

Consultation proposal by South Lanarkshire Council

Report by Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to re-establish primary stages P5 to P7 in Auchengray Primary School.

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 South Lanarkshire Council proposes to re-establish primary stages P5 to P7 in Auchengray 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:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 4 March 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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- visits to the site of Auchengray Primary School and Carnwath 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 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, including those attending Carnwath Primary School.
- 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 South Lanarkshire Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

2.2 South Lanarkshire Council's decision to undertake this consultation was in response to a formal approach from the Auchengray Primary School Parent Council which had carried out its own extensive consultation within the local community and informal discussions with parents of children currently attending Auchengray Primary School.

2.3 Auchengray Primary School currently provides education for stages P1 up to P4. Children who attend Auchengray Primary School currently transfer to Carnwath Primary School at the end of P4. A few children who live within the catchment area for Auchengray Primary School attend Carnwath Primary School from P1 on parental placing requests. The entire population of Auchengray Primary School will be decanted to temporary accommodation within the grounds of Carnwath Primary School for session 2014/2015 whilst a new building for Auchengray Primary School is under construction. There is strong support within the local community for the re-establishment of stages P5 to P7.

2.4 All children from Auchengray Primary School interviewed expressed positive views about the proposal. They felt a very strong attachment to their school and to the Auchengray community. They were very happy in school and thought that there would be significant benefits for them in being able to continue their learning there without interruption until the end of P7. Older children wanted to stay at Auchengray Primary School so that they would have the chance to take on greater leadership roles within what they regard as their own school community. Some welcomed the opportunity to avoid having to travel to school by bus, particularly during winter months.

2.5 Children currently at P4 were concerned at the uncertainty about plans for their future education. The reason for this uncertainty was that a decision is not due to be taken until after the end of the school term, meaning that they will not know where they will be going to school in August 2014 and which school uniform they will

need. Similarly, children currently at P3 who will be decanted during session 2014/2015 will not know whether they will be returning to Auchengray Primary School or remaining at Carnwath Primary School.

2.6 Parents of children attending Auchengray Primary School who were interviewed were strongly in favour of the proposal. They were keen for a decision to be made as soon as possible to end the uncertainty for their children, particularly those currently at P4. Parents had thought through in some detail the educational benefits of the proposal as well as the implications for their children's experiences as learners. They were particularly concerned that under the current arrangements, their children have to make an additional educational transition at the end of P4 and that this had the potential to interrupt learning, particularly for children who cope less well with change.

2.7 Staff of Auchengray Primary School firmly supported the proposal. They felt that almost all children are happy and settled and that they would benefit from continuity of education, and the removal of the need for an additional educational transition at the end of P4. They thought that the opportunity to have older children as role models would benefit all age groups.

2.8 Staff, parents and children of Carnwath Primary School understood the rationale for the proposal and were well aware of the potential benefits for the children of Auchengray Primary School of staying there until P7. They also recognised the benefits of moving to Carnwath Primary School at the end of P4 and the opportunities for new friendships and experiences of larger class groups that this can bring.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 South Lanarkshire Council has given careful consideration to this proposal, including consideration of the current and future projections of the school roll. In doing so it has identified a range of clear educational benefits of the proposal to the current and future children attending Auchengray Primary School. Should the proposal be accepted, there is no doubt that children will have a larger peer group within the school with whom to interact. There will also be more scope for collaborative activities as well as increased opportunities for whole school initiatives.

3.2 The removal of the need for a transition at stages P4 to P7 would bring Auchengray Primary School into line with all other South Lanarkshire Council primary schools, and eliminate the potential for disruption to children's educational experiences.

3.3 In identifying these benefits, the council has taken into account a range of factors including: its aspiration to ensure the social, emotional and intellectual development of all its children; the recognition of the importance of the location and size of a school; and the importance of positive relationships between parents, school and community. The council also pays due regard to the principles of Curriculum for Excellence and good practice in relation to peer engagement and the potential benefits of enhanced opportunities for showcase events and enterprise activities.

3.4 It will be particularly important for the council to reassure children currently at the P3 and P4 stage and their parents about its plans for their future education.

3.5 This proposal will lead to a reduction in the size of the P5, P6 and P7 classes of Carnwath Primary School in future years.

4. Summary

South Lanarkshire Council makes a positive and well-reasoned case for its proposal to re-establish primary stages P5 to P7 within Auchengray Primary School. The proposal would have clear educational benefits for children at all stages within the school, including the removal of the need for an additional educational transition. The proposal has strong support from current pupils and from past, current and future parents of the school as well as staff and the community. The council now needs to take account of the need to eliminate uncertainty, particularly in relation to those children currently in at the P3 and P4 stage, by deciding, without delay, whether to implement the proposal.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
May 2014**