

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Glasgow City Council to consult on the entry criteria for Notre Dame High School.**

August 2019

## 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 Glasgow City Council's proposal to consult on the entry criteria for Notre Dame High 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.

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 16 April, 25 April and 7 May 2019 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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and
- visits to the sites of Notre Dame High School, St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School, Notre Dame Primary School and St Ninians' Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees. These included representatives from Parent Councils from across Glasgow City Council.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation process ran from 18 March until 26 May 2019. Three public meetings were held in Notre Dame High School, St Thomas Aquinas Secondary School and St Roch's Secondary School. Commendably, to support the inclusion of families with languages other than English, Glasgow City Council made arrangements for interpreters for 15 languages to be present at the

public meetings. Each public meeting followed the same format. Two groups of parents and supporters, one representing the status quo and one arguing for change, put forward their views on the proposal through presentations. Council officers then responded to questions from the audience. There was a high level of public interest and response to the council's online questionnaire (4,761 fully completed and over 2,000 partially completed). From the fully completed responses, the percentages in favour of the various options were 39.9% for option one, 13.4% for option two, 45.9% for option three and 0.9% for none of the three options.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The educational benefits statement contained within the proposal provides some helpful information. However, there is scope for the council to outline more clearly how each of the options being considered supports its aspirations for the future of education within the city, including providing local schools for local children. HM Inspectors note that not all parts of Notre Dame High School are fully accessible to users with mobility issues. Staff at Notre Dame High School outlined the challenge of ensuring effective transitions when children are coming from over 50 different primary schools. Continuity in pupils' learning at the point of transition between Notre Dame Primary School and Notre Dame High School would be more manageable if boys as well as girls were attending Notre Dame High School. The current position sees a fragmentation and dispersal of movement from Notre Dame Primary School to a wide variety of secondary schools. The variation in arrangements for induction days to secondary schools leads to interruption for learners.

3.2 HM Inspectors met with a range of stakeholders including children and young people, parents (including Chairs of Parent Councils), staff and a representative of the Catholic Church. A range of views were shared. However, there was no consensus, with stakeholders' views polarised into those strongly in favour of change and those strongly against change. Staff recognised their sensitive position and have supported parents individually and collectively to participate in the consultation process. Almost all staff took a neutral stance, however, a few were in favour of change and a few against. Around half of the parents, children and young people who met HM Inspectors felt that if option three was accepted then the education for young people would more accurately reflect the world of further and higher education and work as well as the community in which they live.

3.3 Children and young people who met with HM Inspectors had mixed views with around half in favour of Notre Dame High School being fully inclusive reflecting society at large with a mix of genders as well as cultures and backgrounds, including gender. A few children argued that if single gender education is appropriate, the council should make a similar opportunity available to boys in Glasgow. Most young people do not think that girls and boys learn in different ways. However, learners currently attending Notre Dame High School believe that single gender education prepares them well as confident individuals.

3.4 Around half of the stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors believe that girls are succeeding better in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). Other stakeholders have argued that subject choice in Notre Dame High School is more limited in technology than other schools nearby.

3.5 Around half of the parents and young people responding to the consultation thought it important for young people themselves, and also to strengthen parental engagement, to have improved access to a local school in their community. They feel that the current situation creates a scattering of local young people to too many different schools. Added to this, a few parents talked about the additional stress on children and families who faced uncertainty in trying to get a placement request for a local school. They saw as a solution each school with its well-defined

catchment including places for all local children. A few parents and children expressed concerns over environmental issues, arguing that a higher percentage of local young people attending Notre Dame High School would encourage greater numbers to walk or cycle to school with gains to the environment and health and wellbeing. Children and families talked about the practical difficulties faced by having siblings, boys and girls, attending different high schools and of the importance of having mixed gender peer groups for friendship and support.

3.6 The Archdiocese of Glasgow reported that it is grateful to Glasgow City Council for undertaking the school consultation to consider the future of Notre Dame High School. The Archdiocese regard the principle of parental choice to be paramount. They acknowledge the contribution made to Catholic education since the establishment of Notre Dame High School and value the high standards they judge to have been offered to the girls attending over time. Taking account of the aims and objectives within the Charter for Catholic Schools in Scotland, the Archdiocese is passionate in supporting the future growth and development of Catholic education in Glasgow. Whatever the outcome of the consultation, the church is keen to support inclusive schools with a distinct Catholic ethos.

## 4. Summary

Stakeholder groups and individuals hold strong and varied views about the relative merits of the different options. Children, young people and parents have deep-seated views which are mainly polarised into supporting the status quo or supporting a change which will see Notre Dame High School enrol both boys and girls in the future. A much smaller percentage favoured increasing the catchment area to include higher numbers of local girls (option two). HM Inspectors have not been provided with convincing evidence to support the claim that girls are attaining better or indeed worse in a single sex environment. There is potential for improvements in terms of planning for transition, parental engagement and reducing travel across the city, should option three be accepted. Currently, the educational benefits outlined by the council do not present a compelling case for any of the three options. In finalising its report, it is important that the council's educational benefits statement demonstrates clearly how the council has identified and intends to balance the diverse interests and views expressed. The council should continue to work closely with all stakeholders and give consideration to all evidence available when considering which option to take forward.

**HM Inspectors  
August 2019**