

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Renfrewshire Council to review the catchment areas affecting St Fillan's and Our Lady of Peace 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 the catchment areas affecting St Fillan's and Our Lady of Peace 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 7 October 2014 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

- a visit to the site of St Fillan's Primary School including discussions with staff, children, parents and representatives of the Catholic Church.

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 St Fillan's and Our Lady of Peace Primary Schools ran from 5 September to 26 November 2014. The council held a public meeting on 7 October at St Fillan's Primary School. This meeting was attended by one member of the public. The council received 11 written responses on the proposal. Ten of these responses were from parents. All of those who responded to the council supported the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal to review and amend the catchment areas of St Fillan's and Our Lady of Peace Primary Schools is of clear educational benefit. St Fillan's Primary School is located in the village of Houston. The current catchment area arrangements for the schools mean that some children from an area in the village of Houston have to travel to Our Lady of Peace Primary School in the village of Linwood. Implementation of the proposal will mean that children will spend less time travelling to school each day. The proposal will establish catchment areas for both schools that follow a natural border line. If implemented, the whole of the village of Houston will become part of the catchment area of St Fillan's Primary School. The council plans to implement the proposal from August 2015. However, it is not clear from the proposal paper that this will apply to children due to start P1 at this time. In its final consultation report, the council needs to clarify whether implementation of the proposal will apply to children due to start school in P1 from August 2015.

3.2 Implementation of the proposal will have a positive impact on the local community. It has the potential to create a greater sense of community within both the school and the village of Houston. Once implemented, children who live in the village of Houston will be entitled to attend their local denominational primary school.

3.3 The proposal will enable the council to make more effective and efficient use of its resources. The proposal is part of the council's School Estate Management Plan which aims to improve the fabric, efficiency and suitability of the council's school buildings. Included within the proposal is a commitment to improve the overall learning environment of St Fillan's Primary School by removing modular classrooms and combining this with some adaptation, refurbishment and extension of the main school building.

3.4 The council has taken a number of steps to minimise any possible adverse impact of the proposal. For example, it has given guarantees 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 range of guarantees to siblings of those children who attend the schools.

3.5 All those who responded to the council supported the proposal. They did so through the council's online survey. Some respondents raised questions about the proposal during the consultation. The council provided clear responses to these questions. Parents who met with HM Inspectors were strongly in favour of the proposal. They appreciated the fact that the council has consulted on this proposal in response to their earlier requests. They feel the proposal will ensure that all children who live in the village of Houston will have fair and equitable access to the schools in the village. They also feel that the proposal addresses current perceived anomalies in arrangements for providing children with transport to school. They very much welcomed the proposal and would wish it to be implemented as quickly as possible. They were particularly keen that the proposal would apply to children due to start school in P1 from August 2015. As the schools affected by the proposal are denominational schools, the council consulted with the Catholic Church. The Diocese of Paisley supported the proposal.

4. Summary

The proposal by Renfrewshire Council to review and amend the catchment areas affecting St Fillan's and Our Lady of Peace Primary Schools is of clear educational benefit. The proposal has the full support of parents, staff, children, the Diocese of Paisley and the wider community. It addresses historical anomalies in the catchment areas of the schools. If the proposal is implemented it will enable children who live in the village of Houston to attend their local denominational primary school instead of having to travel to Our Lady of Peace Primary School in Linwood. This has the potential to provide fair and equitable access to the schools in the village of Houston whilst having a positive impact on the wider community of Houston. Implementation of the proposal will also enable the council to make more effective and efficient use of its resources and help it secure best value in the delivery of its services. In its final consultation report, the council needs to clarify whether implementation of the proposal will apply to children due to start school in P1 from August 2015.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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