

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Lanarkshire Council to change the catchment areas of Glengowan, Machanhill and Robert Smillie Memorial Primary Schools.**

October 2023

## 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 South Lanarkshire Council's proposal to change the catchment areas of Glengowan, Machanhill and Robert Smillie Memorial 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' 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; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children 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 13 September 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 Glengowan Primary School, Machanhill Primary School and Robert Smillie Memorial Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

2.1 South Lanarkshire 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 28 August and 13 October 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. South Lanarkshire Council held a public meeting at Machanhill Primary School on 13 September 2023. Around 20 members of the public attended the public meeting. A number of concerns were raised at the public meeting including safe walking routes and differing levels of attainment across the three schools. A few attendees questioned why only new housing had been considered when realigning catchment areas. They suggested alternatives including rezoning some well-established areas. A few people

were concerned about the potential negative impact on families who had chosen to move into homes currently zoned to a specific school. For example, having to change their plans around childcare.

2.3 The council received 46 online responses to the proposal, mostly parents and other interested members of the public. A minority, 35%, were in favour of the proposal and a majority, 61%, were not in favour. A few, 4%, were undecided, and two people submitted two responses each. Respondees raised similar concerns as those expressed at the public meeting, mainly around educational outcomes and the suitability, safety and distance of walking routes. In their final consultation report, the council should provide further information and reassurance around the issues raised at the public meeting and in the online responses.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council state that the main educational benefit would be to enable children in the area to attend the school that is geographically closest to their home address. By reducing the distance between home and school, the council also state that this could increase the opportunities for children to walk to school and to engage in more after school activities. HM Inspectors agree that reducing the distance between home and school has these potential educational benefits. However, in the current proposal this would only affect children living in the new houses within the community growth and development areas. Having moved the location of Glengowan Primary School some years ago, a number of children no longer attend the school geographically closest to their home address. The council should consider whether there is a need to carry out a further review of catchment areas so that all children in the wider area are zoned to attend their nearest school.

3.2 All of the parents and staff that HM Inspectors met with agree that the council should review the catchment areas within Larkhall. However, almost all of them suggested that the review should consider more than these two new housing developments. A few parents and staff were concerned about children's safety on some of the proposed walking routes. They suggested that it may be better to align the Machanhill/Glengowan boundary with the main road that crosses through the community growth area. This would avoid children having to cross a busy traffic route. They also hoped that a path to the existing gate at the rear of Glengowan Primary School could be opened up to provide a safe and shorter walking distance to the school from the new housing development.

3.3 Although the proposed changes will not directly affect the children that HM Inspectors spoke with, they all agree that there are potential benefits. They like the idea of children living in the same area attending the same school as each other. They agree that more children could walk, cycle or scoot to school if there were safe, accessible and shorter distances between home and school.

3.4 A few staff and parents from Machanhill Primary School are concerned about a potential negative educational impact on children's learning if the proposal is approved. They are worried that a smaller school roll could lead to a reduction in the size of the leadership team. They think that this in turn could impact on the capacity of the school to offer the high quality learning experiences that the community and the council are committed to. They believe that the school has more classroom space than the council's current assessment and could therefore accommodate more children. The council may wish to reassess the physical capacity of the school when carrying out any further reviews of catchment areas.

## 4. Summary

Overall, HM Inspectors agree that by reducing the distance between home and school that there are some potential educational benefits. However, the current proposal focuses only on two new housing developments. The council should consider whether a fuller review covering the wider catchment area of all non-denominational schools in Larkhall is now required to meet their aspiration of having, wherever possible, children attend their nearest school. This could help to ensure that these catchments work in the longer term as the population grows over time. If the council decide to approve the current proposal without any further adjustments, they should consider how they can work with stakeholders to mitigate their concerns in regard to safe routes to school.

**HM Inspectors**  
**October 2023**