

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Lanarkshire Council to change the catchment areas of both Newfield and Stonehouse Primary Schools to better align new housing developments in the area to the primary school geographically closer to the development.

November 2019

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 South Lanarkshire Council's proposal to change the catchment areas of both Newfield and Stonehouse Primary Schools to better align new housing developments in the area to the primary school geographically closer to the development. 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 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.

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 25 September 2019 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 Stonehouse and Newfield 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 formal consultation ran from 9 September 2019 to 29 October 2019. This was preceded by a notification advert in the Hamilton Advertiser. Communication was issued to all statutory stakeholders at the affected schools and in the community informing them of this consultation. A public meeting was held at Stonehouse Primary School on 25 September 2019. This was attended by the headteachers of the affected schools and one stakeholder. There were three formal responses received during the consultation period. Two in favour of the proposed changes and one undecided.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council has set out a strong case for the proposed catchment changes to both schools. Initially this proposal was led by the community, recognising that historical catchments no longer align with how the community of Stonehouse has grown and developed. Some families opt to use placing requests to enable their children to attend the school closest to their address. Taking account of future pupil roll projections and future known housing developments both schools have capacity to accommodate a small increase in roll numbers. If the proposal is approved, changes would come into effect for August 2020 enrolment. Children who are currently attending Newfield or Stonehouse Primary School will have the right to remain in that school. Any younger siblings due to enrol whilst an older sibling is attending either of the primary schools will have the right to attend the same school as their sibling until 2025. There would be no change to existing secondary transition arrangements.

3.2 The council is committed to providing the best learning experiences possible for children who attend their schools. They recognise that travel, distance from school and parental choice are important. The proposal offers a more sensible division of the geography and takes account of proposed house building. The proposal may contribute positively to children's health and wellbeing, allowing for increased opportunities for walking and cycling to school with a reduction in the use of cars. The assurances that existing pupils will not be affected and that siblings can attend the same school is positive. The council anticipate that there will be no negative impacts on the local community.

3.3 HM Inspectors met with parents and school staff in both schools. All were supportive of the proposal. In particular, they recognised the travel distance for those furthest away from Stonehouse Primary School. All children from both schools that met with HM Inspectors supported the proposed changes to the catchment areas. The children highlighted a number of potential educational benefits. This includes a reduced walking time and safer route to school for a few children. The children raised concerns about the current walking route to this school, given part of the journey includes crossing a very busy road with no crossing patrols. The children suggested that there may be less car pollution and congestion, as the use of cars for travel may reduce. Children re zoned to a nearer school may begin to walk to school on their own. The children highlighted that developing friendships and increased interaction outwith and within school may increase. Currently, children have friendships out of school with children that live nearby. However, under the current catchment arrangements they may attend different schools. The children also thought that participation in after school activities may increase. HM Inspectors endorse this view.

3.4 Families with children already attending either school, and with a further sibling enrolling in P1 between 2020 and 2025 will have a choice of school regardless of the catchment change. This is positive in educational continuity for families.

4. Summary

The council's proposal provides a strong case for the proposed catchment area changes and outlines the associated educational benefits. HM Inspectors endorse this view. All children, parents and school staff who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. The council's proposal, should it proceed may see a decrease in placing requests as geography is better aligned to the schools.

**HM Inspectors
November 2019**