

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Fife Council to rezone the secondary catchment areas of Dunfermline, Inverkeithing, Queen Anne and Woodmill High Schools.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (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 Fife Council's proposal to rezone the secondary catchment areas of Dunfermline, Inverkeithing, Queen Anne and Woodmill High 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 catchment areas of the secondary schools in the Dunfermline and West Fife area; 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 23 April 2018, 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 Woodmill, Dunfermline and Inverkeithing High Schools and Camdean, Kings Road and Masterton Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

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

2.2 The consultation period commenced on 17 April and ran until 29 May 2018. Public meetings were held in each of the secondary schools affected on 19, 23 and 24 April and 23 May 2018. During the consultation there was a total of 723 responses to the consultation, either in written form or online. In addition, the council received a total of 189 comments by email or letter from other interested parties. There were 17 responses from people who were both a parent and a member of staff. As a consequence of the proposed rezoning of the four secondary schools, a total of nine primary schools are involved, namely, Camdean, Kings Road, Masterton, Limekilns, Torryburn, Tulliallan, Canmore, Pitreavie and Commercial Primary Schools. The level of support for the proposal, from submitted responses, varied significantly depending on the primary school affected.

2.3 Almost all of the large number of parents, pupils and staff at Camdean and Kings Road Primary Schools, who responded and expressed a preference, were against the proposal for their schools. Almost all of the large numbers of parents, pupils and staff at Masterton Primary School, who responded and expressed a preference, were in favour of the proposal for their own school. The majority of the small number of parents and staff at Limekilns Primary School, who responded and expressed a preference, were in favour of the proposal for their own school. Half of the very small number of parents at Torryburn Primary School, who responded and expressed a preference, were in favour of the proposal for their own school. The majority of the small number of parents and pupils at Tulliallan Primary School, who responded and expressed a preference, were not in favour of the proposal for their own school. Most parents and pupils at Canmore Primary School, who responded and expressed a preference, were in favour of the proposal for their own school. All of the small number of parents at Pitreavie Primary School, who responded and expressed a preference, were in favour of the proposal for their own school. Most of the small number of parents and pupils at Commercial Primary School, who responded and expressed a preference, were in favour of both of the proposals for their own school. Overall, there is significant opposition to the proposal from the Rosyth communities of both Camdean and Kings Road Primary Schools yet considerable support for the proposal from the Masterton Primary School community. Further detail is contained in section 3.2 to 3.6 below.

2.4 In preparing the proposal, the council undertook a number of engagement sessions with the school communities of the Dunfermline and West Fife area during November 2016 and January 2017. A further round of engagement sessions was

undertaken in August and September 2017, in four secondary and seven primary schools, to consider and appraise available options. In addition, once the proposal was finalised, the council undertook pupil consultation sessions in each of the schools affected, to support discussion and a greater understanding of what was being proposed.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 In seeking to rezone the catchment areas of the four secondary schools, Fife Council is attempting to ensure a more equal and balanced distribution of young people across each of the four secondary schools. Currently Woodmill High School is unable to accommodate all young people who are eligible for a place, according to its existing catchment area, in forthcoming sessions and for foreseeable future years, according to current projections. This has created anxiety and uncertainty for the young people concerned and their families. The proposal also attempts to address some existing anomalies within split catchment areas and allows for more continuous borders and a more distinct association for many schools with their local secondary school community.

3.2 The proposal, in addressing the capacity issues at Woodmill High School will ensure that in future years the school is more likely to have sufficient capacity for all young people living in the rezoned catchment area. If no action is taken, it is estimated that over 100 pupils may fail to get a place for session 2019-20 and it is likely that the demand for places will continue to exceed capacity in future years. By rezoning primary school catchment areas away from Woodmill High School to other neighbouring secondary schools, the capacity risks at Woodmill High School can be addressed in the short term. The proposal provides much needed clarity and certainty for the children and their families of the Masterton Primary School community, in terms of accessing secondary school catchment places. The proposal also affords the opportunity to increase the occupancy at the other three secondary schools and provide a more sustainable school roll at Inverkeithing High School, helping to address the falling school roll there. By increasing the occupancy at the other three secondary schools, the proposal is supporting the council's efforts to improve efficiencies and deliver best value.

3.3 While the proposal overall has clear educational benefit for the majority of young people and their families, particularly those of the Woodmill High School and Masterton Primary School catchment areas, this is not universally the case for all of the young people and their families affected by the proposal. As it stands, the educational benefits for the considerable number of young people and their families from the Rosyth communities of both Camdean and Kings Road Primary Schools are not sufficiently clear.

3.4 Stakeholders are overall divided about the merits of the proposal. Most children do not think that existing catchment anomalies impact on them or their education in any way. Children and young people are most concerned about siblings being split up as a result of the proposal and the knock on effect of this for families and relationships and the extent to which younger siblings feel safe and secure in the secondary school environment. Children from Masterton Primary School welcome the clarity that the proposal will provide in terms of a catchment

area and the ability to access a local secondary school. Children at both Camdean and Kings Road Primary Schools are not in favour of the proposal, having concerns about travel; access to the Inverkeithing High School building; the amount of space and the quality, condition and suitability of accommodation; and in addition to the breaking of well-established links with Dunfermline High School.

3.5 Parents are overall divided about the proposal. Most acknowledged that what was being proposed was only a short term solution to ongoing capacity issues in the four secondary schools. Almost all parents would welcome more information about future plans for the school estate across Dunfermline and West Fife and for similar such decisions to be made much earlier, with a greater focus on long term planning. Most parents of children at Masterton, Limekilns, Torryburn, Canmore, Pitreavie and Commercial Primary Schools are in favour of the proposal. These parents recognise that change is required and are supportive of the proposal in addressing capacity issues and in bringing about much needed clarity. Almost all parents at Camdean and Kings Road Primary Schools and a minority at Tulliallan Primary School are against what is being proposed. These parents also recognise the need for change but feel that this should be minimal in terms of cost and disturbance to the children, young people and their families and that the proposal as presented fails to deliver on this. Similar to their children, they have concerns about the condition and suitability of the Inverkeithing High School building and the size of site; the cost and nature of proposed temporary or semi-permanent accommodation; the severing of well-established historical ties with Dunfermline High School; and the lack of safe walking routes and clear transport links from Rosyth to Inverkeithing. They do not think there is educational merit for the Rosyth communities in terms of what is presented and they consider that longer term, the school rolls at Inverkeithing and Dunfermline High Schools will be well over capacity and well under capacity respectively, which would represent inefficiencies. Parents of pupils in Rosyth do not think that they should be displaced from their current catchment as a result of new house building in Dunfermline. Further, there is a perception that there may be potential transport costs to be borne by some parents from the most needy communities. Therefore, parents consider the proposal to be unfair, as it will increase the cost of the school day for those affected families least well placed to face increased costs. Some parents, while recognising the need for change, think that the proposal creates unnecessary disruption for a greater number of school communities than is required.

3.6 Staff are, on the whole, supportive of the need for change and are anxious for things to progress and be decided clearly and quickly. The vast majority of staff have no strong views as to the way in which this is achieved. They are simply keen to have a clear outcome in order that they can continue to strengthen the arrangements for and impact of transition from primary to secondary school for all children across the schools affected.

4. Summary

Significant elements of Fife Council's proposal to rezone the catchment areas of the four secondary schools of Queen Anne, Woodmill, Dunfermline and Inverkeithing High Schools have clear educational benefit but this is not the case for all aspects of the proposal. HM Inspectors do not consider that there are clear enough educational

benefits for the children, young people and their families of the Rosyth communities of both Camdean and Kings Road Primary Schools. HM Inspectors recognise that the council needs to address the current capacity risks at Woodmill High School and to provide much needed clarity and certainty for the Masterton Primary School community. The proposal helps to achieve this. However, the council needs to address the reasonable and legitimate concerns raised by the parents and children of the Rosyth communities of Camdean and Kings Road Primary Schools. They have concerns about safe walking routes to Inverkeithing High School from Rosyth and access to the building for those with restricted mobility. They are particularly concerned that there is no clear position outlined for siblings and the knock on effect that this will have on families affected by the proposal. They would like more information, about the funding for, and provision of, school transport and how this would work on a daily basis and to understand what the long term plan is for the school estate across the Dunfermline and West Fife area. They have concerns about the quality of existing accommodation at Inverkeithing High School; the lack of space within and out with the building to cope with the increased roll and the cost and nature of the required temporary or semi-permanent accommodation which in their view does not represent best value. Finally, they are concerned that the proposal, if accepted, will result in a much more complicated and less safe commute to school for their children, reducing the likelihood of participation in after school activities and would end long-established and historic community links and ties with Dunfermline High School.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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