

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Fife Council to rezone the catchment areas of Bell Baxter High School and Madras College.

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 Fife Council's proposal to rezone the catchment areas of Bell Baxter High School and Madras College. 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 meetings held on 31 October 2022 and 10 November 2022 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 Bell Baxter High School, Madras College, Balmerino Primary School and Balmullo Primary 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 consultation period ran from 5 October 2022 to 1 December 2022. The council published the proposal document 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. Three people attended the public meeting in Madras College and 11 people attended the public meeting in Bell Baxter High School. All questions received at the public meetings were related to why the Balmullo Primary School catchment was not considered as part of this proposal. The council received 45 responses to their online consultation. Most written responses were from parents or carers of children attending a primary school outside the area under review, 75% were opposed to the proposal. Responses indicate that parents would like to see a future proposal for a catchment review to rezone Balmullo Primary School from Bell

Baxter High School to Madras College. No stakeholder attended the four additional drop-in sessions that were promoted in the Notice of Consultation. The council consulted with children and young people from Balmerino Primary School, Bell Baxter High School and Madras College, all were in support of the proposal. They think the transition to secondary will be less stressful when children from a primary school all move to the same secondary school. They also indicated that the small number of households affected from the Rathillet area would not make a noticeable difference to the numbers attending Madras College.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 This proposal involves the re-zoning of Balmerino Primary School, in full, to Madras College. This will resolve the current catchment anomaly for postcode addresses within the former Rathillet Primary School catchment area. If the council proceeds with this proposal, parents and pupils from this area would now be required to submit a placing request to attend Bell Baxter High School. The proposal will also ensure that all households within a single primary school catchment area are associated with one secondary school catchment area. HM Inspectors agree with Fife Council that this proposal will support the continuity of learning and streamline the transition arrangements.

3.2 All headteachers in the schools affected support the proposal. They also agree with the educational benefits stated by the council. They state that this will also reduce workload in managing transition arrangements. They believe that this will remove uncertainty for children whilst retaining parental choice through placing requests.

3.3 Almost all parents that spoke with HM Inspectors are supportive of the proposal. Although parents with children attending Balmullo Primary School expressed concern that the council discounted the option to also rezone Balmullo Primary School to Madras College. Some parents were anxious that new housing developments would result in Madras College exceeding maximum pupil capacity which could negatively impact on future placing requests. However, the headteacher and council officials have confirmed that Madras College can reconfigure space in the school to accommodate up to 100 additional pupils. There may be fewer places available to accommodate pupils from outwith the Madras College catchment area.

3.4 All children who spoke with HM Inspectors were in full support of the proposal. They feel it is important to continue the friendships and support networks that they have already established. They see the value in consistent transition arrangements and believe it will help them settle into their new environment and progress their learning.

4. Summary

Overall, HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits from the proposal. The change will resolve a current catchment anomaly. The proposal, if approved, will assist in the coordination, continuity of learning and progression of learning pathways for children and young people transitioning between establishments. All headteachers, children and young people and almost all parents support the proposal. Parents value and continue to use placing requests, they highlight the importance of parental choice. In its final consultation report, Fife Council should outline the increased maximum pupil capacity of Madras College.

**HM Inspectors
December 2022**