

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The City of Edinburgh Council to realign the catchment areas of Queensferry Primary School and Echline Primary School.

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 The City of Edinburgh Council's proposal to realign the catchment areas of Queensferry Primary School and Echline Primary School. The proposal has become necessary due to the continued housing developments in the area. 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- visits to the sites of Queensferry and Echline Primary Schools including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 The City of Edinburgh Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The consultation ran from 28 October to 9 December 2019. Two public meetings were held on 13 and 21 November 2019 and were attended by two parents only. Twenty-two people responded to the online consultation and responses were split evenly between those who supported the proposal and those who did not. Two parents submitted email responses directly to Education Scotland. Prior to the formal consultation the council conducted an informal consultation

which included visiting the schools affected. Most stakeholders felt that the council had taken appropriate steps to keep them informed. However, a few were keen that the council continues to keep residents informed through social media and the local press.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council states that the principal educational benefit of the proposal addresses the future sufficiency issues at Queensferry Primary School so that it can provide appropriate education provision for catchment children. The changes to the catchment areas should ensure that Queensferry Primary School in particular is not over-capacity in the next couple of years. The proposal will also mean that Echline Primary School roll will increase, making it a double-stream school which is common across The City of Edinburgh estate. Given that the attainment data for both schools is very similar and compares well with the city average, it is unlikely that there will be any adverse impact on children's learning. HM Inspectors are of the view that the council's proposals should ensure that children living in South Queensferry are not adversely affected by the change of catchment. However, the council should take reasonable steps to ensure that the sibling guarantee at Queensferry Primary School is extended beyond November 2020. This will be important for parents to have confidence that their children will not have to attend two different primary schools.

3.2 Overall, the views of stakeholders regarding the proposal was mixed. Parents, staff and children at Echline Primary School were broadly in favour of the catchment change. They feel this will lead to a better social mix and extended friendship groups within the school. The council is aware that this will mean some disruption if additional classrooms are required but are taking steps to minimise this. Whilst many Queensferry Primary School parents agreed with the proposal in principal, a number of those who responded to the online questionnaire expressed concern about the sibling guarantee. Several of those who met with HM Inspectors were also of this view. A few parents also cited possible issues with access to after-school provision. There were concerns about dropping children off at two different schools and the negative impact on the environment of more cars on the roads.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors consider that overall there is a strong case for the council to change the catchment area of Echline and Queensferry Primary Schools. This should address the short to medium term issues for the school estate. In the longer term the council is proposing to build an additional non-denominational primary school in South Queensferry which should address capacity issues going forward. The council's case for the proposal is well-considered. However, it should now take steps to ensure that as a result of the proposal, children from the same family do not attend different schools.

**HM Inspectors
December 2019**