

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL
EDUCATION SERVICES
RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

**PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE CATCHMENT AREA OF TARBERT
ACADEMY SECONDARY DEPARTMENT TO INCLUDE
THE ISLAND OF GIGHA**

REPORT BY COMMUNITY SERVICES: EDUCATION

Purpose of Report

To advise the Executive Committee on the outcome of the public consultation on the Council's proposed change to the catchment area of Tarbert Academy Secondary department to include the Island of Gigha.

This document has been issued by Argyll and Bute Council in response to the consultation in terms of the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010.

**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL
EDUCATION SERVICES**

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

**THE PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE CATCHMENT AREA OF TARBERT
ACADEMY SECONDARY DEPARTMENT TO INCLUDE THE ISLAND OF
GIGHA**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Argyll and Bute Council approved consultation on the proposal (see Appendix A) that there be a change to the catchment area of Tarbert Academy Secondary department to include the Island of Gigha.
- 1.2 Pupils from the Tayinloan area have traditionally had the option of travelling north to Tarbert or south to Campbeltown for their secondary education and Argyll and Bute Council sought the views of interested parties on the proposal to extend this choice to secondary-aged pupils from Gigha, at the same time removing the option to attend Oban High School.
- 1.3 Part of the process is to provide an educational benefits statement, which the Council believes will result from implementation of the proposal.
- 1.4 In the case of this proposal, two specific benefits were identified:
 - 1.4.1 There are differences in curricular and extra-curricular subjects and activities, which will give pupils a wider choice; and
 - 1.4.2 Class sizes at Tarbert Academy are generally smaller, which some pupils and parents may find more attractive.
- 1.5 Argyll and Bute Council undertook that consultation in line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. This report has been prepared in accordance with the terms of the Act.

The process requires authorities to actively involve and consult with children and young people, staff, parents/carers, parent councils and other school users. It is necessary to include an educational benefits statement; that is, the authority must produce a statement setting out its assessment of the effects on children and young people and other users of any affected school. There is a mandatory six-week term time consultation period.

 - Consultation papers were distributed to a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties
 - A notice to advise of the consultation arrangements was placed in the press

- The proposal was made available on the Council website for information; a request for written comments was placed within the downloadable proposal
- The consultation period ran from 19th April – 2nd June 2010 inclusive, a total of six weeks within school term time
- Two public meetings were arranged to facilitate a wide breadth of involvement
- Children and staff were invited, through a letter sent to their schools, to participate in the consultation process via their establishments
- All responses to the consultation were recorded, and subsequently validated by a member of the education team in order to ensure that views and comments were accurately reflected in the consultation response paper.
- In relation to the proposal, a public consultation meeting was held in Gigha Primary School. An additional meeting was organised at Glenbarr Primary School to ensure that any parents or member of the public from the mainland were not disadvantaged by not being able to attend the late afternoon meeting held on Gigha. No-one attended the public meeting at Glenbarr. A record of the views and issues raised at this meeting are contained in Appendix B

1.6 The statutory consultation period concluded on 2nd June 2010.

1.7 All individual responses will be available for inspection at Argyll House, Dunoon by request. Please phone 01369 704 000

2. Response to the consultation

2.1 A total of six responses to this proposal were received and these are shown by respondent category in Appendix C.

2.2 Of the six responses received, five were supportive of the proposal and one raised a number of issues of concern. Of the five who were supportive, one raised one issue of concern. One alternative proposal was submitted (see Appendix E).

2.3 The issues of concern are detailed below.

3. Main Issues

3.1 **Issue: Existing provision** - The 1980 Act [1] already makes provision for parental choice, rendering the current proposals unnecessary.

[1: Education (Scotland) Act 1980]

Response

Gigha parents already have the choice of sending their children to one of two secondary schools – Oban High or Campbeltown Grammar. The proposal to include Tarbert Academy instead of Oban retains the existing arrangements for the choice of one of two secondary schools. If attendance at Tarbert were by placing request only, parents would be responsible for the associated travel costs of their children.

- 3.2 **Issue: Budgetary and staffing** - The effect of approving this proposal could raise significant budgetary and staffing issues for the schools concerned.

Response

While recognising the points made in regard to budgets and staffing, the variations in pupil numbers that would be created if Tarbert Academy was a preferred choice, would not exceed the annual natural variances brought on by movement of families within a secondary school's catchment area. In addition, prior knowledge of family preferences and ongoing liaison with Gigha Primary School would ensure more accurate predictions of transition numbers.

- 3.3 **Issue: Catchment area** - Gigha Primary School should therefore be in the catchment area of Tarbert Academy or Campbeltown Grammar School but not both.

Response

In discussion with parents at the public meeting and through responses received, parents placed great importance on their children staying with, friends and family known and trusted adults as an important element of school choice. By providing the choice of Campbeltown and Tarbert, parents will have more chance of making the most appropriate arrangements for overnight stays due to adverse weather conditions.

- 3.4 **Issue: Catchment area** - Consideration should be given to bringing the position of Rhunahaorine Primary School on to the same footing.

Response

This suggestion is noted but at the moment there are no plans to change the current arrangements for Rhunahaorine Primary School.

- 3.5 **Issue: Catchment area** - From the point of view of Campbeltown Grammar School, the degree of certainty to be gained from knowing one way or the other whether or not to include Gigha and Rhunahaorine pupils in staffing and budgetary calculations would be advantageous even if the decision were to remove those schools from the Campbeltown Grammar School catchment area.

Response

This suggestion is noted but at the moment there are no plans to change

the current arrangements for Rhunahaorine Primary School. In the case of Gigha Primary, the response for 3.3 applies.

- 3.6 Issue: Timing of parental choice** - In the event of a free choice between Tarbert and Campbeltown, a 'cut off' date with the decision in early May would be helpful.

Response

Prior knowledge of family preferences and ongoing liaison with Gigha Primary School would ensure more accurate predictions of transition numbers that would reduce the chances of last-minute decisions. It is noted that the response from HMIE recommends that the council should work with schools and parents to agree approaches on aspects of planning for staffing and the curriculum.

- 4. HMIE Report** As part of the new Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 HMIE completed a report on the proposals. The council has reviewed the original proposal in light of all representations received, including the HMIE report. This report is attached as Appendix D.

- 4.1 Main issue:** There have been concerns raised in relation to planning for staffing and curriculum in both Tarbert Academy and Campbeltown Grammar. The council should work with schools and parents to agree approaches on these aspects of the proposal.

Response

The Council acknowledges the importance of both Tarbert Academy and Campbeltown Grammar being made aware of transition plans well in advance of primary to secondary transfer. Prior knowledge of family preferences and ongoing liaison with Gigha Primary School would ensure more accurate predictions of transition numbers are available to the two secondary schools.

5. Implications

5.1 Policy

None

5.2 Financial

None

5.3 Personnel

There would be no compulsory redundancies of Education Services staff as a consequence of this proposal.

5.4 Equal Opportunities

None

5.5 Legal

The consultation process was conducted in compliance with statutory requirements.

Appendices

- A. Proposal paper**
- B. Record of public meeting**
- C. Number of Responses to Proposal by Respondent Category**
- D. HMIE report**
- E. Alternative proposal**

Appendix A
Proposal Paper

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES: EDUCATION

Consultative Document on the Proposed Change to the Catchment Area of Tarbert Academy Secondary Department to Include the Island of Gigha.

This document has been issued by the Executive Committee of Argyll and Bute Council for consultation in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES: EDUCATION

Consultative Document on the Proposed Change to the Catchment Area of Tarbert Academy Secondary Department to Include the Island of Gigha.

1. Summary

This paper sets out proposals for a change to the catchment area of Tarbert Academy Secondary Department to include the island of Gigha.

2. Detail

Historically, secondary-aged pupils from the island of Gigha had the option of taking lodgings in Campbeltown and attending the Grammar School or going into the hostel in Oban and attending the High School. This was due to the ferry timetable not providing a schedule which would permit pupils to arrive at school on time. Since the change to the ferry times no pupils have gone into lodgings or to the hostel and all have travelled daily.

Pupils from the Tayinloan area have traditionally had the option of travelling north to Tarbert or south to Campbeltown for their secondary education and Argyll and Bute Council is now seeking the views of interested parties on the proposal to extend this choice to secondary-aged pupils from Gigha, at the same time removing the option to attend Oban High School.

There is at present a bus service in both directions so there will be no additional transport costs.

3. Educational Benefits

There are differences in curricular and extra-curricular subjects and activities which will give pupils a wider choice.

Class sizes at Tarbert Academy are generally smaller, which some pupils and parents may find more attractive.

4. Public Meeting

A public meeting will be held at a time and place to be yet agreed.

5. The Consultation Process

Following public consultation the matter will be referred to HMIE, including all written representations and a summary of oral representations made at the public meeting. HMIE will have up to three weeks to consider the matter before reporting back to the Council. The Executive must then publish a Consultation Report.

The Council cannot take a decision on a proposal until three weeks have elapsed after the publication of the Consultation Report.

If agreed, the change will be implemented for the start of the new session in August 2010

6. Comments on the Proposal

Written comments should be made by 2nd June 2010 to:

Carol Walker
Head of Education
Argyll House
Alexandra Parade
Dunoon
PA23 8AJ

Appendix B

Record of Public Meeting

Gigha Public Meeting, Gigha Primary School: 12.05.10

Notes on issues raised

- The attending parents commented that those not in attendance were probably happy to continue to send their children to Campbeltown Grammar School.
- The parents at the meeting prefer the option of going to a smaller school.
- The children of the attending parents would prefer the option of going to Tarbert.
- Would the cost of travel be free, including the ferry? At the moment, the cost of travel to Tarbert through a placing request is met by the parents. This includes the cost of the ferry, which seems unfair.
- The welfare of the children has been an issue and a disappointment in the past in the relation to travel rearrangements due to adverse weather conditions. It is hoped that the new arrangements will be more child-welfare focussed. These concerns had been passed to Councillor Robin Currie.
- There has been approximately twenty occasions this year when the ferry has been cancelled.
- The Gigha secondary children feel that they are resented by staff and other pupils and seen as a disruption to classes.
- Campbeltown accommodation has been lost because of the increasing age of the providers.
- It is felt that the disclosure process (in relation to overnight stays) has not been addressed properly in the consultation.
- There are a limited number of places to stay. In one case, one family knows no one with whom their child could stay.
- There is an expectation that once your child finds a friend at school, they will be able to stay over when required.
- The school's (Campbeltown Grammar) responsibility has shifted to parents when finding somewhere for the children to stay.
- Could better sheltering facilities be provided at the pier?

John McPhee
Quality Improvement Officer
12.05.10

Appendix C

Number of Responses to Proposal by Respondent Category

Appendix C - Number of Responses to Proposal by Respondent Category	
Respondent Category	Number of responses
Children – Gigha Primary	0
Children – Campbeltown Grammar	0
Children – Tarbert Academy	0
Children – Oban High	0
Parents/Carers - Gigha Primary	1
Parents/Carers - Campbeltown Grammar	0
Parents/Carers - Tarbert Academy	0
Parents/Carers – Oban High	0
Parent Council - Gigha Primary	0
Parent Council - Campbeltown Grammar	0
Parent Council - Tarbert Academy	0
Parent Council - Oban High School	1
Staff - Campbeltown Grammar	1
Staff - Tarbert Academy	1
Staff – Oban High	0
Community Council - Lochgilphead	1
Community Council - Tarbert	1
Community Council – Oban	0
Total	6

Appendix D

HMIE Report

CONSULTATION PROPOSAL BY ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

REPORT BY HMIE ADDRESSING EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREAS FOR GIGHA PRIMARY SCHOOL

1. Introduction

1.1 Argyll & Bute Council proposes that secondary-aged children from the island of Gigha should have the option of attending either Campbeltown Grammar School or Tarbert Academy. They currently have the option to attend either Campbeltown Grammar School or Oban High School. Pupils from the Tayinloan area on the mainland have traditionally had the option of travelling north to Tarbert or south to Campbeltown for their secondary education. The Council propose to extend this choice to secondary-aged pupils from Gigha and remove the option to attend Oban High School.

1.2 The report from HMIE is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HMIE in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.3 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:

- attendance at the public meetings held on 12 May 2010 in connection with the Council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the Council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents and written and oral submissions from parents and others;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and
- visits to the site of Campbeltown Grammar School and Tarbert Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 HMIE considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children, young people and their families living on Gigha; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the Council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;

- how the Council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- benefits which the authority believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the Council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Argyll & Bute Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. The consultation included an invitation for written submissions and public meetings held on 12 May 2010.

2.2 Parents of children at Gigha Primary School were positive about the Council's proposals. They welcome the opportunity to have a choice of choosing to send their children to either secondary as they can base their decisions on both the particular needs of their children and on where they have closer family links. The arrangements parents can make with family and friends to look after their children when there is adverse weather are an important factor for children from Gigha. Weather conditions change quickly and mean that occasionally the ferry is cancelled. In the past, there were arrangements for lodgings in Campbeltown when young people from Gigha required them. These were so rarely used that they are no longer current. Most parents either do not send their children to school when the forecast is very poor or children go to stay with named family or friends. Almost all young people of secondary age attend Campbeltown Grammar. A few parents have been sending their children to Tarbert Academy through successful placing requests. This currently means that they pay an additional fee for transport which they will not pay if these proposals are agreed.

2.3 Parents of children at Gigha Primary School were positive about the ethos and the quality of learning and teaching at both secondary schools. They felt that each had different strengths as Campbeltown Grammar School offers a wider curriculum and Tarbert Academy has relatively small class sizes. These differences were seen as a very positive aspect of choice to meet the different needs of individual children.

2.4 An additional meeting was held to ensure that any parents or member of the public from the mainland were not disadvantaged by not being able to attend the late afternoon meeting held on Gigha. No-one attended this public meeting held at Glenbarr Primary.

2.5 There were six written submissions received by the authority in relation to these proposals. Almost all of these were in favour of the proposals. Aspects of concern were raised in two of these submissions in relation to planning of the curriculum and staffing for the secondary schools. These respondents felt that, although the number of pupils is relatively small, the levels of staff and also the range of subject options, which might be available,

would be affected depending on the choice made by the young people and their parents.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 The Council's proposals outline the historical context and the current and future benefits of their proposals for pupils attending Gigha Primary School. The Council's educational benefits statement focuses on two key areas. By extending the choice to either Campbeltown or Tarbert secondary schools, young people and their parents can consider the differences in curricular and extra-curricular activities and make their choice based on individual needs. Secondly, class sizes at Tarbert Academy are generally smaller, which some pupils and parents may find more attractive.

3.2 The option of Oban High School is a historical one, based on sending children to stay in hostel accommodation. When changes were made to the ferry timetables, young people were able to commute to secondary school on the mainland on a daily basis from Gigha. This option has not been chosen by parents or pupils for a number of years.

3.3 Both Tarbert Academy and Campbeltown Grammar School offer a broad curriculum and work successfully to meet the needs of individual pupils, working closely with partners and other schools. The small numbers of pupils from Gigha Primary School would have an impact on the planning for both schools in relation to staffing levels and curricular options. This could either lead to benefits for other young people at these schools or limit their curricular choices if a lowering of pupil numbers led to decreased staffing. It is not possible to be more accurate about the impact of these decisions at this stage as we do not yet have a clear understanding of the pattern of choice, which will be made by parents.

3.4 The current arrangements are positive for those who have family connections within Campbeltown as young people who have these arrangements are more likely to attend school on days when the weather is poor and are therefore less likely to miss classes. Young people are also more likely to participate in a wider range of after school activities both at school and in local communities if they have alternative support arrangements in place. The proposal would enable those families from Gigha with family and friends in Tarbert to make similar arrangements. Those who do not have links with either town will continue to face these issues during periods of bad weather.

3.5 Parents from Gigha who have currently made placing requests and whose children attend Tarbert Academy pay for transport costs. There is at present a bus service used by other pupils living on the mainland to both schools. The proposals remove these transport costs for parents and there are no additional costs to the authority.

4. Summary

4.1 Argyll and Bute Council's proposal is likely to result in a quality of educational experience for children from Gigha Primary School which, across a range of aspects, is the same as or better than that which they currently experience. Depending on the choice of school, there is likely to be a benefit for individual young people from increased curricular choice. Families who currently send their children to Tarbert Academy will benefit from savings on transport costs.

4.2 There have been concerns raised in relation to planning for staffing and curriculum in both Tarbert Academy and Campbeltown Grammar School. The Council should work with schools and parents to agree approaches on these aspects of the proposal.

HM Inspectorate of Education
July 2010

Appendix E

Alternative Proposals

Number of Respondents	Alternative Proposal	Response
1	Gigha Primary School should therefore be in the catchment area of Tarbert Academy or Campbeltown Grammar School but not both.	In discussion with parents at the public meeting and through responses received, parents placed great importance on their children staying with, friends and family known and trusted adults as an important element of school choice. By providing the choice of Campbeltown and Tarbert, parents will have more chance of making the most appropriate arrangements for overnight stays due to adverse weather conditions.