

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Perth and Kinross Council to make a limited variation to the Schools' Admission Policy for Perth and Kinross Council schools.

January 2020

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 Perth and Kinross Council's proposal to vary their schools' admission policy. 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 9 January 2020 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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and
- visits to the site of St John's RC Academy and Kinross High School, including discussion with relevant consultees, including senior staff from associated primary schools, school staff, parents and pupils.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Perth and Kinross Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The statutory consultation on the proposal to make a limited variation to the Schools' Admission Policy for Perth and Kinross Council schools from school session 2020-2021 commenced on 2 December 2019 and closed on 24 January 2020 which includes a period of 30 school days.

2.3 Details of the consultation and proposal paper were issued by email to the list of statutory consultees. Public notice adverts were placed in the local press on 2 December 2019 and 6 December 2019. The consultation was also published on the Council's social media channels. As part of the statutory consultation process, one public meeting was held on 9 January 2020 at Bertha Park High School attended by 18 members of the public. The proposals were generally accepted as a positive move to support children to have improved confidence about their progression route, and to attend secondary school with their peer group.

2.4 In total, 69 responses were received within the consultation period. Fifty-eight responses agreed with the council's proposal, ten disagreed with the council's proposal and one neither agreed nor disagreed with the council's proposal.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Overall, the impact of the proposal is not likely to make a difference to a significant number of children and young people, and the authority's own modelling suggests that in the current year it would have had an impact on only 15 from almost 18,000 pupils in the authority. Families whose children and young people attend their catchment primary school and secondary school, are likely to remain unaffected.

3.2 The proposal is a change and refinement to the admissions policy. The new policy lays out clearer and more precise criteria for priority relating to admissions. This clarity is helpful in giving stakeholders and children and young people a greater confidence regarding their transition route to secondary school.

3.3 The proposal gives stakeholders a greater confidence that children and young people are more likely to progress to the same secondary school as their peers. This is underpinned by criteria within the proposal of prioritising those pupils from associated primary schools. It also helps to ensure that preparation for transitions from associated primary schools are more likely to be suitable and effective. HM Inspectors recognise the value of these arrangements.

3.4 The greater clarity and improved detail should also lessen the need for appeals where placement requests have been unsuccessful. Where appeals are made, the enhanced criteria should make decisions clear and easier for everyone to understand. HM Inspectors recognise the benefit of a more transparent and understandable criteria for such decision making.

3.5 For the children in denominational primary schools, there will be a greater clarity regarding their priority for places in the authority's only denominational secondary school.

3.6 Stakeholders overall welcome the clarity that the proposals bring, with over 80% of responses to the local authority supporting the proposals. Children and young people value the improved level of confidence about their progression arrangements, and the likelihood of progressing with their peer group. Stakeholders whose priority is not improved with this proposal also recognise the benefit of greater clarity.

3.7 The few stakeholders who do not support the proposal focus primarily on the extra travel distance that might be involved for the young people who may not get a place in the school nearest their home. A small number of the stakeholders affected by the proposal are resident in the neighbouring local authorities, and these residents expressed some concern that the proposal may have an impact on their opportunity for a successful placement request.

3.8 Catholic church representatives were consulted during the process and are satisfied that there is no disadvantage to the Catholic education provision. They are supportive of the general proposals which aim to ensure improved transitions for more young people.

4. Summary

The proposed changes to the admissions policy lay out clearer and more precise criteria for priority relating to admissions. This clarity is helpful in giving stakeholders, children and young people a greater confidence regarding their transition route to secondary school. It also helps to ensure that preparation for transitions from associated primary schools are more likely to be suitable and effective. For the children in denominational primary schools, there will be a greater clarity that they have a priority for places in the authority's only denominational secondary school. Therefore, the proposal supports a level of continuity for those children and young people wishing to continue their education in a denominational school. The proposal is supported by the majority of stakeholders. It is likely to lessen the need for appeals, and where appeals are made, the enhanced criteria will support clearer decision making and improved understanding for the reasons that decisions are made.

**HM Inspectors
January 2020**