

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review the admission arrangements arising from school catchment area variations at Harrysmuir Primary School and Toronto Primary School.

May 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 the admission arrangements arising from school catchment area variations at Harrysmuir Primary School and Toronto 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 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;
- 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 4 March 2021 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
- virtual visits to the site of Harrysmuir Primary School and Toronto Primary School, 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 consultation period ran from 17 February 2021 until 2 April 2021. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and taking account of public health risks, the council arranged a virtual public meeting to take place on 4 March 2021. Two senior officers and two headteachers from West Lothian Council attended the meeting along with the Executive Councillor for Education. No members of the public attended the public meeting. Senior officers were available to respond to any questions that arose from the presentation and proposal. The council made appropriate arrangements to consult with children and staff. During the consultation period the council received less than five responses from parents and stakeholders. Of the responses, the main concern related to safe walking routes

for those who move into the new Eagle Brae development. Members of Toronto Primary School Pupil Council provided individual responses. Pupil Council responses were positive and in favour of the proposal.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council sets out a strong case for the proposal to vary the catchment areas of Harrysmuir Primary School and Toronto Primary School. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has potential educational benefits. Harrysmuir Primary School is near to capacity and projections undertaken by West Lothian Council expect this to continue. The proposal seeks to keep the Harrysmuir Primary School current and future rolls within capacity. The school roll of Toronto Primary School has the capacity to accommodate the projected increase from the Eagle Brae development of around 30 residential homes. Should the council move forward with the proposal, both schools will continue to be fully equipped to meet the educational entitlements of children. Therefore, continuity of education provision for children will continue with minimal disruption.

3.2 The educational benefit statement correctly identifies that there is little impact upon current education provision for children if the proposal moves forward. Additionally, no physical adaptations are required to accommodate any aspect of the proposal. Furthermore, the council does not foresee any change to staffing levels or school management for the schools. Therefore, children will continue to experience learning and teaching as they do now.

3.3 All children, parents and staff from Toronto Primary School and Harrysmuir Primary School were in favour of the proposal. A few parents from Harrysmuir Primary School identified that expansion of the school building would be a preferred alternative to the variation of catchment areas. There was recognition from stakeholders that Harrysmuir Primary School is near its maximum school roll and that space in the school is already utilised to near full capacity. If the proposal were not progressed, the addition of more pupils to Harrysmuir Primary School's roll would add to the pressure in an already busy school. Toronto Primary School has ability to increase its current school roll as it is not near capacity. HM Inspectors agree that the variation of Toronto Primary School's catchment area to include the Eagle Brae development supports both schools with minimal disruption.

3.4 A few stakeholders raised concerns surrounding safe walking routes to and from Toronto Primary School. The council as part of the public consultation process has addressed the concerns. The council has identified safe walking routes to Toronto Primary School from the Eagle Brae development with underpasses and bridges to avoid crossing busy roads. HM Inspectors recommend that safe walking routes to and from the school continue to be reviewed.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal for the catchment area variations to Toronto Primary School and Harrysmuir Primary School has potential educational benefits. Overall, the proposal considers well the concern of continued growth of Harrysmuir Primary School and the space available within Toronto Primary School. For both primary schools, the proposal has the potential to ensure continued use and development of existing spaces for learning. The location of the Eagle Brae development is under one mile from Toronto Primary School and the council have identified suitable walking routes. If the council proceeds with their proposal, it should continue to engage with parents over their concerns with regard to walking routes.

HM Inspectors
May 2021