

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review denominational secondary school admission arrangements at Sinclair Academy, St Margaret's Academy and St Kentigern's Academy.

May 2025

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His 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 a proposal by West Lothian Council to review denominational secondary school admission arrangements at Sinclair Academy, St Margaret's Academy and St Kentigern's Academy. 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' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's 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 consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for 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 3 March 2025 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;
- visits to the site of St Margaret's Academy and Sinclair Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The council ran a statutory consultation from 17 February to 4 April 2025. The proposal was available on the council's website and through social media. Paper copies and accessible formats were available on request. The council held a public meeting on 3 March 2025, which no members of the public attended. The council received no responses or objections to the consultation.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 West Lothian Council proposes to review admission arrangement in the north of West Lothian. This would alter the denominational secondary catchment areas of Sinclair Academy, St Margaret's Academy and St Kentigern's Academy. The council states that many of the proposed changes are relatively minor in scale. However, they are important to improving school catchment areas to be more closely aligned with community council areas and natural geographic boundaries. The council do not anticipate any impact to the existing school capacities, management structures or transport arrangements resulting from the proposed changes. The proposal has the potential to address the demands of future housing developments and make best use of school capacity. HM Inspectors agree there is benefit to catchment areas being aligned with local communities.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits to this proposal. The council's educational benefits statement states that a key educational advantage for the schools affected is that they will continue to deliver the full breath of Curriculum for Excellence. HM Inspectors agree that the council's proposal should have no detrimental impact on the delivery of education. In the proposal, the council confirmed that all young people will continue to attend their existing school for the remainder of their secondary education. The council also confirms that younger siblings of pupils currently attending schools would be entitled to attend the same school as their older sibling. The council set out that this review aligns with a separate denominational primary review. HM Inspectors agree that these two proposals will ensure that secondary catchments continue to match primary catchments and help to facilitate effective transition arrangements.

3.3 HM Inspectors met with young people, parents and staff in Sinclair Academy and St Margaret's Academy. All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposed changes. They agree that the revised catchment areas align better with local communities. All stakeholders expressed the view that the proposed changes would have no impact on children and families currently attending any of the schools. Young people and parents expressed the importance of young people being entitled to attend the same secondary school as their peers from primary school. No parents from St Margaret's Academy chose to meet with HM Inspectors. Parents from Sinclair Academy who met with HM Inspectors feel it is important there is adequate pupil support to respond to the increasing school roll and level of need. They are concerned that increased class sizes may have a negative effect on pupil wellbeing. HM Inspectors agree that the council should continue to engage with parents as the school roll changes to provide reassurance in regard to young people's needs being met.

3.4 HM Inspectors met with a representative of the Scottish Catholic Education Service who expressed their support in relation to the proposal.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree there are educational benefits to the proposal to review the catchment areas for the three denominational secondary schools. If agreed, this proposal will align school catchment areas with community council areas and natural geographic boundaries within West Lothian. Stakeholders do not have objections to the proposal.

HM Inspectors
May 2025