

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Fife Council to rezone the catchment areas of Kirkcaldy West and Dunnikier Primary Schools.**

March 2025

## 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 a proposal by Fife Council to rezone the catchment areas of Kirkcaldy West and Dunnikier 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' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's 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 consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act.

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 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 public meetings held on 3 and 10 February 2025 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 Kirkcaldy West Primary School, Dunnikier Primary School and Balwearie High School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The statutory public consultation ran from 21 January to 7 March 2025. Copies of the proposal were made available to stakeholders and posted on the council website. The council held drop-in events at both primary schools. The public meetings were held on 3 February 2025 in Kirkcaldy West Primary School and 10 February 2025 in Dunnikier Primary School. Ten stakeholders attended one or both of the meetings. The council also invited stakeholders to provide their views by letter, email or by completing an online response form. Nine responses were received to the online form survey and one written response. The respondents were asked whether they agreed with the proposal, seven stated that they disagree and two stated they did

not know. Stakeholders raised a range of queries and concerns. These included the impact on families with one child already at Kirkcaldy West Primary School and a younger sibling who would be zoned to Dunnikier Primary School if the proposal is agreed. A few stated that they disagree as they want their children to continue to go to their nearest school, Kirkcaldy West Primary School. A few parents, whose children attend Dunnikier Primary School through placing requests, were concerned this may mean such placing requests are less likely to be agreed in the future.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 In its proposal, the council states a range of educational benefits they consider this change will provide. They also outline the potential changes in housing and demographics across the area the two schools currently serve. HM Inspectors agree that it is important that school rolls are managed to support schools to have adequate accommodation and space, and that the impacts of future housing developments on schools are planned for appropriately. Kirkcaldy West has capacity for 485 children, with 17 classrooms in total, 11 classrooms are in the permanent buildings and six are in modular units. The 2024-25 school roll is 393 pupils, lower than the projection of 430, with 14 classes. The council projects the roll will increase slightly over coming years, without any additional housing developments. Dunnikier has capacity for 434 children, with the 2024-25 roll being 342. The roll is projected to decline over coming years. Currently both schools are under their maximum capacity. However, this would not be the case at Kirkcaldy West should the modular units be removed, which would lower the maximum capacity to 317 pupils. The council states there are no plans to remove the modular units. There are currently no approved housing developments in the area, though there are three which potentially affect these schools should they be developed in the future.

3.2 Staff at Kirkcaldy West Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors are confident that maintaining a roll similar to the current one does not present any significant challenges. The council state that the proposal will support the accommodation at Kirkcaldy West being adjusted to better meet children's needs. For example, this may provide more space to accommodate dining at lunch time. Currently the school runs three sittings per day. However, staff state that this has beneficial effects around the use of the playground. They also state that as most children in P6/7 already eat in school they do not anticipate greater demands on the dining space from the change to entitlements for free school meals. Staff at Kirkcaldy West Primary School deliver on-site, off-site and outdoor nursery provision. They are confident they can meet existing needs whilst the modular units remain. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal may provide opportunities to be more flexible in the use of the accommodation at Kirkcaldy West. However, this benefit needs to be offset against any potential negative effects for the families currently living in the area affected.

3.3 Children and young people, including those from the area under consideration, who met HM Inspectors have mixed views about the proposal. They are confident that children will thrive at either school. Those at Dunnikier Primary School are positive about welcoming more children to their school. However, children at Kirkcaldy West Primary School and young people at Balwearie High School are concerned about the potential for siblings to split up as they will be allocated to different primary schools. This concern is shared by a few of the parents from the area who would be affected by the proposed catchment changes. In its proposal, the council states it cannot guarantee children starting school will receive places in the same school as older siblings, but that a child living in the same household as their sibling will be given a higher priority. HM Inspectors recommend the council considers further the potential impact on families whose children may be zoned to different schools if the proposal is agreed.

3.4 Several stakeholders who met HM Inspectors have concerns about where boundaries are being drawn for the proposed new catchment areas. They have suggestions for alternative boundaries that include moving them so that they do not run down the middle of a residential road

and also maintain some of the area being considered as within Kirkcaldy West's catchment. Stakeholders who spoke to HM Inspectors agree with the proposal that any new housing that may be developed in the town centre brownfield sites should be zoned to Dunnikier Primary School.

3.5 Several stakeholders who spoke to HM Inspectors are concerned that changing the catchments would result in longer distances to travel to school for some children. This may mean more parents may choose to drive children to school rather than walk. These stakeholders felt children may develop less independence, due to the increased distances and number of roads to cross, parents may accompany them or drive them to school. A few stakeholders raised concerns about the potential for this proposal to increase traffic around Dunnikier Primary School. Traffic at school drop-offs and pick-up times is already a concern at Dunnikier Primary School. Staff, parents and children are being pro-active to reduce risks. For example, staff and parents run a walking bus from the train station car park. HM Inspectors recommend that if the proposal is agreed, the council should work with stakeholders at Dunnikier Primary School to address concerns around safe routes to school and school related traffic.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits in both school rolls being managed well to ensure they have sufficient accommodation to support the learning and social experiences of children. HM Inspectors agree that this proposal may provide more flexibility on how accommodation is used at Kirkcaldy West Primary School. The proposal may also help to sustain the roll at Dunnikier Primary School. Stakeholders agree with proposals to allocate part of the area the council has identified to rezone Dunnikier Primary School. This would include any new housing in the town centre brownfield sites that may be developed in the future. However, stakeholders have reasonably asked whether all of the area needs to be rezoned given the existing accommodation and projected roll at Kirkcaldy West. HM Inspectors recommend the council considers further how to minimise changes for families, including those with siblings who would be allocated to different schools, should this proposal be agreed.

**HM Inspectors**  
**March 2025**