

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Ayrshire Council to amend the primary school catchment boundary for Mayfield, Glencairn, St John's and St Anthony's Primary Schools**

March 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 North Ayrshire Council's proposal to amend primary school catchment boundaries for Mayfield, Glencairn, St John's and St Anthony's 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;
- 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 18 January 2023 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;
- visits to the site of Mayfield, Glencairn, St John's and St Anthony's Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- engagement with the Diocesan Representative for North Ayrshire.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation ran from 9 January until 2 March 2023. A public meeting took place in Saltcoats Town Hall on 18 January 2023. Two elected members, one parent, two headteachers, one deputy headteacher and representatives from North Ayrshire Council attended the meeting. Members of the public were encouraged to respond to the consultation through the online survey, by phone or in writing. Twenty-five written responses were submitted to the council. Almost all disagree with the council's proposals although almost half of these were from staff from St John's Primary School who had particular concerns about the impact of the proposal. Early engagement by the council took place in the form of meetings with headteachers in June 2022, with follow up

discussions and a meeting with Parent Council chairpersons in August. No enquiries for clarification or further information were received by the council.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 In relation to the proposed new housing development, the council outlines what it believes are the educational benefits for children and their families. The council believe that the most important benefit is to provide children with a place at the primary school nearest their home, along with their neighbourhood peers. They also state that all schools in the area will be able to maintain a viable and sustainable school roll with flexibility to support a variety of learning and teaching approaches. Numbers will be carefully managed each year at primary one admission and throughout each session. The council does concede that there could be a possible negative impact on children attending some of the schools in future, albeit not for a number of years. However, they do not foresee a situation whereby siblings would not be able to secure a place at Mayfield or St Anthony's Primary Schools.

3.2 Around half of stakeholders who spoke to HM Inspectors are not in favour of the proposal. Many parents are concerned about increasing class numbers and the potential negative impact that this may have on their child's learning although none of the existing schools are at capacity. Parents at St John's Primary School are strongly against the proposals. Whilst recognising the benefits to small class numbers currently at the school, they expressed concern about the longer-term impact should numbers fall further. Parents from St Anthony's and Mayfield Primary Schools also have reservations about the council's proposals in terms of increasing class sizes. Both schools experience issues with parents and carers parking directly outside the school gates, particularly at the end of the school day. Parents in both schools worry that traffic would only increase should the proposal go ahead. The council accepts that traffic issues are a problem and requires careful management. However, the location of the new development should encourage children to walk to school. Mayfield Primary School is less than 0.5 miles and St Anthony's Primary School is 0.7 miles away.

3.3 Children who spoke with HM Inspectors have mixed views about the proposal. A few welcome being able to make new friends should school rolls increase. Across the four schools, children recognise the potential benefits for health and the environment if more children walk to school. However, children at St John's Primary School are worried that the proposal might lead to reductions in staffing and resources should numbers attending the school fall significantly.

3.4 Although most school staff who met with HM Inspectors identified benefits from the proposal in terms of children attending their nearest school, staff at St John's Primary School expressed strong reservations. They believe a falling school roll will be detrimental for their school community. However, the council contends that the issue needs to be set in the wider context of a general decline in birth rates and primary school pupil numbers. Whilst the proposed boundary amendment can be viewed as a loss of potential new pupils for Glencairn and St John's Primary Schools, the council's predictions estimate that there should be little impact on either school. Parents and carers will still be able to exercise their choice of school via the existing placing request process.

3.5 HM Inspectors met with the lay member representing the Catholic Church in North Ayrshire who is in favour of the proposal. Their reasons include that Catholic children from the new housing could travel more easily to St Anthony's Primary School as it was closer than St John's Primary School. If the boundary remains as it is, it may cause confusion for families given that all the new houses would all have a Saltcoats postcode. They expressed some reservation regarding overcrowding of local schools in future, given that there are other housing developments in the area.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors are of the view that the proposal to change the catchment areas as stated by the council is sufficient in terms of educational benefits. Although around half of stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors are opposed to the proposals, HM Inspectors are satisfied that the council have systems in place to carefully manage school admissions to the schools impacted. The council do not foresee a situation where school capacity is exceeded. Should the proposal be agreed the council will need to work with stakeholders to manage any increase in traffic in affected school areas.

**HM Inspectors**  
**March 2023**