

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review admission arrangements arising from school catchment area variations at St Mary's Primary School Polbeth, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School and St Ninian's Primary School.

November 2021

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 West Lothian Council's proposal to review admission arrangements arising from school catchment area variations at St Mary's Primary School Polbeth, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School and St Ninian's Primary School. 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 of the schools; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper;
- 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:

- 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
- virtual visits to St Mary's Primary School Polbeth, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School and St Ninian's Primary School.

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 West Lothian Council undertook a statutory consultation which ran from 15 September 2021 until 5 November 2021. Information was provided to stakeholders including parents of children attending the three schools. A public meeting was held on 30 September 2021 which no one attended. The council received no objections or written responses to the proposal.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 West Lothian Council has set out a sound rationale for its proposal to review admission arrangements arising from school catchment area variations at St Mary's Primary School Polbeth, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School and St Ninian's Primary School. Within West Lothian Council's Local Development Plan Gavieside is a major development with over 2,000 new dwellings planned. Currently, almost all of the site is split between Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School and St Mary's Primary School, Polbeth catchment areas for denominational primary

schooling. The proposed changes to catchment areas will ensure that there is greater alignment of housing developments to existing and future primary school capacities. Currently, only seven residential properties sit within the proposed area of change with no children in these properties attending West Lothian schools. The proposal helps to avoid pressure on accommodation in the future and also supports schools linking with their local communities which support Curriculum for Excellence. The clarification of the catchment areas avoids uncertainty for parents moving into the new catchment areas.

3.2 The council believe that there will be no impact to pupils currently in attendance at West Lothian schools as a result of proposed variations to school catchment areas. All pupils will continue to attend their existing schools for the remainder of their primary stage education. Arrangements for younger siblings have also been considered and those pupils currently attending St Mary's Primary School, Polbeth, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School and St Ninian's Primary School will retain the catchment status of the older sibling and will be permitted to attend the existing primary school establishment if parents wish siblings to attend the same primary school. This catchment status would remain until no older sibling was in attendance at any of the affected primary schools. The assurances that existing pupils will not be affected and that siblings can attend the same school is positive. Current arrangements for primary to secondary school associations will remain the same and not change as a result of this proposed review of school catchment areas. HM Inspectors agree that there will be no negative impacts on the local community.

3.2. HM Inspectors met with the headteachers of St Mary's Primary School Polbeth, Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School and St Ninian's Primary School. All headteachers were in favour of the proposal.

3.3 The council did not receive any responses during the consultation period.

3.4 HM Inspectors met with a representative of the Scottish Catholic Education Service who expressed no concerns in relation to the proposal.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that West Lothian Council's proposal provides a valid case for the proposed catchment area changes which will result in educational benefits. If approved, there will be a greater alignment of housing developments to existing and future primary school capacities.

**HM Inspectors
November 2021**