

Consultation proposal by North Ayrshire Council

Report by Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to rezone St Luke's Primary School and St Winning's Primary School Catchment Areas.

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation 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. Introduction

1.1 North Ayrshire Council proposes to change the catchment zones of St Luke's Primary School and St Winning's Primary School.

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

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

- 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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal by Scottish Catholic Education Service; and
- visits to the site of St Luke's Primary School and St Winning's Primary School including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 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
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 North Ayrshire Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

2.2 Twenty-one written responses on the consultation were received by the council. Almost all of the parents and carers of children who attended St Luke's Primary School and St Winning's Primary School who submitted a written response were in favour of the proposal to rezone the catchment zones of St Luke's Primary School and St Winning's Primary School.

2.3 The Scottish Catholic Education Service and the local representative of the Catholic Church supported the council's proposal.

2.4 The headteacher, staff, children and parents and carers of children attending St Winning's Primary School supported the council's proposal. All consultees considered that the quality of education provided at St Winning's Primary School was high. They pointed out that there was additional capacity in St Winning's Primary School and limited capacity in St Luke's Primary School. They felt the extra space in St Winning's Primary School gave staff greater flexibility to organise learning. Teaching staff identified the benefits of St Winning's Primary School's location and its proximity to the town's library, St Winin's Church and other local facilities.

2.5 The vast majority of St Luke's Primary School stakeholders supported the council's proposal to rezone the catchment zones of St Luke's Primary School and St Winning's Primary School. Senior managers, teaching staff, children and parents and carers of children attending St Luke's Primary School recognised the need to rezone the catchment areas of the two schools to take account of the underutilisation of St Winning's Primary School's buildings and the very high occupancy level in St Luke's Primary School.

2.6 A few staff and parents of St Luke's Primary School who were met thought that the council's proposal would not address the issue of potential overcrowding of St Luke's Primary School and the spare capacity in St Winning's Primary School.

They perceived potential shortcomings in the council's proposals. Parents also noted that this nursery was full and the proposal did not address the provision of nursery places. They pointed out that parents of children who reside in the area designated for new housing in the West Byrehill may make a placing request for their children to attend St Luke's Primary School for a variety of reasons related to: St Luke's Primary School being closer to the area than St Winning's Primary School; and the location of a nursery class in St Luke's Primary School. They also raised concerns about a safe walking route from the West Byrehill area to St Winning's Primary School.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 Rezoning the catchment area will alleviate the pressure on St Luke's Primary School's accommodation. St Luke's Primary School has a capacity of 240 and a roll of 228. Furthermore, the number of classes in St Luke's Primary School will increase from nine to ten from August 2014. The two additional classrooms planned for the school in August 2015 will enable one class that is located in the library to move into a purpose built classroom, and provide some extra capacity for the additional class. However, this school will continue to be near its capacity as a result of the limited size of its shared areas. The rezoning of the West Byrehill area may not alleviate pressure on St Luke's Primary School given the potential for parents to make placing requests to St Luke's Primary School as a result of the close proximity of the school to the proposed housing development.

3.2 Those children currently attending St Luke's Primary School will benefit from the improved space as soon as the classroom extension has been completed. The expansion of the accommodation will give staff more flexibility to organise learning if the roll is held at the August 2014 figure. This flexibility should also enable staff to provide more choice and breadth in the curriculum. Nevertheless, it is likely that the timetabling of shared spaces will continue to be challenging especially if the school is to meet the national expectation of two hours of quality physical education each week.

3.3 The proposal will enhance both school communities and the long term sustainability of both schools. The council's case that maintaining the current role of St Luke's Primary School will allow greater flexibility in organising learning is valid. The roll of St Winning's Primary School had steadily decreased but there are signs of it increasing and the proposed addition to its catchment area would help this to continue if parents residing in the West Byrehill area send their children to this school.

3.4 The council's proposal is based on best value, taking account of its responsibility to use its resources effectively and efficiently. This approach is borne out by the current rolls and capacities of the two schools, if the change in the catchment area leads to potential parents, residing in the West Byrehill area, sending their children to St Winning's Primary School. The relevant rolls and capacities are: St Winning's Primary School has a capacity of 192 and its roll is 96; whereas St Luke's Primary School is nearly full, with a capacity of 240 and a roll of 228.

3.5 The council's proposal has not taken sufficient account of travel arrangements and traffic management. This includes safe routes for children walking from the West Byrehill area to St Winning's Primary School. The distance from the West Byrehill area to St Winning's School via Pennyburn Road is approximately 1.1 miles and this road has no safe crossing places. Furthermore, this road does not have a continuous footpath for the whole route. The council needs to address this in its final report.

3.6 The council's proposal does not take account of the risk to St Luke's Primary Schools' current and future children and parents and carers resulting from the increased road traffic which may be generated by families living in the West Byrehill area and using the exit road on to Pennyburn Road. At present this road is congested at the beginning of the school day by parents and carers parking their cars in Pennyburn Road to drop off their children for St Luke's Primary School and nursery class. The council needs to address this in its final report.

4. Summary

4.1 HM Inspectors recognise that the council's proposal to rezone the catchment zones of St Luke's Primary School and St Winning's Primary School is addressing the issue of the pressure on the roll of St Luke's Primary School and the capacity of St Winning's Primary School to accommodate more children. Its assertion that educational improvements would follow from this proposal are sustained if the roll of St Luke's Primary School does not increase and children from the West Byrehill area attend St Winning's Primary School. The council needs to provide more information about how it will address any potential increase in roll as a result of children from the planned housing development making placing requests to attend St Luke's Primary School rather than St Winning's Primary School.

4.2 In taking forward this proposal the council needs to take account of safe routes to school for children walking from the West Byrehill area to St Winning's Primary School.

4.3 The consideration of this proposal has highlighted the current risks to children and parents and carers of the traffic congestion on Pennyburn Road arising from parents and carers dropping off their children to St Luke's Primary School and Nursery Class. These risks may be exacerbated by the additional traffic generated by prospective residents of West Byrehill area and, in taking forward the proposal, the council needs to address this issue.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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