

## **Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Glasgow City Council to review and improve the placing request criteria for mainstream 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 \("the 2010 Act"\)](#). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Glasgow City Council's proposal to review and improve the placing request criteria for mainstream 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 statutory 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 attending Glasgow City Council 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 public meetings held on 5 June 2018, 19 June 2018, 16 August 2018 and 21 August 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, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig as statutory consultees for changes to Gaelic provision;

- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- visits to the sites of St Angela's Primary School, Hillhead Primary School, St Andrew's Secondary School and Hyndland Secondary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 Glasgow City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The council undertook the consultation between 14 May 2018 and 24 September 2018. Advertisements were placed in the local newspapers and copies of the proposal document were made available through the council's website and in public libraries. Six public meetings were held in city schools which were attended by a total of 19 people. An online survey tool which asked three questions and invited additional comments was used to enable stakeholders to respond to the proposal.

2.3 The council received 256 responses to its online survey. From the responses received, 65 agreed with the council's proposed redrafted placing request criteria and 81 people did not agree. The remaining respondents either did not answer that question in the survey or did not record a preference. Of those who answered a question on the order in which the new criteria would be applied, 49 agreed and 64 disagreed with the proposal.

## **3. Educational Aspects of Proposal**

3.1 Glasgow City Council's proposal has the potential to be of educational benefit. The proposal seeks to improve the criteria used for placing requests, ensure that they are applied fairly and consistently and provide greater clarity for stakeholders. Some of the wording in the existing criteria is out of date. The revised criteria is framed in terms of the needs of the child or young person and is more consistent with additional support needs legislation. The proposal, if implemented, could provide clearer and more up to date criteria for managing placing requests across Glasgow schools.

3.2 The proposal will support the council in meeting its statutory requirements to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. The proposal has the potential to help the council to manage its school estate more effectively and efficiently, ensuring best value in the delivery of its services.

3.3 It would be helpful for stakeholders if aspects of the proposed new criteria had further explanation. It is not sufficiently clear how the second criterion of 'children who face ongoing family circumstances' would be applied to achieve greater

consistency and transparency. The council should consider whether this criteria should be reviewed to achieve its stated aim of greater consistency and transparency. This should include the role of the Head of Service in assessing the applications.

3.4 The council should review their proposed fifth criterion (a child or young person who requires the particular teaching methods provided by that school to progress a particular aspect of learning). Respondents felt strongly that parents and carers should not have to evidence a commitment to Gaelic Medium Education, rather they felt that Gaelic Medium Education should be open to all those who wished it.

3.5 Stakeholders who responded to the consultation raised a range of issues including the view that distance from a school should be included as a category. A number of comments on Gaelic Medium Education were submitted including comments submitted from national and local representative bodies. They referred to statutory Guidance on Gaelic Medium Education to support their concerns.

3.6 Parents, children and young people, and staff who discussed the council's proposal with HM Inspectors had mixed views on the council's proposal. Almost all agreed that it was important to give additional support needs the highest priority. Several felt that the ranking for denominational education had been diminished and that they preferred the existing ranking. Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church emphasised the importance of ensuring sufficient provision within catchment areas. A number of members of staff questioned the need to include additional support needs in placing requests criteria since they felt this should be handled through inclusion policy and children's planning as a matter of entitlement rather than a process involving application. Staff were concerned about the impact of the existing placing request processes on school induction and transition planning.

3.7 During discussion, stakeholders raised a number of important issues regarding their experience of the existing placing request process. A few parents raised the issue of children and young people with disabilities and some spoke negatively of their experience with the existing system. A few parents spoke of the stress and anxiety caused by potentially having to place children at different schools and felt that the sibling category should receive a higher priority.

3.8 Several parents who spoke with HM Inspectors felt that the existing placing request process was confusing and difficult to understand and that there was a lack of assistance for those for whom English was an additional language. The council will need to consider this in its final paper, including the need for accessible information and further support. The council has also committed to undertaking an equalities impact assessment on its proposal.

#### **4. Summary**

Glasgow City Council's proposal has the potential to be of educational benefit by achieving improved and clearer criteria for placing requests which can be applied fairly and consistently. In discussion with inspectors, the council has stated that it will be taking into account the views of stakeholders and will be amending the criteria, for example, by not including Gaelic Medium Education in the reviewed criteria.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
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