

# **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review admission arrangements as a result of alteration to the denominational secondary school catchment areas of St Margaret's Academy and St Kentigern's Academy.**

January 2024

## 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 West Lothian Council's proposal to review admission arrangements as a result of alteration to the denominational secondary school catchment areas of 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' 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; 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 20 November 2023 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 St Margaret's Academy, St Kentigern's Academy and St Mary's Primary School Polbeth, 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 undertook the consultation between 17 October and 1 December 2023. The proposal was communicated to stakeholders via the council website, through social media and local press. The consultation paper was made available in the affected schools and other council buildings, and formal notice was given to a wide range of consultees. Headteachers of the three affected schools shared information with young people and parents. West Lothian Council held a public meeting at St Mary's Primary School Polbeth on 20 November 2023. This was attended by three members of the community: one parent and two members of staff from St Mary's Primary School Polbeth.

2.3 West Lothian Council received three responses to their online consultation. Responses were from the headteachers of the three affected schools. They all reported that there were no objections to the proposals following discussions with young people and parents.

2.4 West Lothian Council also consulted with the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. The council involved the Church Representative for West Lothian as part of this. In a written response to the local authority, the Archdiocese noted their support for this proposal.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors agree with the council's educational benefits statement. All children and young people will continue to attend their existing schools for the remainder of their primary school or secondary school education.

3.2 The rationale for this proposal is primarily to reduce an imbalance of primary schools associated with each of the denominational secondary schools in the local authority. This is due to the opening of the new denominational secondary school, Sinclair Academy, in August 2023. One primary school has moved from St Kentigern's Academy to Sinclair Academy cluster, and two primary schools have moved from St Margaret's Academy to Sinclair Academy cluster. The proposal to review admission arrangements and move St Mary's Primary School Polbeth into St Margaret's Academy cluster helps to achieve this aim.

3.3 St Margaret's Academy is slightly closer to St Mary's Primary School Polbeth than St Kentigern's Academy. However, at present, almost all St Mary's Primary School Polbeth leavers go on to attend the non-denominational West Calder High School. St Mary's Primary School Polbeth and West Calder High School are located less than a mile from each other. The council should ensure that they continue to monitor the sustainability of school rolls in all establishments. This is in line with their intention for all schools to be fully equipped to deliver the full breadth of Curriculum for Excellence.

3.4 Children and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposed change. They expressed a view that St Margaret's Academy was easier to reach by public transport than St Kentigern's Academy from the St Mary's Primary School Polbeth catchment area. The proposal notes that requests for school transport provisions will be considered in accordance with West Lothian Council's school transport policy. The council should continue to work with school staff so that they can inform parents what school transport arrangements will be in place.

3.5 Staff from all schools who spoke with HM Inspectors were confident they would continue to be able to offer well-planned transitions for young people into secondary school if the proposal goes ahead. A few staff did note they hoped decisions would be made quickly so that transition planning for school session 2024-25 could progress as soon as possible.

3.6 HM Inspectors met with a representative of the Scottish Catholic Education Service who expressed their support in relation to the proposal. This was in line with the written response from the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. Church representatives felt the proposal was sensible to reduce imbalance in primary schools associated with secondary schools following the opening of Sinclair Academy. Church representatives welcomed the slightly shorter journey for children to school.

## 4. Summary

Overall, HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits from the proposal. The changes to admission policy should help to balance school rolls. This should help to make it more likely that schools can continue to offer a breadth of experiences as part of Curriculum for Excellence. It should help to make it less likely that a school roll will fall to a level where this becomes more challenging. Staff, parents, children and young people do not have objections to the proposal.

**HM Inspectors**  
**January 2024**