

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Renfrewshire Council to review catchment areas affecting St Anne's (Erskine) and St James' (Renfrew) 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 review catchment areas affecting St Anne's (Erskine) and St James' (Renfrew) 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 school 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:

- 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;

- visits to the site of St Anne's and St James' Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- discussion with a representative from the Scottish Catholic Education Service.

2. Consultation Process

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*. The consultation period ran from 8 October to 27 November 2014. A public meeting was held on 8 October 2014. There were no attendees beyond the acting headteacher of St Anne's Primary School and a council official. There was a questionnaire available for completion on the council's website. The council received 15 written responses to the proposal. The majority of those who provided a response were in favour of the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The council's proposal has a number of important educational benefits for children. These include a reduced travel time to school for children living in Inchinnan and a greater sense of community amongst the denominational school community of the surrounding area of St Anne's Primary School.

3.2 Most children living in the Inchinnan area who attend a denominational school already choose to go to St Anne's Primary School, which is closer geographically than any other denominational school. The council has provided assurances that, if the proposal goes ahead, all children attending St James' Primary School would be entitled to continue to attend that school. Those children who choose to transfer to the nearer St Anne's Primary School would be supported during the transition. Should the proposal go ahead, children moving to St Anne's Primary School would continue to benefit from a high standard of education, as outlined in the recent positive inspection report that the school received.

3.3 All stakeholders, who met with HM Inspectors, supported the proposal. Staff from St Anne's Primary School felt that the proposal would formalise arrangements that were already taking place. In addition, they felt that children would experience a greater sense of community by attending a more local school. They felt that the proposal would also result in greater continuity of learning for those children who move on to attend denominational secondary education at Trinity High School. Should the proposal go ahead, there would be little or no impact on St James' Primary School. The proposal will assist in the planned longer term review of Renfrewshire Council's school estate, including a review of the accommodation provided at St Anne's Primary School. Implementing this catchment area change now will help the council make more informed longer-term plans and help ensure best value.

3.4 The Scottish Catholic Education Service supported the proposal.

4. Summary

The council's proposal is of clear educational benefit. Stakeholders, who met with HM Inspectors supported the proposal as did the majority of those who submitted written responses. It addresses the current anomaly of children from Inchinnan having to make a placing request in order to attend the nearest denominational school. Children from Inchinnan will benefit from shorter travel times to and from school. Implementation of the proposal will also help the council secure best value in the delivery of its services.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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