be presented to the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on 1st February 2022, prior to being submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for final approval.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance

There will be financial implications linked to this proposal. The teaching staff will be contained within the overall staffing budget and the authority will apply for a Gaelic grant for secondary provision. The transport costs will initially be more expensive but it is anticipated that initial additional expense for transport will be offset by the reduction in transport to the Glasgow Gaelic School. The approximate initial cost for transporting primary pupils will be in the region of £30,000 per year but this could increase if numbers rise. The current cost for transporting the 9 pupils to Glasgow Gaelic is £38,000.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

7.2 **Legal**

N/A.

7.3 **Human Resources**

N/A.

7.4 **Equalities**

Equalities

(a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

X	YES
	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

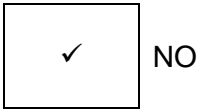
Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
✓	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
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7.5 Repopulation

N/A.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 N/A.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 N/A.

Response by Comann nam Pàrant from Whinhill to the proposal for secondary education in Inverclyde

Dear Mrs Binks

On behalf of the parents of children in Gaelic medium education at Whinhill Primary School we are writing in response to the proposal of secondary Gaelic provision in Inverclyde Academy.

Before going into detail, we would like to express that the time scale given to us to make this decision - having received the proposal a few days before Christmas and pressed to answer by the end of term, or at the latest by the first day back - was unreasonable; especially given the fact that the first meeting we had regarding this issue took place almost 5 months ago and we have been aware of the insecurity of our children's further education since May last year.

We feel this was a deliberate attempt to pressure already anxious parents and children into making a hasty decision.

Response

A meeting was held to discuss the contents of the paper and to listen to concerns. Although Bord na Gaidhlig and the head teacher of Inverclyde Academy were both present to discuss curricular options and plans for the future the opportunity for questions was not taken up.

However, to the proposal... We had expected to receive an overview of the 'Options Appraisal' as indicated by Inverclyde Council. This would include an insight into the three options identified for our children's education:

- A unit within an Inverclyde High School
- A partnership with the Gaelic Unit within Dunoon Grammar school
- A stand-alone 3-18 GM school in Inverclyde

The proposal we received on 17th December 2021 covers just two of these options, avoiding any consideration for a stand-alone GM school, which, as you know, is the preferred option for most parents of children in Gaelic Medium in Inverclyde.

When considering what we do have in this partial proposal, we find that it lacks the required information to assist us in making an informed decision.

Response

It was simply not possible to undertake a full options appraisal in the timescale. This is why the paper identifies setting up a Gaelic advisory group who will oversee the undertaking and remit of a wider options appraisal for the future. Officers have taken advice from Bord na Gaidhlig and

Education Scotland in the establishment of Gaelic secondary provision for the academic year 2022/23 which was identified as the immediate concern.

Dunoon Grammar

With regards to Dunoon Grammar, we appreciate you state that Argyll and Bute had said they would welcome our pupils and do not foresee a capacity issue in the future. Yet you claim that this would be an insecure arrangement similar to that held previously with Glasgow. We feel that if Dunoon Grammar see this as a viable option, many of us would be as prepared to work with this as we were to send our children to Glasgow on a placement request. This should not be a reason to dismiss the Dunoon option.

The issue of travel to Dunoon has also been cited as a reason to dismiss the option. For some parents the prospect of a ferry is a concern, however this is a commuter crossing, made daily by teachers and pupils alike. The car ferry almost never fails and if it did, occasional remote, online learning would not be an issue. Statutory guidance 2.16 from Bord Na Gaidhlig states that a range of delivery methods could be employed “including distance learning and technology”.

We also note that the road journey to Glasgow is comparable in terms of duration.

The option of Dunoon still does not satisfy the aim of establishing Gaelic secondary provision in Inverclyde. Bord na Gaidhlig has advised that GME Secondary Provision in Glasgow began with the development of GME secondary service within Hillpark Secondary. As this became more successful during the 1990s and early 2000s, with numbers of pupils growing, it was decided that a standalone GME Secondary would be the next step in development.

SGG didn't exist until 2006 – prior to that, there was Gaelic Secondary provision within Hillpark Secondary.

Statutory guidance 2.16 refers to how a service would be delivered – The Bord have confirmed that the intention is that teaching staff would normally be the core of a Local Authority provision with further curriculum delivery potentially from additional online support (e.g. e-Sgoil). Any additional online support wouldn't necessarily be available because the teaching staff would be engaged in teaching classes.

The issue remains when pupils get stranded in Dunoon and cannot get home. Contingency arrangements would need to be put in place.

Inverclyde Academy curriculum concerns

The proposal states that Inverclyde Academy would be able to closely match the curriculum offered by Dunoon Grammar. There is no detail here to support this claim and we would like to know more.

We would particularly like to know how the curriculum will be expanded to match Dunoon's subject pool and extra-curricular activities, such as: FilmG, BT Deasbad Alba, Sports, Drama, and school trips all through the medium of Gaelic.

With regards to the availability of subjects through the medium of Gaelic, Statutory guidance 2.19 and 2.16, show that Maths, History, Gàidhlig, Modern Studies and Geography are all examined at advanced higher level in Gaelic by the SQA. However, these subjects are not offered at this level in the English stream of Inverclyde Academy. With the situation as it is currently, Gaelic speaking children would not have the academic support to sit these exams in either English or Gaelic.

We as parents also require assurances that subjects inherent to Gaelic culture such as arts, drama and music are offered at Advanced Higher levels in line with other Secondary schools.

Response

Each school in Inverclyde offers Advanced Highers according to pupil choice and schools can also access consortium arrangements. This means that the lack of a subject on a timetable does not necessarily mean that pupils do not access that subject. Each year wInverclyde Adademy offers Art and Music at Advanced Higher level and Drama at Higher in Inverclyde Academy. Any levels/courses outwith these are accessed through consortium arrangements

It is our intention to link with Whinhill Primary School to continue to offer the wide cultural subjects linked to Gaelic culture. Whinhill links with many Gaelic organisations to access cultural music and drama and the BBC. While this has been limited due to Covid we expect this to increase significantly again once mitigations are reduced.) With a very high initial pupil to staff ratio we envisage that many exciting opportunities for wider cultural experiences can be explored.

Statutory guidance 2.19 refers to availability of SQA qualifications through the medium of Gaelic. Our understanding is that there is a very mixed picture across the country in individual GME Secondary Services regarding actual GME courses that they are able to provide.

Gaelic Culture

With the curriculum to one side, we are concerned about the diminished culture and peer support for Gaelic learning that our children now face compared with what we were led to expect from Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu.

While it is not on the scale of Glasgow, we understand that Dunoon has a fully established Gaelic unit with a wide age range of fluent Gaelic speakers. It cannot be stressed enough how important this peer support will be for our children's confidence and continuation with Gaelic.

We believe it is essential that children have access to a wider peer group of those whose experiences mirror their own to promote good mental development and positive social relationships. Due to small numbers in Whinhill Primary, this peer support group and subsequent mental and social benefits that all English medium children will automatically receive, will not be present for Gaelic speaking children at a new unit.

Response

An advantage of Inverclyde Academy is that the children from Whinhill will progress with their peers and enhanced transitions can take place. Whilst it is understandable that pupils from smaller primary schools can feel apprehensive, enhanced transition can be put in place to ease this. Because of the high teacher to pupil ratio pupils will get many additional opportunities to converse in Gaelic.

There is also the additional advantage of being able to provide interdisciplinary learning opportunities, where several subjects are linked through a common theme e.g. languages/drama.music. Inverclyde Academy provides Drama as part of the curriculum and as Glasgow Gaelic School currently provides Drama through the medium of English, there would be a similarity in experience between the two schools.

Further to this, the short-term plans outlined in the proposal leave the following statements to be answered:

- Contingency plans surrounding teacher absence and the effects of extended leave such as parental leave or bereavement. Anecdotal evidence has shown that the single Gaelic teacher at Greenock Academy was not replaced, thus leaving the small number of students without any Gaelic learning in an English medium school.
- Parents fears about potential bullying in an Inverclyde school have not been acknowledged or addressed at meetings or in this proposal. We know that children who stand out in school can be targets. We are concerned that the inevitable celebration of the new Gaelic unit... adapted signage, translated emails, including Gaelic in assemblies... all which would lead to the promotion of Gaelic culture, but could also foster resentment, especially with such low numbers of Gaelic pupils representing this change. Have the Education officers considered this possibility? What is the school's bullying strategy? And how does it plan to manage the integration of the Gaelic unit?
- We are concerned that you indicate if siblings were accepted into Glasgow their transport would not be supported by Inverclyde council, despite their elder sibling's transport being maintained. We feel it is not reasonable to expect children from the same family to go to different schools because they cannot afford a spare seat in a taxi.
- If a Gaelic unit in Inverclyde Academy is unable to start due to lack of pupil numbers, will the council financially support travel to Dunoon Grammar?

Response

- The intention is to work alongside the Gaelic provision in Whinhill primary school, thus being able to provide cover if necessary in the first years. Depending on numbers, the intention is to employ a second teacher as soon as needed. The Local Authority would explore the potential for accessing additional online support from agencies such as e-Sgoil, in the event of absence seriously impacting on delivery.
- Inverclyde Academy has experience of welcoming pupils from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of additional languages. As with all schools in Inverclyde the school is very supportive and nurturing. All schools use the Inverclyde anti-bullying policy which incorporates Respect Me. The head teacher has a strong commitment to integrating the Gaelic unit, including building on Gaelic as language 3.
- As with all placing requests, there is simply no guarantee that siblings will get a place in the Glasgow Gaelic school. To be clear, the authority would establish a catchment area for Gaelic medium provision and offer free transport to all pupils who live more than 2 miles away from Inverclyde Academy. If a placing request is accepted for the Glasgow Gaelic School then the proposal is not to offer bespoke transport for anyone who chooses to attend, including siblings. However, it should be noted that young people are entitled to free bus transport and that there is public transport between Inverclyde and Glasgow (with a bus stopping within walking distance of the Gaelic School). Because of the small numbers this option would be considered to be feasible.
- Whilst we hope that this will not be the case if a Gaelic provision is established in Inverclyde, parents will always have the right to submit a placing request to Dunoon Grammar or the Glasgow Gaelic School. With the establishment of a secondary provision and catchment area in Inverclyde then this would bring Gaelic medium in line with the Council transport policy on placing requests.
- Once a Gaelic medium provision is established then this should be the main option offered by the authority in order to build up the provision and provide Gaelic enrichment. It is unfair on those who attend if, as they progress through the school, others in lower years opt not to attend.

This information is important for all parents to come to one of the most important decisions we will make concerning our children's future.

We have to be clear however, that the decision to accept or reject this proposal must be made by each year group in their turn. The numbers of pupils will change over the years as will the parents' wishes for each child. We therefore must defer the decision for this year to the current P7's.

In the meantime, many of us will continue to advocate for a stand-alone Gaelic medium school in Inverclyde as we feel this will best serve the children and the town.

This remains an option, but secondary Gaelic medium provision will take time to build up and gain a critical mass. Whilst the Council has to start somewhere please be assured that there is a strong commitment from all involved to establishing Gaelic medium secondary provision in Inverclyde.

Yours sincerely

Comann nam Pàrant

Statutory guidance 2.15, 2.16, 2.18, 2.19, 2.23, 2.30 & 2.31 available at

<https://www.gaidhlig.scot/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Statutory-Guidance-for-Gaelic-Education.pdf>

APPENDIX 2

Gaelic Catchment Areas

Statutory Consultation to create catchment areas for Secondary Gaelic provision in Inverclyde

January 25 2022	Decision taken at Education and Communities Committee
January 26 – Jan 28 2022	Preparation of proposal paper Notification to Education Scotland of intended proposal and timeline
1 February 2022	Start Consultation period (6 weeks – 30 school days) Publish the proposal paper Hold public meeting
18 March	Last day of consultation
18 March – 25 April	Prepare Education Scotland proposal paperwork
25 April -16 May	3 week timeline for Education Scotland
16 May – 24 May	Preparation of final proposal
24 May	Publication of proposal 3 weeks prior to decision being taken
14 June	Final decision at education and Communities Committee