

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review admission arrangements for St Paul's Primary School, St Ninian's Primary School and St Mary's Primary School Polbeth.

December 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 West Lothian Council's proposal to review admission arrangements for St Paul's Primary School, St Ninian's Primary School and St Mary's Primary School Polbeth. 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:

- 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 sites of St Paul's Primary School, St Ninian's Primary School 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 West Lothian Council undertook the consultation between 30 October 2019 and 10 December 2019. A public meeting held at Bellsquarry Village Hall on 14 November 2019 was attended by two parents and five members of staff from the affected schools. Children at the three schools affected were given the opportunity to discuss the proposal and provide their views. The council received no written responses to its consultation.

2.3 West Lothian Council's proposal is of potential educational benefit. The council proposes to change the catchment areas of the three schools to address some anomalies to existing denominational primary school zones. None of the four geographical areas listed as affected by the proposal currently have children attending denominational primary schools. The council's

proposal will ensure the Wellhead and Oakbank area which currently has no denominational primary school catchment area is appropriately zoned. The effect of its proposal on schools is minor with no significant impact on learning, staffing, transport or school accommodation. The main benefits arising from the council's proposal is that anomalies in denominational primary school catchment areas will be addressed, families moving into the areas affected in future will have clarity on their denominational primary school zones and that the schools affected could have potentially better links with their local communities.

2.4 The council has provided school roll forecast information but it is not wholly clear that these forecasts take full account of the proposed new housing developments referred to in its proposal document. The council will need to clarify this in its final proposal paper. The council's school roll forecast for St Paul's Primary School shows that its roll will exceed the school's capacity by 2020-21 and continue to grow. It would be helpful for stakeholders if the council could make reference to its separate plans to address the increase in St Paul's Primary School roll in its final proposal paper.

2.5 Staff, parents and children from all three schools who spoke with HM Inspectors supported the council's proposal. They thought the proposed school catchment areas made sense and had no concerns. Children were reassured that there would be no change to the secondary school they would move to at the end of P7.

2.6 Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church saw merit in the council's proposal and agreed that it would result in clearer school catchment areas.

3. Summary

West Lothian Council's proposal is of potential educational benefit. It will remove anomalies in existing catchment areas for denominational primary schools. In its final paper, the council should clarify that its school roll forecasts take full account of proposed new housing developments. It should make reference to its separate plans to address the increase in the school roll at St Paul's Primary School.

**HM Inspectors
December 2019**