

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dumfries and Galloway Council to change the catchment area for pupils living in the Burnhead area from Holywood Primary School to Dunscore Primary School

December 2022

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 Dumfries and Galloway Council's proposal to change the catchment area for pupils living in the Burnhead area from Holywood Primary School to Dunscore 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 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; and
- visits to Holywood Primary School, Dunscore Primary School, Wallace Hall Academy and the North West Community Campus, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The council started to consult on this proposal in November 2019 following an approach by Auldgirth and District Community Council. The council could not then complete the original consultation due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The full consultation period ran from 5 September to 14 October 2022. The council made copies of the proposal document available to the public and published it on the council website. Information about the proposal was made available to stakeholders including children, young people, parents and carers of the schools affected by the proposal. One person attended the public meeting held on 27 September 2022 in Auldgirth Village Hall. They supported the proposal. The council received one email which queried the need for the change as they felt school transport issues had been resolved. The council consulted with children attending Dunscore and Holywood Primary Schools. Children mainly

commented on travel to school and the advantages of being zoned to your nearest school. It should be noted that members of Auldirth and District Community Council now have mixed views on the proposal.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council believes the proposal would enhance continuity of learning and transition arrangements for children ages 3–18 from the Burnhead community if they intend to attend Wallace Hall Academy. Currently of the eight secondary age young people from the Burnhead area seven chose to attend Wallace Hall Academy. Currently none attend the secondary, North West Community Campus, that they are zoned to. Of the five primary aged children four attend primary schools in the Wallace Hall catchment area. Given this, HM Inspectors agree that this proposal will support the continuity of learning and transition arrangements from primary to secondary school. Inspectors consider that it would be helpful for the council to expand upon the brief educational benefits statement in the consultation report. HM Inspectors have discussed this with officers from the council.

3.2 A majority of the stakeholders that spoke with HM Inspectors are in support of the proposal. HM Inspectors agree with stakeholders that the proposal should reduce the number of placing requests to both primary and secondary schools. In addition, it will entitle a small number of children to access school transport to both their chosen and nearest primary school. This may result in a reduction of fuel costs for a few families. However, HM Inspectors spoke to several stakeholders who questioned whether this proposal is still required. These stakeholders stated that their original concerns about the cost of travelling to school have been resolved now that young people can access free public bus transport.

3.3 Stakeholders who spoke to HM Inspectors at Holywood Primary School disagree with the proposal. They acknowledge that no children from Burnhead community currently attend Holywood Primary School even though it is the school they are zoned to. However, they expressed concern about the potential negative impact on the school roll in the future in removing the Burnhead community from the school catchment area. Current and projected rolls at all four schools included in this proposal indicate that parents will continue to be able to choose which school their child attends through placing requests.

3.4 Children who spoke to HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposed change to primary school catchment areas. They see value in the proposal as they think they would enjoy shared transport to school and believe that this will positively impact on the environment.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has potential educational benefits. There is potential to support the continuity of learning and transition for the children located in the Burnhead community as they move to secondary school at Wallace Hall Academy. HM Inspectors agree with children that the proposal would entitle a few children to access school transport to get to primary school. Whereas, currently none have this entitlement as all attend a school other than the one they are zoned to. HM Inspectors recommend that the council in its final report offers more information on the educational benefits. This should provide stakeholders with a fuller understanding of the current rationale for this change.