

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to review the denominational primary school catchment areas of St Anthony's, St Mary's (Bathgate) and St Joseph's (Whitburn).

August 2024

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 West Lothian Council to review the denominational primary school catchment areas of St Anthony's, St Mary's (Bathgate) and St Joseph's (Whitburn). 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 the public meeting held on 3 June 2024 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 sites of St Anthony's, St Mary's (Bathgate) and St Joseph's (Whitburn) Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The council ran a statutory consultation from 13 May to 28 June 2024. The proposal was communicated to stakeholders via the council website, through social media and local press. The consultation paper was made available in the affected schools and other council buildings. Stakeholders were invited to respond to the consultation in writing or by email. The council received one response. This was from the pupil council at St Anthony's Primary School who support the proposal if children who wish to remain at St Anthony's Primary are able to do so. The council held a public meeting in Armadale Academy, which no members of the public attended.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 West Lothian Council states that this proposal to alter the denominational primary school catchment areas would ensure that catchment areas fit better with local communities, community councils and natural geographic boundaries. The proposal should not see any change to the current school rolls and all children will continue to attend their current primary school. All three primary schools will continue to be aligned to St Kentigern's Academy. HM Inspectors agree there is benefit to catchment areas fitting well with local community boundaries.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree that there are educational benefits to this proposal. The council's educational benefits statement states that a key educational advantage for the schools affected is that they will continue to deliver the full breath of Curriculum for Excellence. HM Inspectors agree that the council's proposal should have no detrimental impact on the delivery of education. In the proposal, the council confirmed that children will be entitled to continue to attend their existing school for the remainder of their primary education. The council also confirms that younger siblings of pupils currently attending schools would be entitled to attend the same school as their older sibling. The council sets out that the small changes in catchment areas should ensure that primary and secondary school catchment areas are aligned. HM Inspectors agree there is benefit in young people being entitled to attend the same secondary school as their peers from primary school.

3.3 HM Inspectors met with children, parents and staff in St Anthony's, St Mary's (Bathgate) and St Joseph's (Whitburn) Primary Schools. Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposed changes. They agree that the revised catchment areas align better with local communities. Children, staff and parents who met with HM Inspectors expressed a view that the proposed changes would have no impact on children and families currently attending any of the schools. Parents from all schools who spoke to HM Inspectors shared concerns about future capacity given the amount of home building in the local areas. The council should continue to engage with parents as the local areas grow.

3.4 HM Inspectors met with a representative of the Scottish Catholic Education Service who expressed their support in relation to the proposal.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree there are educational benefits to the proposal to review the catchment areas for the three denominational primary schools. If agreed, this proposal will align the primary schools with communities and natural boundaries within West Lothian. Stakeholders do not have objections to the proposal.

**HM Inspectors
August 2024**