

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Lanarkshire Council to realign the catchment areas of St John the Baptist Primary School, Uddingston, and St Bride's Primary School, Bothwell.

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 South Lanarkshire Council's proposal to realign the catchment areas of St John the Baptist Primary School, Uddingston, and St Bride's Primary School, Bothwell. 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 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 9 November 2016 in connection with the council's proposal;
- 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 St Bride's Primary and St John the Baptist Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 South 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 South Lanarkshire Council undertook a statutory consultation which ran from Monday 24 October until Friday 9 December 2016. Information was provided to stakeholders including parents of children attending both schools. Details of the consultation were published in the local newspaper. A public meeting was held on 9 November 2016 which was attended by 14 stakeholders. Attendees at the public meeting were supportive of the proposal. The council received no objections or written responses to the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The council proposes to realign the catchment areas of St John the Baptist Primary School, Uddingston, and St Bride's Primary School, Bothwell, to ensure that new housing developments are linked more appropriately to the local denominational primary schools. By making the proposed changes, the council hopes to manage effectively demand for places in each school and to take better account of current and future land use with regard to housing developments. The proposed new catchment areas are better aligned to housing than the old historic boundaries. The proposal will affect relatively small numbers of children. The effect on both school rolls will, overall, be neutral as both areas identified will have similar numbers of houses once complete. The improved links between the changed catchment areas and schools has the potential to provide easier access to the schools, allowing children to be better connected with their communities and peers. This could make it easier for children to access after school clubs and activities and encourage them to become more independent in travelling to school. There is a will within the community to explore with the council whether improved paths could encourage increased walking and cycling with the associated health benefits for children and families. With improved links to their local communities, both schools could realise further benefits contributing to the curriculum experienced by children.

3.2 All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were positive about the proposal. They saw a clear rationale for the changes. Stakeholders were pleased with the clarity of the council's plans. The assurance given by the council to allow siblings entry to the same school as their brothers or sisters (for a period of six years) without the need to submit a placing request was greatly welcomed by parents.

3.3 The Diocese of Motherwell, on behalf of the Catholic Church, has indicated its approval of the suggested changes. It considers that the proposed changes take full account of the new housing in the area, provides assurance to families with regard to siblings who will enroll in either school for the next six years and welcomes the

greater likelihood that children will be mixing with others from the same parish communities.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors consider that, if implemented, the proposal to alter the catchment areas has the potential to help children, families and their communities. There are potential gains for improving the curriculum, providing better access to school facilities and activities and for developing friendships. If the proposal goes ahead, the council should explore with stakeholders the potential for improving walking and cycling routes. In its final report, the council should more clearly outline the overall educational benefits of the proposal.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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