

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Lanarkshire Council to realign the catchment areas of Kirklandpark and Wester Overton Primary Schools.

1. Introduction

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 South Lanarkshire Council's proposal to realign the catchment areas of Kirklandpark and Wester Overton Primary Schools, to more appropriately link new housing developments to the local non-denominational 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 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.

1.1 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children 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.

1.2 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 28 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; and

- visits to the site of Kirklandpark and Wester Overton Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 South Lanarkshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

2.2 The statutory consultation period ran from 18 June to 14 September 2018. Communication was issued to all stakeholders at the two affected schools, three nursery classes and the document was issued to the two partnership nurseries within the town. Adverts were placed in the Strathaven Echoes and East Kilbride News. Copies of the proposal document were made available in council libraries and on the council website. The council held a public meeting on 28 August 2018 at St Patrick's Primary School, Strathaven. There were 17 attendees at the public meeting. Consultation with pupils also took place at both affected schools.

2.3 The council received 17 written responses to the proposal, nine were in favour of the proposal, six were not in favour of the proposal and two were undecided. Concerns raised at the public meeting, in written responses from those against the proposal and from parents who met with HM Inspectors, predominantly related to two aspects: specific boundaries of the proposed new catchment areas and safe routes to school.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal aims to ensure that children can attend their closest non-denominational school, by appropriately linking housing areas to each of the two schools concerned. The proposal has the potential to remove uncertainty for families and for schools at enrolment. Overall, the proposal has clear educational benefits. The proposal should assist the council to make effective use of its resources.

3.2 Respondee who were against the proposal were of the view that the council had not fully considered the needs of families living in the Dovecastle and Colinhill areas. At the public meeting council officers indicated that specific boundaries of the catchment area, such as Dovecastle, could be looked at. In taking forward the proposal, the council should respond to individual local school communities regarding concerns around specific areas in the proposed realignment of the catchment.

3.3 Stakeholders reported concerns regarding safe routes to school. The consultation paper indicates that the proposed catchment areas should provide more opportunities to promote safe walking and cycling to school. One headteacher indicated that they were awaiting a response from the roads department regarding aspects of safe routes to school. In taking forward the proposal, the council should ensure that each school's travel plan is reviewed and responses are shared regarding stakeholder concerns about safe routes to school.

3.4 Almost all staff and children from Kirklandpark Primary School and Wester Overton Primary School who spoke with HM Inspectors fully supported the proposal to redefine the catchment areas, sharing that the proposal made sense and it would be helpful and move away from uncertainty for families.

3.5 Most parents at Kirklandpark Primary School and Wester Overton Primary School who spoke with HM Inspectors supported the proposal to redefine the catchment areas, albeit with issues relating to specific areas of the catchment as outlined above being reconsidered. Parents at Kirklandpark Primary School shared concerns regarding demands on the capacity of the school. In the proposal paper, the council has stated that they will continue to monitor the impact of an increasing roll and make necessary arrangements to enhance the existing educational facilities appropriately and in a timely manner. In taking forward the plans, the council should share with parents how this monitoring and any relevant changes to arrangements would be undertaken.

4. Summary

Overall, South Lanarkshire's proposal to realign the catchment areas for Kirklandpark Primary School and Wester Overton Primary School has clear educational benefits. The proposal aims to ensure that children can attend their closest non-denominational school, by appropriately linking housing areas to each of the two schools concerned. The proposal has the potential to remove uncertainty for families and for schools at enrolment. In taking forward the proposal, the council should respond to individual local school communities regarding concerns around specific areas in the proposed realignment of the catchment. The council should also ensure that each school's travel plan is reviewed and responses are shared regarding stakeholder concerns about safe routes to school.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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