

Open Letter on Collective Leadership Model
Argyll and Bute Education Department
Kilmory,
Lochgilphead
PA31 8RT

Dear Argyll & Bute Education Department,

**An Open letter from the Community of Colintrave & Glendaruel
On the Collective Leadership Model & Current Consultation**

We write to you as a community to register our dismay at these proposals which will affect Kilmodan Primary School, and therefore the community around it, in an entirely unacceptable and avoidable way.

It is encouraging however that the tone of the proposal is changing from “feedback” to “consultation”. This offers the opportunity to explore alternatives and avoid being forced down a single track without due consideration, as originally proposed.

We have concerns in three areas with regard to this consultation:
Education, Development and Governance:

- **Educational**

- The Collective Leadership Model (CLM) provides that school leaders do not teach, and as a community we are not really sure why this is an advantage. As all the head teachers we have spoken to assert, there is no better way to understand a school or a class, than teaching. It was confirmed that the reduced teaching capacity by shifting FTE’s to Executive Head Teachers would be compensated in each school by additional teaching capacity. Given the current recruitment challenges across Argyll and Bute, it is unclear how that will be achieved in practice?

- The CLM specifies that a head teacher will have several schools in their remit. Unfortunately for proponents of this model, we have direct experience of this type of scenario within our community with one of the most experienced head teachers Cowal has had. It is this head teacher's opinion, having run three Primary schools concurrently, that the model does not deliver any educational benefits. It is absolutely critical in the opinion of this community's ex-head teachers that a direct relationship is fostered between a head teacher and all their pupils and families. Experience shows this will be absolutely impossible in the CLM. Given the rural geography of area the "collectivism" is also physically impractical from a simple transport and communication perspective, made worse in winter.
- It is the opinion of this community that the CLM will strip out the educational leadership represented by present head teachers of Argyll and Bute to replace it with two levels of educationalists
 - (1) class teachers
 - (2) Education Scotland (inspection and review)
- This model will also therefore precipitate a deeper recruitment crisis, when teachers realise that the CLM provides for no professional promotion within Argyll's schools. There is no doubt that ambitious, creative and effective teachers will seek positions and opportunities elsewhere - even if they decide to remain resident in our county / communities.
- We are also entirely unsure as to the status of the posts 'Heads of School' and 'Executive Head Teacher'. These positions are not classified by an educational literature or union, and as such sits outside any accepted scholastic hierarchy. Again, this seems to allow the recruitment of non-teachers into the Heads of School and Executive Head Teacher roles.
- It is this community's decided view, that from the educational perspective, the CLM proposed disguises a ill-founded, ill-considered and wholly inappropriate cost-cutting exercise.

- Within the proposals there would be an element of de-skilling staff if each Head of School is expected to take on a specialism. Presently all teachers and Head Teachers undertake professional development as a matter of course.
- If the Council appoints a head with no teaching experience, how will the council guarantee that there are enough experienced teachers in each school to be able to properly identify appropriate pedagogy, curricular needs and particularly differentiation
- Head Teachers here in Cowal have an excellent support network. If this is not happening in other areas in Argyll that is surely down to the Quality Improvement Team (QIT) and does not need a specific policy change to improve. Indeed further distancing the QIT from the pupils, by introducing a further layer of bureaucracy is counterproductive. The QIT should be getting closer to the schools as that's their role, not further distancing themselves from the pupils, teachers and head teachers.
- Pooling resources and budget sharing is also mentioned as a plus: surely that can/does happen now without change? If there is a barrier to pooling funding for major purchases between schools, that's presumably an accounting restriction, rather than a real restriction. That should be within the responsibility of the Council education team to resolve as support to the schools – it doesn't need a new layer of bureaucracy. There is also the danger of the larger schools demanding a larger portion of what little funding is available.
- The CLM proposals indicate that an Executive Head Teacher will have schools of different sizes under their management. It will be natural for larger urban schools with higher school rolls to take more of a Executive Head Teacher and Head of School's attention than smaller rural establishments. The rural schools will therefore suffer from a lack of attention and focus, necessary to maintain educational standards.

- **Developmental**

A rural school is closely connected with its community, and if it starts to lose local children because of the organisational changes in these proposals, for example through a decline in standards caused by a distracted head teacher, then the community will start to fail as families decide to move away to better supported urban schools or for the same reasons are disincentivised to move in.

- The proposal repeatedly mentions the importance of equality for all pupils and young people in A&B, and across the school network. Whilst equal opportunities are welcomed, it is unclear as to how the CLM will provide these if every school is viewed as the same. Rural schools are very different to larger, urban settings, and cannot be viewed or managed in the same way.
- Without an efficient, adaptable, thriving school, rural communities will suffer beyond repair. Skills migration of working-age parents, unattractive educational services for potential new residents, and damage sense of community and identity without a younger generation.
- The three key drivers of A&BC's Rural Growth Deal are 'Connecting, Attracting and Growing', [Source: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/rgd>] however it is unclear as to how the CLM will contribute to the success of these drivers in rural communities.
 - Connecting - with several schools in their remit, how are the Executive Head Teachers, who are unlikely to be based in a rural school, going to get to know the pupils, the teachers, the local community in a meaningful way?
 - Attracting - how will new staff, especially teachers, be encouraged to relocate to rural schools if there is no clear opportunity for professional progression with the removal of Head Teacher roles, when the 'teaching' aspect is such an important, joyful, and beloved part of the vocation? Many apply for headship posts in rural Argyll because they enjoy teaching and the Headship of a rural school offers the best of both worlds.

- Growing - how will the community grow if families move away from the area due to a failing educational system, or are discouraged to move to a rural community due to a school that is struggling compared to ones in neighbouring towns?

- **Governance**

The consultation is designed to manufacture consent, eschews best practice and is only on nodding terms with transparency.

- It is clear the single proposal under consultation was NOT derived from comparing multiple options and modelling or understanding the impact of these from a comprehensive appreciation of, and consideration of all the factors. Indeed it does not seem that the following were established:
 - A clear identification of what problem the proposal is trying to address
 - No criteria were set to be fully assessed
 - Different options [to measure against the criteria] were not assessed, nor was modelling of the impacts from human, financial and practical inputs then accomplished.
 - No judgement on the options was made or published and a recommendation then offered to then be discussed.
- Education Scotland's website and its School Information Dashboard show absolutely no relevant information for Argyll and Bute schools. Therefore there is no evidential baseline available to check whether these proposed changes in education policy are good or bad.
- Parents and Teachers are not allowed to consult with one another. While parents see their childrens' education as a priority, they do not have a professional's understanding of the way changes will affect this. By not allowing teachers to talk to parents on this, the council ensures there is an immediate suspicion that this is not a transparent process. Given the

content of this letter and other representations, this strategy has backfired.

- The consultation questionnaire is framed in positive, rather than neutral, language encouraging at all points a positive rather than an objective outcome. A consultation should not attempt to skew a respondent's views. In this case no other options to the proposal were presented for consideration.
- Have any of the present leaders of education in Argyll and Bute taught in our schools and therefore have direct experience of the particular qualities of rurality in our area, particularly our extended topography and dispersed, but strong communities?
- While we are sure the consultants used for this consultation are incredibly professional, we are not entirely convinced they are educational specialists. Do they perhaps provide marketing expertise? How is it possible for a consultancy under a time-limited contract, even if it has an educational specialism, to understand the complexities and nuances of Argyll education, and rural education in particular?
- How much has all of this cost?

Sincerely,

Colintraive and Glendaruel Community Council

And

Kilmodan Primary School Parent Council

Contact Details: secretary@colglencommunitycouncil.org.uk