



## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL : DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Gaelic Medium Education : Progression to Secondary

#### Report by the Director of Education

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In May 1997 the education committee approved the establishment of Gaelic medium provision at Condorrat Primary School, Cumbernauld. The following factors were important in taking that decision.
- (A) A substantial number of North Lanarkshire children were already attending Gaelic medium units in other authorities.
- (B) There was significant support from parents for Gaelic education. A voluntary sector playgroup existing at Victoria Primary School, Airdrie, and community education Gaelic courses were well supported.
- (C) Scottish Office specific grant was available at 75% of cost to support an initiative.
- 1.2 Provision at Condorrat has proved to be very successful. Intake has increased each year with 19 pupils enrolled into P1 in August 2000. There has been strong support for the unit from the Scottish Executive and in 1998 the minister for education performed the official opening. It is considered to be one of the leading Gaelic medium schools in Scotland and the head teacher has been used by HMI to evaluate Gaelic provision elsewhere.
- 1.3 The general approach to Gaelic education at Condorrat is to deliver all teaching through Gaelic until the P3/4 stage. Thereafter, teaching is in both Gaelic and English. Further details about the Condorrat provision and about other North Lanarkshire pupils in Gaelic medium education are shown below in table 1.

Table 1 - North Lanarkshire Pupils : Gaelic Medium Education Uptake (2000-01)

	S1	S2	S3-6	P7	P6	P5	P4	P3	P2	P1
Secondary Schools in other authorities	8	1	3							
Condorrat Primary				2	2	2	8	13	11	19
Primary Schools in other authorities				2	2	4				
Total No of Children	8	1	3	4	4	6	8	13	11	19

- 1.4 A cultural dimension has also been important in the Condorrat Primary School provision, particularly the development of strong links with Irish language schools in Ireland.
- 1.5 More generally, Gaelic medium education has been recognised as offering children a high quality education. A report by Professor Johnston of Stirling University concluded that by the end of Primary 7 pupils not only learnt a second language but also achieved higher competence in some other curricular areas compared to the wider cohort.

## 2 THE NEED FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 There is now a need to consider what further provision should be made for Gaelic medium education. Firstly, an increasing number of North Lanarkshire children are completing their Gaelic medium primary education and parents wish them to continue with their Gaelic studies at the secondary stage. To date, on an ad hoc basis, these pupils have attended secondary provision in other authorities with transport support. A more cost effective approach would be to make in-house Gaelic-medium arrangements. Secondly, Gaelic medium has been identified as one of the national education priorities and as a result the authority is obliged to consider secondary provision, taking account of parental wishes. Thirdly, further Scottish Executive specific grant funding is available for establishing that provision.
- 2.2 These matters have been discussed extensively with parents, including two meetings over the last few weeks. In addition, the department has given consideration to two options:
- (A) Continued dependence on provision in other authorities.
- (B) The establishment of North Lanarkshire provision at Greenfaulds High School, the secondary school associated with Condorrat Primary School.
- 2.3 The first of these options is not considered to be viable. North Lanarkshire would have no say on strategic or operational issues. The transport costs would be significantly higher than for a North Lanarkshire location. Limited accommodation is available in the Glasgow unit and places may not be available for North Lanarkshire children. Therefore, the development of Gaelic medium at Greenfaulds High School has been given particular attention.

## 3 THE GREENFAULDS HIGH SCHOOL PROPOSAL

- 3.1 In liaison with the head teacher the following proposals were developed for consultation with parents.
- (A) At all stages, Gaelic language, some subject teaching through Gaelic and the wider curriculum would be available.
- (B) Developments would be phased in response to the growth in pupil numbers and staff availability.
- (C) Initial S1-2 provision would comprise
- personal/social education and registration in Gaelic
  - Gaelic language teaching by extraction from classical studies, religious education or drama
  - teaching in Gaelic in another subject depending on the expertise of the available staffing
- (D) Depending on staff availability Gaelic could be made available as a subject option at the S3-6 stages.
- 3.2 Parents have given near unanimous support to these proposals. However, which pupils already in Gaelic medium education should transfer to Greenfaulds High School for secondary provision in August 2001 was a concern for some parents. There were two arguments for allowing pupils to remain in their existing schools; the benefits of continuity and progression and secondly not to split siblings.

The proposals in this paper are sensitive to these views. Firstly, from an educational perspective, it is acknowledged that it would be difficult for secondary age pupils beyond S2 to transfer because of subject choices. However, it is considered that transfer at the end of S1 can be achieved with minimum disruption to educational progress. The complications for parents with children in more than one secondary is also acknowledged. However, it is

considered that these are no greater than having children at both primary and secondary stages.

- 3.3 There are also best value arguments for restricting the option for parents to choose Gaelic provision outwith North Lanarkshire. Firstly, it would undermine progress at Greenfaulds. Secondly, it would bring potentially long-term substantial additional transport costs for the authority which would not be covered by the Scottish Executive specific grant.
- 3.4 If the education committee approves the establishment of provision at Greenfaulds High School it is considered that the support given to parents opting for attendance in other secondary Gaelic medium provision should be restricted to pupils in S3-6. The proposed entitlement to free transport for secondary age pupils from August 2001 would be as follows.
- (A) Pupils attending Greenfaulds High School for Gaelic medium education and living more than 2 miles from the school.
  - (B) S3-6 pupils already attending Gaelic medium education in other authorities.
- 3.5 Under this proposal all North Lanarkshire P7 pupils enrolling for Gaelic medium secondary education in August 2001 and S1 pupils already attending Gaelic medium education in other authorities in 2000-2001 would be expected to transfer to Greenfaulds High School. Decisions to enrol elsewhere would be treated as placing requests and free transport would not be available except on a privilege basis. Two families only would have siblings at different secondary schools.
- 3.6 Overall, this paper recommends arrangements which take account of:
- (a) meeting parental wishes
  - (b) supporting effective provision at Greenfaulds High School
  - (c) ensuring best value from council funding

#### 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The education committee is recommended;
- (i) to approve the establishment of Gaelic medium secondary provision at Greenfaulds High School as outlined in section 3,
  - (ii) to approve the free transport policy for secondary age Gaelic medium pupils as described in paragraph 3.4,
  - (iii) to request the submission of progress reports to future meetings of the committee.