

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Inverclyde Council to changes to the policy on admission and pupil placement in mainstream schools in relation to the transition from village primary schools (Inverkip, Kilmacolm and Wemyss Bay Primary Schools) to secondary schools.**

May 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 Inverclyde Council's proposal to change the policy on admission and pupil placement in mainstream schools in relation to the transition from village primary schools (Inverkip, Kilmacolm and Wemyss Bay Primary Schools) to secondary 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; and other children and young people in the council area;
- 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 25 February 2020 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;
- telephone discussions with relevant consultees; and
- communication with the Catholic Church representative.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 13 February to 25 March 2020. Communication was issued to all statutory stakeholders of the affected schools and in the community informing them of this consultation. Copies of the proposal were distributed to local libraries and a copy was placed on the council website. Adverts to notify the public of the consultation meetings were placed in the local press. The period from 13 February 2020 until most of Inverclyde schools closed on 20 March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, included 27 days when schools were open. This is short of the six week and 30 days expected duties under the Act. However, despite the fact that most of Inverclyde Council's schools closed on 20 March 2020, the ability to respond

to the proposal continued to the end of the original planned consultation period. The period of consultation met the timescales albeit that only Inverclyde 'hub' schools were open.

2.3 Three public meetings were held on 25 and 27 February 2020, and 4 March 2020 in Port Glasgow Community Campus, Notre Dame High School and St Columba's High School. They were attended by 47 stakeholders. The council responded to all questions from attendees. A pupil consultation took place through pupil councils in the affected schools.

2.4 During the consultation period, the council received 228 responses to the proposal. Of these, 152 were supportive of change one of the proposal and 76 were opposed. One hundred and forty six were supportive of change two of the proposal, and 79 were opposed and three did not answer.

2.5 The main points in support include providing Catholic children priority for denominational schools when over subscription arises. The main points of objection include the perception of some in the relative difference in quality of education being provided between schools and the possibility of siblings being split up across schools.

2.6 Most pupil councils thought the proposals were fair. Whilst there were mixed views on whether a certificate of baptism is the best way to identify commitment to a particular faith, it was acknowledged that this is a sensible option for the council to take.

2.7 If the proposal is approved, the council has helpfully agreed to prioritise the entry of siblings within a seven-year transition period. However, the council recognises that it will be important to monitor all transitions including placing requests from non-denominational to denominational primary schools. This will help to ensure transitions to St Columba's High School are fair and transparent and in line with proposed changes.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council has given due consideration to the potential educational benefits for children and young people affected by the proposal. Proposed changes to the policy on admission and pupil placement in mainstream schools in relation to the transition from village primary schools (Inverkip, Kilmacolm and Wemyss Bay Primary Schools) to secondary schools will help to avoid oversubscription. There are risks as a consequence of the policy currently in place in relation to village schools if the school becomes oversubscribed for pupils within its catchment area. Pupils who have a certificate of baptism into the Catholic faith, or pupils from the villages who have attended the associated denominational primary school for their catchment area may not get a place. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal will help Inverclyde Council to avoid oversubscription and see improved and fair transition arrangements for children and young people within clusters. HM Inspectors recognise the importance of progression in learning between associated schools working in clusters.

3.2 The Education Service has indicated that it will remain sensitive to the concerns parents may have during the transition period. It will make every effort, where possible, to ensure that those with a certificate of baptism (obtained before entry to school) and who live within the catchment area can access the denominational secondary school associated with their catchment area. If change one is approved, then transition arrangements for those pupils at the village schools with siblings already at St Columba's High School will be allocated a place at St Columba's High School, providing the pupil's older sibling will be a pupil of St Columba's High School at the time of the pupil's entrance to S1. If change two is agreed, any child who is in attendance, or has enrolled, at the village schools prior to the date the decision to change the council's policy on admissions is made and who had a certificate of baptism prior to enrolment in

Primary 1 will be treated as attending an associated denominational school during the transition period.

3.3 All staff and parents who spoke with HM Inspectors indicated that they understood the reasons for the proposed changes. However, a few raised concerns relating to parents who had younger siblings who may not qualify for transition to the same secondary school if the age gap between them and older siblings extended beyond the seven-year grace aspect of the proposal.

3.4 The council also received a written submission on behalf of the Diocese of Paisley. The response acknowledges the need to reduce and manage the pressure on St Columba's High School and supports the proposals as being reasonable and supportive of Catholic education. The need for a certificate of baptism prior to entry to Primary 1 gives reassurance to Catholic parents of their right to choose a denominational school for their children with respect to supporting a place in the catchment denominational secondary.

## 4 Summary

The council's proposal provides a sound case for changes to the policy on admission and pupil placement in mainstream schools in relation to the transition from village primary schools (Inverkip, Kilmacolm and Wemyss Bay Primary Schools) to secondary schools. The council recognises the potential impact of increasing demand for places at St Columba's High School and its proposal sets out well its response. The council outlines the associated educational benefits to all affected schools. HM Inspectors endorse this view. All staff and parents who spoke with HM Inspectors indicated that they understood the reasons for the proposed changes. In taking this forward, the council should, as part of its plans, monitor its proposed transition arrangements to ensure they continue to be fair and transparent. The council's proposal, should it proceed, will see improved and fair transition arrangements. This forward planning will assist the authority in managing the rolls in all affected schools.

**HM Inspectors  
May 2020**