

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Glasgow City Council to amend the catchment areas for Merrylee, Croftfoot, Battlefield, Mount Florida Primary Schools and King's Park, Hillpark Secondary Schools and Shawlands Academy.

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 Glasgow City Council's proposal to amend the catchment areas for Merrylee, Croftfoot, Battlefield, Mount Florida Primary Schools and King's Park, Hillpark Secondary Schools and Shawlands Academy. 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 27 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
- visits to the sites of all schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

Glasgow City 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*. Glasgow City Council's consultation on the proposal to amend the catchment areas for Merrylee, Croftfoot, Battlefield, Mount Florida Primary Schools and King's Park, Hillpark Secondary Schools and Shawlands Academy ran from 20 October to 1 December 2014. During this period the council held seven public meetings. At one of the meetings no members of the public attended. At these meetings, there were mixed reactions to the proposal. The council received only 74 written responses to the proposal. There were also meetings with children and young people from the schools involved. Most children and young people were positive about the proposal. Stakeholders who spoke with HM Inspectors felt some of the information contained within the proposal was unclear. In particular they felt the maps showing catchment areas did not have enough detail. The council responded to these concerns and posted more detailed maps on its website.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal to review and amend the catchment areas for Merrylee, Croftfoot, Battlefield, Mount Florida Primary Schools and King's Park, Hillpark Secondary Schools and Shawlands Academy is of educational benefit. In particular, the proposal will address overcrowding at Merrylee Primary School. This will provide greater certainty for children and families residing within the catchment area of Merrylee Primary School in terms of primary school education. The proposal will establish clearly defined catchment areas for all of the schools and remove a number of the current shared catchment areas. This will include the three secondary schools, creating a distinct association with their local community and the potential to further links within local areas. 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. The proposed catchment area amendments will result in a better balanced and sustained distribution of pupils across schools. Implementation of the proposal will mean that children will spend less time travelling to school each day. No changes are planned for the general use of the seven school buildings and/or its facilities. As such, no others users would be affected.

3.2 The council plans to implement the proposal from August 2015. Parents of children attending the primary schools, who met with HM Inspectors had concerns that arrangements for transitions for children moving from nursery to P1 and from P7 to S1 may have to be changed. A few parents felt that it would be better to implement the proposal from August 2016. In its final consultation report, the council needs to address concerns regarding the proposed timescale and make clear the

arrangements for children and young people's transitions, including those who have additional support needs.

3.3 Across the primary schools, staff, children and parents were positive and saw the benefits of the proposal. Almost all parents, who met with HM Inspectors, felt the proposal would ensure that their children would have fairer access to the school in their catchment area. They were happy that overcrowding issues in Merrylee Primary School would be addressed. In the primary schools, the main concerns from staff and parents, who met with HM Inspectors, were around catchment boundaries. Most felt that 'Old Cathcart' should remain in the Merrylee catchment and the railway line be used as the boundary in order to avoid splitting the community. Parents would like further information about the timescales for refurbishing Battlefield and Croftfoot Primary Schools. Overall, primary-aged children were enthusiastic about the proposal.

3.4 Those staff, young people and parents of Hillpark Secondary School and Shawlands Academy, who met with HM Inspectors, were opposed to the proposal. Staff had concerns that they would lose teaching staff as a result of changes to the catchment areas. A few parents and young people were worried that a lack of transport will result in long walks for pupils from the east side of the catchment area. Parents would also like more information on potential impact of new housing on catchment areas. Staff, parents and young people within King's Park Secondary School were happy that anomalies to the catchment area were being addressed.

4. Summary

Overall, the proposal to review and amend the catchment areas for Merrylee, Croftfoot, Battlefield, Mount Florida Primary Schools and King's Park, Hillpark Secondary Schools and Shawlands Academy is of educational benefit. The proposal has the support of most parents, staff and children who attend primary schools and King's Park Secondary School but not of those from Hillpark Secondary School and Shawlands Academy. The proposal addresses anomalies in the catchment areas of the schools and will help to reduce the number of placing requests. If the proposal is implemented, it will enable children who live in the catchment area to attend their local primary school instead of having to travel or make placing requests. This has the potential to provide fair and equitable access to the schools in the local area whilst having no impact on the wider community. In taking forward the proposal, the council should provide reassurance about arrangements to support transitions. It should provide more information on the refurbishment plans for Battlefield and Croftfoot Primary Schools.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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