

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Fife Council to close Gateside Primary School and to rezone the catchment area of Strathmiglo Primary School.**

January 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 Fife Council's proposal to close Gateside Primary School and rezone the catchment of Strathmiglo 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. 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 and the special provisions that apply to proposals to close a rural school.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children 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 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 the site of Strathmiglo Primary School and the mothballed Gateside Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closure of Gateside Primary School, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

## 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 proposal was considered by Fife Council Education and Children's Services Committee in October 2019 and the consultation took place between 12 November 2019 and 10 January

2020. A public meeting was held on 27 November 2019 and was attended by nine people. Only two responses were received by the council following the consultation; one from the residents of the house attached to the school and another from the Gateside Memorial Hall Committee. Both were concerned about the potential impact on the village in terms of losing its school and the fact that the building may fall into disrepair.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The rezoning of children from Gateside Primary to Strathmiglo Primary should achieve the council's aim of providing an improved range of experiences and curricular opportunities. The increased pupil population at Strathmiglo will also enable pupils to be educated with peers of similar age which should widen the curriculum offer. Pupils, parents and staff at Strathmiglo all cited the benefits for pupils of having wider social groupings that will enhance learning opportunities.

3.2 Of the 12 children currently living in Gateside, all have already chosen to attend Strathmiglo Primary. Parents, having seen that the school roll had fallen, made the decision to send their children to Strathmiglo Primary to ensure that they benefitted from a wider range of learning experiences. Recognising that parents had already made this choice, HM Inspectors agree that re-opening of Gateside Primary is not the best option. In terms of early years provision, Gateside Primary cannot accommodate a nursery and families have always travelled to Strathmiglo. This has been beneficial in terms of transition to Strathmiglo Primary. Having the Gateside Primary children permanently in Strathmiglo Primary will support progression and allow for greater continuity.

3.3 All children, staff and parents that HM Inspectors met during the consultation were supportive of the council's proposals. However, there was a sense of sadness that the village of Gateside would lose another community facility. This was echoed by the Gateside Memorial Hall Committee. There were some valid concerns raised about the future of the building and the potential for it to fall into disrepair. With this in mind, the council should now ensure that decisions about the future of the building be taken quickly. This would provide some re-assurance to local residents living in Gateside.

3.4 As the proposal will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. HM Inspectors agree that the council have set out their reasons for the closure of Gateside Primary appropriately. There are no other more favourable alternatives and there is no demand from local people in Gateside to send their children to the mothballed school. Fife Council has also agreed to provide free transport for all children from Gateside who attend Strathmiglo Primary. As noted above, the council should ensure that the future use of the school building in Gateside is handled quickly and sensitively.

### 4. Summary

The council has set out clearly the educational benefits for the closure of Gateside Primary School. HM Inspectors agree that the larger school and the curriculum that it can offer will serve better the needs of the children. This view is supported by the vast majority of families who over time have exercised their right to choose to send their children to Strathmiglo Primary.

**HM Inspectors  
January 2020**