

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by East Dunbartonshire Council to change the secondary transfer arrangements for children who live in the catchment area of Lennoxtown Primary School.

November 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education ("HM Inspectors") in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of East Dunbartonshire Council's proposal to change the secondary transfer arrangements for children who live in the catchment area of Lennoxton Primary School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the 2010 Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; 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
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meetings held on 24 September and 1 October 2019 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, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the sites of Lennoxton Primary School, Lenzie Academy, St Ninian's High School and Kilsyth Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 East Dunbartonshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The council carried out an informal consultation on the secondary transfer arrangements in May 2019. This included meetings with Parent Councils, public meetings and consultations with pupils, parents and other members of the community. Consultation also took place with the Roman Catholic Church as a statutory consultee in line with any statutory consultation.

2.3 The current position is that children living within the Lennoxton Primary School catchment area are zoned to St Ninian's High School in East Dunbartonshire Council and Kilsyth Academy in North Lanarkshire Council.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council sets out the educational benefits of the proposal in terms providing children, young people and parents with greater choice. The rezoning of catchments will give parents assurance that their child can be educated within an East Dunbartonshire non-denominational secondary school without having to make a placing request. The council believes that by re-aligning the catchments to local non-denominational secondary schools arrangements for transition will be enhanced. In order to ensure progression and continuity of learning, primary and secondary teachers will be in a better position to agree standards and track children's progress. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has the potential to support smoother progression from primary to secondary if children were rezoned to Lenzie Academy. Cluster working could also be enhanced. However, those children and young people who choose to attend Kilsyth Academy will continue to benefit from the current well-established transition arrangements.

3.2 The council also believes that opportunities for out-of-school activities would increase if East Dunbartonshire pupils were educated in an East Dunbartonshire Council school. Currently, there may be barriers for East Dunbartonshire pupils at Kilsyth Academy accessing after school clubs and groups due to the availability of public transport. Staff at Kilsyth Academy have been proactive in offering more lunchtime clubs. HM Inspectors recognise that access to after-school activity may be enhanced by the proposal.

3.3 A wide range of stakeholders responded to the consultation. This included local elected members from North Lanarkshire Council, a Member of the Scottish Parliament, members of North Lanarkshire Educational Institute of Scotland and 142 members of the public. From the public response, 95 disagreed and 47 agreed with the proposal. Twenty-three people attended the public meeting at Lenzie Academy in September 2019. Lenzie Academy has the capacity to take pupils from Lennoxton Primary School. Currently, a range of families already send their children to Lenzie Academy as the result of placing requests. Parents who disagreed with the proposal expressed concern about the potential impact on pupil numbers at Kilsyth Academy, transport and the impact on their children's friendships if they move to other schools. However, in the visits to schools, several parents agreed with the proposals, asserting a preference for their child to be educated at an East Dunbartonshire secondary. Teachers and headteachers believe that the proposals would improve cluster working and moderation and enhance transition arrangements.

3.4 East Dunbartonshire Council also sought the views of children and young people on the proposal. An external consultant engaged with children and young people in the affected schools with East Dunbartonshire Council. Overall, they were positive about the proposals. This was also the case when HM Inspectors visited the schools. However, young people in Kilsyth Academy disagreed with the proposal. This was also the case when HM Inspectors visited Kilsyth Academy. Almost all of those consulted at Kilsyth felt the proposal undermined the reputation of their school.

3.5 During the consultation period the council was notified by North Lanarkshire Council of a range of alleged inaccuracies within the proposal. These relate to statutory duties within the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 and the substance of the proposal itself. The council will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to investigate these alleged inaccuracies, and take any action as may be appropriate. In its final consultation report, the council is required under the 2010 Act to set out the alleged inaccuracies, its views on these, and any action it has taken to address any inaccuracies notified to it.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors recognise the educational benefits of strong cluster working. The proposal has the potential to improve progression and continuity of learning within the revised clusters. Primary and secondary teachers will be in a better position to agree standards and track children's progress. Parents can also be assured with certainty that their child is entitled to a place at a non-denominational East Dunbartonshire secondary. It is important to note that there is no suggestion that the current strong transition arrangements at Kilsyth Academy will not or should not continue. Whilst many respondents to the proposal are positive, there are a significant number of parents and others who have concerns. North Lanarkshire Council has raised issues about the impact of this proposal on Kilsyth Academy. In order to best serve the communities involved, East Dunbartonshire Council and its partner authority North Lanarkshire Council require to demonstrate strong leadership, communicate well and agree constructively should the proposal go ahead.

HM Inspectors
November 2019