

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dundee City Council to remove Invergowrie Primary Schools status as an associated primary school to Harris Academy from August 2021 and to revise the catchment areas for Ancrum Road, Blackness, Camperdown, Tayview and Victoria Park primary schools from August 2021.

October 2020

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 Dundee City Council's proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School's status as an associated primary school to Harris Academy and to revise the catchment areas for Ancrum Road, Blackness, Camperdown, Tayview and Victoria Park 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 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:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 26 February 2020 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 sites of Invergowrie, Ancrum Road, Blackness, Camperdown, Tayview and Victoria Park primary schools and Harris Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation process began on 10 February 2020 and was due to end on 27 March 2020. A public meeting was held on 26 February 2020. With schools across the country closing as a response to the spread of Covid-19, the council was unable to complete the consultation within the proposed timescale. The further public meeting planned for 16 March 2020 did not proceed. The council extended the period of consultation with a revised closing date of 4 September 2020. During the period of extension, weekly online feedback to stakeholders'

questions were published on the council's website on the 24 August, 31 August and 7 September 2020.

2.3 The council posted the consultation documents on its website and placed an announcement within the local press. The council placed copies of the proposal at its head office, in all of the affected schools and local libraries. The meeting held on 26 February 2020 was attended by 55 stakeholders. Participants had the opportunity to view proposals and to engage with council officers around details. All of the stakeholders present did not support the proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School's status as an associated primary school to Harris Academy. The main areas of concern raised included the increase in travel distance, resulting increase in carbon footprint and splitting of established friendship groups. Participants did not make any reference to the proposal to revise the catchment areas for Ancrum Road, Blackness, Camperdown, Tayview and Victoria Park primary schools.

2.4 With regard to the proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School's status as an associated primary school, the council received submissions from 55 stakeholders. Of these, 52 were against, one was in favour and two were neither for nor against. Respondee expressed the view that alternatives to the proposal should be actively sought and considered. Key objections included: the increase in travel time and distance, increased carbon footprint, reduced opportunities for children to walk or cycle to school and splitting up of long-established friendship groups. The loss of Invergowrie's long-established association with the west end of Dundee both in educational and community terms was also cited as a concern.

2.5 Additional submissions were received from Harris Parent Council, Invergowrie Parent Council, and Perth and Kinross Council. These were all against the proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School's associated status. Harris Parent Council and Invergowrie Parent Councils did not think the proposal addressed future capacity issues and wanted alternative solutions to be found. Perth and Kinross Council in its submission acknowledged that Dundee City Council has no legal duty to make education provision for pupils living in Perth and Kinross. It also requested clarification if the option might exist for young people from Perth and Kinross to attend another secondary school in Dundee. A further submission from the Western Gateway Community requested to be included in the catchment area for Harris Academy rather than the existing catchment secondary of Baldragon Academy.

2.6 The council received seven submissions with regard to the proposal to revise the catchment areas for Ancrum Road, Blackness, Camperdown, Tayview and Victoria Park primary schools. Of these, two were in favour of the proposal, four against and one was neutral. Key concerns related to the future status of sibling's entitlement to attend the same school and safe travel to school.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Harris Academy is a modern non-denominational secondary school located in the west end of Dundee. Harris Academy's roll for session 2019-20 was 1,290. Currently, 961 of the 1,290 roll reside in the Harris catchment area. A further 76 attend through association from Invergowrie Primary School. This leaves 253 - approximately 20% of pupils living outside the catchment for Harris Academy and Invergowrie Primary School.

3.2 Invergowrie Primary School is located within Perth and Kinross Council. Currently, a cross-boundary agreement permits families whose child attends Invergowrie Primary School and reside within the Invergowrie Primary School catchment area, to apply to attend Harris Academy for S1 on a priority 1 status. This agreement has operated from before local government re-organisation in 1996. Children attending Invergowrie Primary School also have priority 1 status

to attend their allocated Perth and Kinross secondary school, Perth High School. Currently, 38 children from Dundee outwith the Invergowrie catchment area attend Invergowrie Primary School. In August 2020, 25 P7 children from Invergowrie Primary School transitioned to Harris Academy.

3.3 Dundee City Council has previously engaged in extensive discussions with neighbouring councils relating to the provision of education in the west of Dundee.

3.4 The rationale for the proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School's status as an associated primary to Harris Academy is based upon the projected future pupil intake for Harris Academy and S1 roll being un-sustainable. These projections take account of new housing developments, increased placing requests and an anticipated increase in pupil population within the city. This adds pressure to the demand for places in Harris Academy and potentially generates over capacity issues.

3.5 Recent changes to primary provision within Dundee have resulted in the co-location and amalgamation of some primary schools. Many of these schools are in new build facilities constructed in different locations. As a result, a realignment of primary catchment areas is proposed. This will enable schools to better serve their local communities and address any potential capacity issues.

3.6 The proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School's status as an associated primary to Harris Academy has a few educational benefits for the children and young people in the Harris Academy catchment area. Harris Academy is facing considerable capacity challenges. The reduction in the roll at Harris Academy, should the proposal go ahead, has the potential to only partially reduce class sizes and relieve the pressure on existing accommodation. Any increase in space would offer more flexibility and improve opportunities for the delivery of a wider range of educational and social activities.

3.7 Overall, the proposal to revise the catchment areas of Ancrum Road, Blackness, Camperdown, Tayview and Victoria Park primary schools is of clear educational benefit. Proposed changes will enable schools to better serve their local communities and address any potential capacity issues. The proposal delivers best value by addressing capacity issues within the primary schools estate. Victoria Park Primary School will be located within its own catchment area. Schools will be able to build community links within clearly defined catchment areas. A few stakeholders raised concerns relating to sibling access after August 2021, particularly where older children have been allocated a place through a placing request, others raised the issue of safe travel to schools.

3.8 All the children, parents and carers from Invergowrie Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were opposed to the proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School's status as an associated primary school to Harris Academy from August 2021. The main objections included the increase in travel distance and carbon footprint and splitting of established friendship groups. Children's ability to engage in after school sporting activities locally could be reduced. The lack of reference to children attending Invergowrie Primary School within the educational benefits statement in the proposal was noted by parents. They were of the view that alternative solutions were available and that these should be pursued by Dundee City Council and Perth and Kinross Council before progressing the proposal.

3.9 Senior Leadership Team members from Invergowrie Primary School who met with HM Inspectors recognised there would be potential benefits for Dundee City Council. They recognised the capacity issues faced by Harris Academy and the rationale for the proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School as an associated primary. Invergowrie Primary School enjoys

a positive relationship with Harris Academy and is an active member of the Harris cluster. The additional travel incurred would reduce the opportunities for children to walk or cycle to school or to engage in out of school activities, many of which are located in Dundee.

3.10 Young people, parents and staff from Harris Academy who met with HM Inspectors were not supportive of the proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School's status as an associated primary school to Harris Academy from August 2021. Whilst the proposal would reduce the S1 intake, it would not in itself address the wider capacity challenges the school faces. Pressure on social space was a particular area of concern. Young people from Invergowrie make a much-valued contribution to the social and academic life of Harris Academy. This would be missed. Young people felt that their peers from Invergowrie would be less able to engage in after school activities due to the time spent on additional travel. All respondents expressed the view that alternative options and timescales should be actively considered. Young people were of the view that Perth and Kinross Council should actively contribute to any future solution.

3.11 Senior Management Team members from Ancrum Road, Blackness, Camperdown, Tayview and Victoria Park primary schools who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School's status as an associated primary school to Harris Academy from August 2021. They recognised the negative impact this would have on Invergowrie children in terms of additional travel and loss of the historical association with Harris Academy. However, they believed priority for Harris Academy places should be for Dundee children.

3.12 Most children, teaching staff, parents and carers from Ancrum Road, Blackness, Camperdown, Tayview and Victoria Park primary schools who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal to revise their catchment areas. Clearer boundaries should enable schools to better serve their local communities and address any potential capacity issues. The number of placing requests should be reduced. Victoria Park Primary School will now be located within its own catchment area. Capacity issues at Blackness Primary School will be relieved. Schools will be able to build community links within clearly defined catchment areas.

3.13 During the consultation period, consultees identified alleged omissions in the proposal, namely the lack of reference within the educational benefits statement to set out the impact of the proposal on Invergowrie Primary School children.

4. Summary

Harris Academy is facing considerable challenges relating to capacity as demand for S1 places increases. The proposal to remove Invergowrie Primary School's status as an associated primary to Harris Academy has a few educational benefits for the children and young people in the Harris Academy catchment area. A reduction in the roll at Harris Academy has the potential to reduce class sizes and relieve the pressure on existing accommodation. Any reduction on numbers would offer more flexibility and improve opportunities for the delivery of a wider range of educational and social activities. Whilst the proposal will relieve some pressure, it does not fully resolve the wider future capacity challenges highlighted. Dundee City Council should continue to engage with key stakeholders including Perth and Kinross Council, parents, school leaders and staff, to consider the viability of the alternative solutions raised by stakeholders as part of the consultation process. Should the proposal go ahead the council should reconsider its timescale of August 2021. This will allow Invergowrie children and families to better prepare for change. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged omissions notified to it.

The proposal to revise the catchment areas of Ancrum Road, Blackness, Camperdown, Tayview and Victoria Park primary schools is of clear educational benefit. More appropriate and distinct

boundaries would be in place. Proposed changes should enable schools to better serve their local communities and address any potential capacity issues. Schools will be able to build community links within clearly defined catchment areas. The proposal delivers best value by addressing capacity issues within the primary schools estate. In taking forward the proposal, concerns raised by stakeholders relating to safe travel and sibling access after August 2021, should be addressed.

HM Inspectors
October 2020