

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Renfrewshire Council to review and amend the catchment areas affecting Glencoats and West Primary Schools.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Renfrewshire Council's proposal to revise the catchment areas affecting Glencoats and West Primary Schools. 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 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, 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

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 meeting held on 24 November 2015 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 Glencoats Primary School and West Primary School, including discussion with children, staff and parents.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Renfrewshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 Renfrewshire Council's consultation on the proposal to review and amend the catchment areas affecting Glencoats and West Primary Schools ran from 24 November 2015 to 19 January 2016. The council held a public meeting on 24 November 2015 at Glencoats Primary School. No parents or members of the public attended. The council received nine written responses on the proposal. Seven of these were from parents/carers. Almost all responses were in support of the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal is of clear educational benefit. Glencoats Primary School is located in the Ferguslie area of Paisley. Current catchment arrangements mean that children living at particular addresses have to travel outwith the immediate area to attend their catchment school, West Primary School. For some children this involves being transported by bus or car. If implemented, the proposal ensures that all children from Ferguslie, as of August 2016, will be zoned for their local school, Glencoats Primary School. As a result, children living at the addresses affected by the proposal will be able to walk to school, therefore encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

3.2 Implementation of the proposal will have a positive impact on the local community. It has the potential to promote a greater sense of community both within the school and within the Ferguslie area. If implemented, all children from Ferguslie will be entitled to attend their local non-denominational school.

3.3 There is currently a significant number of placing requests from West Primary School to Glencoats Primary School from the addresses affected. By addressing the current catchment anomaly, the number of placing requests is likely to decline. As a result, uncertainty or anxiety which families may currently have in waiting to hear the outcomes of their placing requests will be reduced.

3.4 The council has taken appropriate steps to minimise any adverse impact of the proposal. This includes a guarantee that children who live in addresses affected by the proposal will be able to continue to attend their current school and will remain entitled to free school transport. The proposal also gives a guarantee to siblings of those children who already attend West Primary School.

3.5 Parents and staff who met with HM Inspectors were strongly in favour of the proposal. They felt that it was positive that the council was proposing to give children fair and equitable access to their local school. They also appreciated that the council would make fair provision for children already attending West Primary School to remain there if they so wish. Children who met with HM Inspectors

agreed, overall, that the proposal was sensible and felt it would have minimal impact on them.

3.6 When stakeholders engaged with HM Inspectors an alleged omission was identified. The council were notified of this and will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to investigate this alleged omission. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the action it has taken to address any alleged omission notified to it.

4. Summary

Renfrewshire Council's proposal is of clear educational benefit. It has the support of almost all parents, children and staff involved. If the proposal is implemented, all children residing in Ferguslie will be able to attend their local school. This will help to promote their health and wellbeing by allowing them to walk to school. Overall, fair and equitable access to schools in the area will be achieved while also potentially increasing social cohesion through an increased sense of community within the local area. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the action it has taken to address the alleged omission notified to it.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
February 2016**