

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Lanarkshire Council to re-align the catchment areas of Castlefield and Crosshouse 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 South Lanarkshire Council's proposal to re-align the catchment areas of Castlefield and Crosshouse 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; and
- visits to the site of Castlefield and Crosshouse Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 South Lanarkshire 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 council proposes to re-align the catchment areas of Castlefield and Crosshouse Primary Schools.

2.2 South Lanarkshire Council formally consulted stakeholders between Monday 1 December 2014 and Friday 23 January 2015. A public meeting was held on Wednesday 7 January 2015 in Castlefield Primary School. The council issued 503 consultation proposal documents. The council received 12 written responses by the close of the formal consultation period. Ten of the 12 stakeholders were in favour of the proposal. Pupils in both schools were given the opportunity to contribute their views during the formal consultation period. The council received less than 20 responses from pupils.

2.3 South Lanarkshire Council's proposal document also makes reference to its plans to tackle capacity issues through a phased reduction in the number of classes in the Crosshouse Primary School Additional Support Needs (ASN) Base and to increase provision in the future at Greenhills Primary School.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 South Lanarkshire Council's proposal to re-align the catchment areas of Castlefield and Crosshouse Primary Schools has a number of educational benefits. The school roll of Crosshouse Primary School has increased significantly since it opened in 2008. The roll has risen from 191 to 304 in session 2014/15. This situation has put considerable pressure on the available teaching spaces within the school building. Castlefield Primary School opened in 2007 with a roll of 190, however, the roll is only 162 at the moment. Should the proposal go ahead there is available accommodation in Castlefield Primary School which could be used to reduce the pressure on accommodation in Crosshouse Primary School. Pupils in Crosshouse Primary School would benefit from regaining access to specialised facilities such as the library and more space to play and learn outside. There would be less crowding in the dining areas and timetabling of the gymnasium would be easier thus allowing staff more flexibility to deliver physical education in line with Curriculum for Excellence.

3.2 The proposal also has some educational benefits for the pupils in Castlefield Primary School. The potential to increase the pupil population could result in the creation of an additional management post within the staffing allocation. This would allow the headteacher more flexibility within her allocation of teaching staff to support children's learning. The proposal would allow children living in streets nearer the school to take up places in Castlefield Primary School rather than traveling further to Crosshouse Primary School.

3.3 Almost all parents, children and staff from Castlefield Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were entirely supportive of the proposal. Staff agreed that there was a need to re-align the catchment areas to ease the growing pressure on the accommodation at Crosshouse Primary School. Pupils were looking forward to

welcoming new friends to their school and parents felt it made sense for children and families who live close to the school would be included in the catchment area for Castlefield Primary School.

3.4 Parents, children and staff from Crosshouse Primary School were mostly positive about the proposal. Staff agreed the growth in the school roll had placed demands on the existing accommodation. Staff had concerns that the council plan to reduce the number of classes in the Crosshouse Primary School ASN base would have a detrimental impact on the highly-inclusive ethos which is considered a real strength of the school. The council has made it clear to stakeholders they do not intend to close the ASN base. It would be helpful to further reinforce this intention and reassure staff and parents of children who attend the base. Parents of children from mainstream classes and children who met with HM Inspectors agreed that the proposal would bring benefits to the school. Pupils wanted to have more space to play and learn and to regain access to the specialised rooms that are currently being used as classrooms.

4. Summary

South Lanarkshire Council's proposal to re-align the catchment areas of Castlefield and Crosshouse Primary Schools has clear educational benefits for the pupils of both schools. The proposal is widely accepted by almost all stakeholders as the most reasonable solution. Current and future cohorts of pupils in Crosshouse Primary School will benefit from more flexible learning spaces and regaining regular access to specialised facilities within their school building. Pupils at Castlefield Primary School will also benefit from this proposal. Almost all stakeholders support the proposal. South Lanarkshire Council have outlined clearly the implementation arrangements for the school session starting in August 2015. It would be helpful if the council further reassured staff from the Crosshouse Primary School ASN base and parents of children who attend the ASN base about the future of the ASN base classes.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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