

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Argyll and Bute Council to rezone the catchment area of St Joseph's Primary School.

May 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 Argyll and Bute Council's proposal to rezone the catchment area of St Joseph's 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 school; 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 25 April 2023 in connection with the council's proposal;
- 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;
- visits to the site of St Joseph's Primary School and Luss Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Argyll and Bute 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 16 March and 12 May 2023. The council published information on the proposal on their website. Information about the proposal was made available to stakeholders including children, parents and carers of the schools affected by the proposal. The council facilitated discussions with the children and Parent Council from St Joseph's Primary School and they all agreed with the proposal. One parent attended the public meeting at St Joseph's Primary School who supported the proposal. They queried the delay in proceeding with the catchment review. The council acknowledge they progressed with the proposal following further representation from St Joseph's Primary School Parent Council. Argyll and Bute Council received no written responses in relation to this statutory consultation.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council sets out a clear rationale for extending the catchment area for St Joseph's Primary School to cover the whole of the Helensburgh and Lomond area from August 2023. They believe that children from a wider geographical area will have the opportunity to attend a denominational school. There are currently three children living in the portion of Helensburgh and Lomond area out with the catchment who chose to attend St Joseph's Primary School through a placing request. If the council proceeds with the proposal, all children who reside in the rezoned catchment area would have the ability to attend St Joseph's Primary School or their local non-denominational school. This would reduce potential barriers such as payment for travel to school and the need for placing requests. HM Inspectors agree that this will also offer additional educational choice and resolve an inherited catchment anomaly. The council has also considered the implications for the local communities of the affected primary schools. They acknowledge that this may lead to a reduction in school rolls for pupils of these schools.

3.2 HM Inspectors met with stakeholders in the two schools most likely to be affected by the proposal. All children, staff and parents were supportive of the proposed changes to the catchment area. Children at St Joseph Primary school understand the benefits from a potential increase in the number of children attending. They particularly welcome opportunities for increased friendships for a larger geographical area. Children from Luss Primary School who met with HM Inspectors expressed some concern about the potential negative impact that this may have on their school roll. They believe their school playground could be adapted to be more inclusive for children with additional support needs. Should the council proceed with the proposal, HM Inspectors recommend that they work with schools and communities to mitigate any likely negative impact.

3.3 HM Inspectors discussed potential education benefits with parents from St Joseph's Primary School. They value the opportunity to send their children to the closest school and agree this adds to the diversity, strength and vibrancy of the school. Parents and carers from Luss Primary School were given the opportunity to speak with HM Inspectors. However, no one attended. The two headteachers had each discussed the proposals with their respective Parent Councils and they reported that there were no concerns raised regarding the council's proposal.

3.4 HM Inspectors discussed the proposal with a representative from the Roman Catholic Church in Helensburgh who is in favour of the proposal. They believe this will reduce financial burden on families who currently pay for school transport. They agree that the new catchment area will present increased opportunities for children to experience a faith-based curriculum and will strengthen St Joseph's Primary School.

4. Summary

Overall, Argyll and Bute Council have set out a clear rationale for rezoning all of the Helensburgh and Lomond area to St Joseph's Primary School. All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors are in favour of the proposal. The council's proposal, should it proceed, will decrease the need for placing requests and reduce the need for parents to pay for school transport. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has potential educational benefits and will offer greater parental choice.

In taking forward the proposal, the council would benefit from working with stakeholders to consider solutions which may alleviate accessibility concerns at Luss Primary School. This could enhance the sustainability of schools in the area.

HM Inspectors
May 2023