

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Lanarkshire Council to vary the arrangements for transfer of pupils from Kirk O'Shotts Primary School from Caldervale High School to Calderhead High School.

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 North Lanarkshire Council's proposal to vary the arrangements for the transfer of pupils from Kirk O'Shotts Primary School from Caldervale High School to Calderhead High School. 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 affected, any other users and children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper;
- 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;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and

- visits to the site of Kirk O'Shotts Primary School, Caldervale High School and Calderhead High School, including discussion with parents, headteachers, school staff, children and young people.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 North 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*.

2.2 The council undertook the consultation between 10 January 2018 and 23 February 2018. Copies of the proposal document were made available in affected schools, local libraries and on the council's website. A public meeting held at Kirk O'Shotts Primary School on 23 January 2018 was attended by 40 people. From 17 returned public consultation forms, 16 were against and none were in favour with one spoiled return. In addition, 20 emails were received by the council of which 12 were in favour of the proposal and eight were against. Fifty-five pupil responses were recorded with 43 against and 12 in favour. A petition against the proposal containing 266 signatures was also submitted to the council.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 North Lanarkshire Council proposes to alter school catchment areas for Calderhead High School in Shotts and Caldervale High School in Airdrie. The aligned secondary school for Kirk O'Shotts Primary School would change from Caldervale High School to Calderhead High School from August 2018.

3.2 The council's proposal paper states that the change would result in the alignment of Kirk O'Shotts Primary School with its natural hinterland of Shotts. The paper states that Kirk O' Shotts Primary School is geographically closer to Calderhead High School, at a distance of 3.5 miles, than it is to Caldervale High School, at a distance of 4.5 miles. Pupils would remain entitled to school transport and transitional arrangements would apply for those children with older siblings currently at Caldervale High School. Additional school transport costs are estimated at between £15,000 and £20,000 per annum.

3.3 The council's proposal paper outlines generalised educational benefits resulting from opportunities for better engagement with Local Area Partnerships. Kirk O'Shotts Primary School would become part of the Shotts Local Area Partnership. This has the potential to result in better opportunities for partnerships with other community planning partners and better opportunities for greater coherence with local area partnership structures and administrative area boundaries. Parents, children and young people could have better opportunities to have their views on the local area taken into account.

3.4 North Lanarkshire Council's proposal paper does not include sufficiently detailed information on how the proposed change will result in improved outcomes for children and young people. The paper does not provide details of the curriculum or facilities in either of the secondary schools or specific details on how pupils' learning experiences would change or improve as result of its proposal. The council

will need to provide more specific and detailed information on the educational benefits of its proposal in its final paper.

3.5 The current roll of Kirk O'Shotts Primary School is 72 pupils resulting in an average of 11 pupils transferring to secondary school each year. The proposal paper states that this would have little impact on the school rolls of either secondary school. The paper states that there will be no significant impact on staffing at any of the schools affected by the proposal. There is no detailed information on school rolls or forecast changes in either of the two secondary schools. The council will need to provide more specific details on school rolls and any staffing implications in its final paper.

3.6 During the consultation process HM Inspectors were informed that North Lanarkshire Council had recently advertised the post of headteacher of Kirk O'Shotts Primary School as a shared headship with Calderbank Primary School in Airdrie. Calderbank Primary School is zoned to Caldervale High School cluster. North Lanarkshire Council will need to clarify in its final proposal paper any implications arising from the shared headship post, as this post would need to operate over two separate secondary school clusters.

3.7 The headteacher at Kirk O'Shotts Primary School could see some merit in the council's proposal, including the opportunities to establish better community links but was concerned about the implications of the shared headship with a school in another secondary school cluster.

3.8 Parents, children and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors at Kirk O'Shotts Primary School had mixed views of the council's proposal. Those parents and children in favour of the proposal could see advantages in transferring to a secondary school with a smaller roll. Some felt it would be easier to make the transition from a small primary school to a small secondary school. Those who were opposed to the proposal felt that they wanted to maintain continuity in the school's historical link to Airdrie. Whilst school transport entitlement would continue, parents were concerned about the lack of public transport and specifically the lack of a direct bus route from Kirk O'Shotts to Calderhead High School. They felt this would make it difficult for parents without their own transport to visit and maintain relationships with Calderhead High School. They were of the view that travel to Airdrie by public transport was much easier. A few parents questioned the council's calculation of distances between establishments and pointed out that the difference in distances between the village of Salsburgh and either of the two secondary schools was negligible. The council will need to clarify the position on public transport in its final paper.

3.9 Children with siblings at Caldervale High School were aware that following P7 they might have to choose between attending the same school as their older siblings or transferring to Calderhead High School with their peers. A few felt that this change could be unsettling.

3.10 Staff, parents and young people at Calderhead High School who spoke with HM Inspectors could see merit in the proposal. Staff could see potential advantages in a slight increase in the school roll. The current roll of Calderhead High School at

383 is significantly below its capacity of 700 pupils. Young people, parents and staff spoke positively about the ethos of the school, the strong sense of community and the positive relationships between staff and young people. They felt children from Kirk O'Shotts Primary School could benefit from an easier transition experience in a smaller school with good facilities and space. Stakeholders had limited knowledge and no views on the potential benefits of Local Area Partnerships referred to in the council's educational benefits statement.

3.11 Staff, parents and young people at Caldervale High School did not support the proposed change. They valued the school's long standing association with Kirk O'Shotts Primary School. Staff felt the bigger school roll, currently 1030, and its greater capacity could result in young people experiencing a potentially broader range of subject choices in the Senior Phase. Stakeholders felt that the historical ties, ongoing sporting links including Active Schools provision and public transport links between Airdrie and Salsburgh were important issues which need to be taken into account. They felt that continuity in existing arrangements would best meet the needs of children transferring to secondary school from Kirk O'Shotts Primary School.

4. Summary

4.1 There are potential educational benefits to North Lanarkshire Council's proposal, including the potential to improve school community links and relationships with Local Area Partnerships. However, the educational benefits statement is not sufficiently detailed or specific. It does not provide details on how learning experiences and outcomes for young people would improve. There is no specific information in the proposal document on the differences in the curriculum offer, facilities in the two secondary schools or school rolls and staffing levels. North Lanarkshire Council will need to strengthen its educational benefits statement in its final proposal paper by providing more specific information, particularly in these areas.

4.2 Stakeholders raised concerns about the lack of a direct public transport link between Salsburgh and Calderhead High School. The council will need to consider this in its final paper.

4.3 The council will need to consider any implications of the shared headship role planned with Calderbank Primary School in its final proposal paper.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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