

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland to review admission arrangements as a result of alterations to the denominational primary school catchments of; St Paul's, St Nicholas, Holy Family, St Joseph's Linlithgow, Howden St Andrew's, St John Ogilvie, St Columba's, St Mary's (Bathgate) and Our Lady of Lourdes Primary Schools.

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 admission arrangements as a result of alteration to the denominational primary school catchments of St Paul's, St Nicholas, Holy Family, St Joseph's Linlithgow, Howden St Andrew's, St John Ogilvie, St Columba's, St Mary's (Bathgate) and Our Lady of Lourdes Primary Schools. 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 children 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; and
- visits to the site of St Nicholas and St Paul's Primary Schools, 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, although no members of the public attended. The council received two written responses to the consultation. One question related to the eligibility of Catholic children attending St Nicholas Primary School in

future and the other was from St Nicolas Pupil Council outlining their views. No objections were raised regarding the proposal.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 West Lothian Council proposes to review admission arrangements for nine of the denominational primary schools. The council are keen to align school catchments with community council and natural geographic boundaries. Most of the proposed changes will have a minimal impact on the schools due to there being very few residential properties in most of the areas affected. The council do not anticipate any significant impact to the existing school capacities 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 says that a key educational advantage for the schools affected is that they will continue to deliver the full breath of Curriculum for Excellence. They also note that there will be no impact on pupils currently attending West Lothian schools as all children will continue to attend their existing school until the end of their primary 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 noted that this review aligns with a separate review of denominational secondary catchments. HM Inspectors agree that both of these 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 St Nicolas Primary School and with the headteacher at St Paul's Primary School. All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors are supportive of the proposed changes. They agree that the revised catchment areas better align with local communities. Children at St Nicholas Primary School were excited about having new people attending their school. They would welcome others coming to their school and felt they could make new friends. However, they were worried about the capacity of the school to cope with lots of new pupils in future. Parents and staff also support the proposal, although there were questions about availability of equipment such as laptops if there were more children in future. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has educational benefits. However, the council should continue to engage with parents in the longer term to ensure they are informed of any developments.

3.4 HM Inspectors spoke to a representative of the Catholic Church to seek their views on the proposal. The church are broadly supportive of the proposal to change the admission arrangements and the subsequent catchment areas. They recognise that without making these changes the capacity of St Paul's Primary School could be compromised within a couple of years.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree there are educational benefits to the proposal to review the catchment areas for the nine denominational primary schools. No stakeholders raised any objections to the proposal. If agreed, this proposal will ensure these primary school catchments areas better align with secondary catchments and with community areas.

**HM Inspectors
May 2025**