



West Dunbartonshire Council Education, Learning and Attainment

REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION RELATING TO THE PROPOSAL

to move the Primary 1 (P1) enrolment date for the start of the academic year from the second week in January to the second week of the preceding November.

Published 28 August 2024

This report has been published by West Dunbartonshire Council in response to the statutory consultation undertaken under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The report will be published on the Council's website for a period of no less than 3 weeks prior to final consideration by the Educational Services Committee on 18 September 2024.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is a consultation response report prepared in compliance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 following consultation on the West Dunbartonshire Council (The Council) proposal to move the Primary 1 (P1) enrolment date for the start of the academic year from the second week in January to the second week of the preceding November.

1.2 The purpose of the response report is to:

- Provide a record of the total number of responses made during the Statutory Consultation period;
- Provide summary of the written responses;
- Provide the full text of Education Scotland's report and a statement of the Council's response to this report;
- State how the Council reviewed the above proposal following the representations received during the Statutory Consultation period and the report from Education Scotland;
- Provide details of any omission from, or inaccuracy in, the Proposal Paper and state how the Council acted on it; and
- State how the Council has complied with Sections 11A to 13 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 when reviewing the above proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 At its meeting on 20 March 2024, Educational Services Committee of West Dunbartonshire Council approved the launch of a statutory consultation by the Chief Education Officer under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 on the proposal to move the Primary 1 (P1) enrolment date for the start of the academic year from the second week in January to the second week of the preceding November.

2.2 Educational Services Committee further agreed that a report outlining the results of the consultation and making appropriate recommendations be presented to its meeting scheduled for 18 September 2024.

2.3 The current position is that parents/carers are notified of the enrolment process through public notifications and social media posts issued in December, with the enrolment week normally taking place the second week in January, for enrolment into Primary 1 in August that calendar year. The proposed changes to the enrolment process detailed within the Policy are outlined below.

2.4 THE PROPOSAL

2.4.1 **Date change for publicity from December to October:**

2.4.2 “Your child will be admitted to school in August if they are 5 between 1 March of that same year and the last day of the following February. Entry to schools is on a once a year basis at the start of the new session in August each year. Public notifications and social media posts will be issued in October providing details on how to register your child”

2.4.3 **Date change for Enrolment week from January to November:**

2.4.4 “Enrolment week normally takes place the second week in November. This is an online process and you can register your child by completing the online Registration Form by the set registration date. Further information on schools admissions and the link to the registration form can be accessed from our website: <https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/school-admissions/>”

3. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

3.1 The statutory consultation process, which requires the Council to adopt a robust and transparent framework for school consultations was undertaken in respect of the proposal. The consultation document developed for consideration included information on the:

- Proposal;
- Consultation process;
- Arrangements for public meetings;
- On how to participate in the consultation;
- Educational benefits of the proposal; and
- Consultation timeline

3.2 An electronic link to the Proposal Paper was issued by email to the stakeholders detailed within that document. The Proposal Paper and details of the consultation were made available on the consultation section of the Council’s website: [Changing the Primary School Enrolment Date](#).

3.3 The Act requires a consultation period of at least 6 weeks which must include at least 30 school days. The consultation period for this project was from Monday 25th March 2024 until Friday 31st May 2024 inclusive (the period covered a total of 30 days to allow for the “clear days” rule and accommodate 15 days where schools were closed due to an in-service day, a long weekend and the spring break).

3.4 The requirements for consulting on a relevant proposal relating to schools are set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the following steps were taken to ensure compliance with the Act:

- Proposal Paper published on Monday 25 March 2024.
- Statutory consultees were sent an email providing a link to the Proposal Paper and details of where, and how to obtain a paper copy free of charge and how to participate in the consultation.
- Schools distributed details of the consultation to staff and parents/carers.
- Proposal Paper published on the West Dunbartonshire Council website

and available in paper copy upon request, and information on the consultation published on social media.

- Public notice in the 'Dumbarton Reporter' and 'Clydebank Post' newspapers advising of the consultation.
- A public consultation meeting was held on 20 April 2024 to facilitate participation, sharing of information and gathering views.
- Education Scotland's involvement consisted of: Proposal Paper being sent to them, attendance at the public consultation meeting, follow up consultation meetings with Head Teachers, Pupils, Parent Council representatives, and Church representatives. Education Scotland were also provided with copies of online survey results/comments and the written representation received during the consultation period.

3.5 In accordance with statutory requirements and good practice, the following relevant stakeholders were consulted:

- Education Scotland;
- The Archdiocese of Glasgow of the Roman Catholic Church;
- the Parent Councils of West Dunbartonshire Primary and Secondary Schools;
- the parents/carers of pupils attending all West Dunbartonshire Primary and Secondary Schools;
- the parents/carers of any children expected by West Dunbartonshire Council to attend the primary schools listed in section 4.1 above within two years of the date of publication of this Proposal Document, including those pupils attending all private and voluntary pre-school nurseries in the West Dunbartonshire area;
- the pupils attending all West Dunbartonshire Primary and Secondary Schools (insofar as this is possible and taking cognisance of the age and maturity of the pupils);
- the teaching and support staff of all West Dunbartonshire Primary and Secondary Schools;
- the trade union representatives of the above staff;
- the constituency MSPs;
- the constituency MP; and
- Neighbouring local authorities.

4. PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

4.1 One public consultation meeting was held at 6pm on 20 April 2024. This meeting was offered simultaneously in person and online - in person in Dumbarton Academy, and online via google meet.

4.2 The consultation meeting was attended by two Senior Education Officers and an HM Inspector. Unfortunately, there were no attendees in person or online. The online meeting link was accessed by officers to ensure it was working correctly. Officers waited for around 30 minutes to ensure there were no latecomers to the meeting, and stayed on the school premises for the duration of the advertised time of the public meeting, should any

stakeholders have arrived during the meeting timeframe.

5. RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE

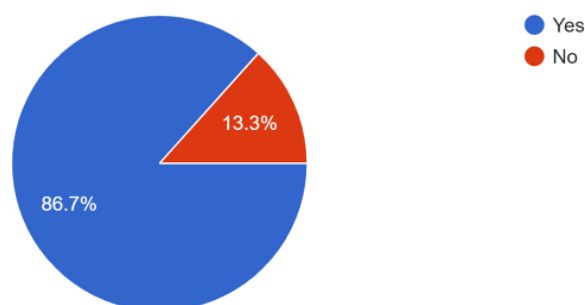
5.1 Members of the public were encouraged to respond to the consultation through the online survey, by phone or in writing.

5.2 A total of 31 respondents responded through the online survey as detailed below.

Q1. Are you a resident of West Dunbartonshire?	Number of responses	% of responses
Yes	26	86.7%
No	4	13.3%
TOTAL	30	

Are you a resident of West Dunbartonshire?

30 responses



5.2.1 Question 2 asked respondents to choose which statement described them best. It was possible for respondents to create their own description in response to this question. It had 31 responses. Responses were broken down as follows:

Q2. From the options below, please select the most appropriate one to indicate your interest in this consultation.	Number of responses	% of responses
A parent / carer of child / young person not presently attending primary school but will from August 2025	11	35.5%
A member of teaching / non teaching staff	11	35.5%
A parent / carer of child / young person presently attending primary school	7	22.6%
Other	2	6.4%

TOTAL	31	
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- 5.2.2 35.5% (11 respondents) stated that they were a parent / carer of child / young person not presently attending primary school but will from August 2025
- 5.2.3 35.5% (11 respondents) stated that they were a member of teaching / non teaching staff
- 5.2.4 22.6% (7 respondents) stated that they were a parent / carer of child / young person presently attending primary school
- 5.2.5 It was possible for respondents to add in 'other' categories to this question. Two categories were added:
- 5.2.6 3.2% (1 respondent) stated that they were a parent & carer of a special needs child starting school August 2024; and
- 5.2.7 3.2% (1 respondent) stated that they were a parent of a child not yet attending school.
- 5.4 Question 3 asked the consultation question '***Do you agree that West Dunbartonshire Council should bring the date of enrolment for primary school forward by two months from January to November?***' There were 31 responses. 93.5% (29 respondents) agreed, with 6.5% (2 respondents) disagreeing.

Do you agree that West Dunbartonshire Council should bring transport provision for schools more in line with the safe walking distance to school?	Number of responses	% of responses
Yes	29	93.5%
No	2	6.5%
TOTAL	31	

- 5.5 Question 4 asked respondents to provide a reason for their answer if they wished. There were 16 responses:
- As a parent who has only just received the news in March 2024 that my son will attend a communication base in August 2024 for p1 & in the knowledge that many children did not secure the same setting so close to starting I find it remarkably late & incredibly anxiety inducing. Gradual transitions are difficult and almost non-existent due to time constraints, as is forward planning in regards to looking at other options.
 - Myself a parent of a special needs child waiting to start school have found such difficulty in finding the suitable placement for our son due to numbers and the time we have to have panel meets etc and get things in place by august
 - I have a son with a speech delay and is awaiting a possible autism diagnosis. I feel earlier is harder for parents to be able to confirm if their child is at a level to be attending school. As it starts I have friends who have deferred their child based on the current date and come august regretted it

as by that point they would have been ready for school. I feel making this gap wider again will cause parents making the wrong choices

- It would be great to have advanced notice of placing requests and be able to make appropriate childcare arrangements. It would also allow enhanced transition programmes from nursery to happen more confidently with the children going to each school. I am a teacher, parent of P1 and have a child starting school Aug 2025.
- Planning for everyone and everything can be done earlier
- I believe the whole process should be reviewed. I had a child that potentially should have went aug 2024 and I feel the whole deferral process is unnecessarily emotive and difficult. There isn't a consistent approach from education staff.
- It will allow placing requests to be organised more quickly which will support high quality transition visits.
- Would give earlier notice of staff numbers required in schools. Interviews for teaching posts are currently held much later than neighbouring. The current system has had teachers finding out on the last day of school if they have a job after the holidays, or not, which is not good for staff motivation.
- This will allow the schools to have a better idea of the enrolment number and therefore classes for the upcoming year. This will hopefully allow interviews to take place earlier than June and allow both schools and staff to know and prepare for where (school or stage) they will be the following year. West Dunbartonshire are currently one of the latest councils to interview for positions for the following year which is not beneficial for schools and staff.
- Would hopefully allow for earlier I decisions regarding placing requests/JRP panels etc, in turn provide more adequate timeframes for transitions.
- Better time to prepare
- More time to prepare if first choice not possible
- Some children had started their transition meetings to schools that they were unsure if they were confirmed for having a place or not. Having the consultation earlier might help make that decision quicker so that there's less uncertainty. My friend also has a child who didn't get a place in a special school and are really struggling with the time left to help plan for what happens next. Earlier decisions on this might help too
- As a parent of a child starting primary school in 2026, this would allow me to know about my child's primary place earlier thus giving more time to arrange any wrap-around care that might be needed. As a teacher in WDC who isn't permanent to a school, the annual staffing exercise runs very close to the

end of term which has caused stress and uncertainty every year since I qualified. If this could also be brought forward, it would mean knowing my job situation for the following year earlier.

- This would allow placing requests to be granted at an earlier date and then children can start transition to the school they are going to attend instead of their catchment school.
- To provide earlier certainty to families, allowing greater planning opportunities and more time to explore alternative opportunities and options

5.6 There were no responses by email or by phone to the consultation. No written responses were received by post. We received a submission from the Archdiocese of Glasgow of the Roman Catholic Church in support of our proposal which is provided as Appendix A.

6. ISSUES RAISED BY STAKEHOLDERS AND EDUCATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE

6.1 Of these 16 responses, 5 related to places for children with Additional Support Needs, which, although helpful responses for our future action, was not the focus of this consultation. Similarly, 2 responses related to deferrals which was not the focus of this consultation.

6.2 The responses highlighted the benefits of earlier information to assist in decision making, and staffing requirements. Benefits raised also highlighted earlier clarity for parents on which school their child will be attending.

6.2 It is clear from the responses and in our work to provide places for children in session 2024/25 that a further revision of both the school enrolment and placing request policies is required to ensure compliance with legislation and better meet the needs of stakeholders. Work also needs to be done to clarify the relationship between admissions and deferrals. A further proposal to conduct a statutory consultation will be brought to the December Education committee.

7. EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT AND EDUCATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE

7.1 In accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, a report was produced by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal.

7.2 The Education Scotland report can be read in full in Appendix B, and the summary conclusions from the report are presented below.

7.3 Within the report, Education Scotland concluded:

“HM Inspectors agree that this proposal has clear educational benefits. The proposed changes will assist the council in obtaining earlier information to help inform decision making. This includes, class configurations, placing requests, transition support, and to identify required teaching posts at an earlier point in time. It will also enable earlier confirmation to parents of the school their child will attend. If approved, the council should continue to engage parents to provide assurance of their rights regarding flexibility in deferring their child's start date. Similarly, staff and parents would like confirmation that the arrangements and associated timeline for enrolling children with additional support needs would also be in line with the proposal.”

7.4 The Council agrees with the points raised by Education Scotland, and will take further action on deferred entries and enrolment and placing requests for children with Additional Support Needs. A proposal to conduct a future statutory consultation will be brought to December 2024 Education committee.

8. ALLEGED OMISSIONS OR INACCURACIES

8.1 Section (10) (3) of the 2010 Act also places a requirement on the Council to provide details of any inaccuracy or omission within the Proposal Paper which has either been identified by the Council or raised by consultees. This section of the 2010 Act also requires the Council to provide a statement on the action taken in respect of the inaccuracy or omission, or, if no action was taken, to state that fact and why.

8.2 In the course of the consultation exercise, there were no areas identified by respondents as being inaccurate or omitted from the Proposal Paper during the consultation period.

9. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 9(1) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010

9.1 Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 states that: After the Education Authority has received Education Scotland's report, the Authority is to review the relevant proposal having regard (in particular) to:

- (i) written representations received by the Authority (from any person) during the consultation period;
- (ii) oral representations made to it (by any person) at the public Meeting; and
- (iii) Education Scotland's report.

9.2 Following receipt of the Education Scotland report, the Council has reviewed the proposal, having regard to the written representations made and to

Education Scotland's report.

- 9.3 The feedback from the consultation was considered by officers where all the questions and comments raised were considered in detail. This ensured that the Council met the requirements to review the proposal under section 9(1) and 13(5) of the 2010 Act.
- 9.5 The proposal was reviewed to consider whether any of the representations led to the Council to reconsider any other reasonable alternatives to the proposal. It is clear from the responses received that the vast majority of stakeholders are in favour of the proposal. No alternatives were presented, but further action on deferred entries and enrolment and placing requests for children with Additional Support Needs should take place. A proposal to conduct a future statutory consultation will be brought to December 2024 Education committee.

10. LEGAL ISSUES/NEXT STEPS

- 10.1 The Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 throughout this statutory consultation.
- 10.2 Under the terms of the Schools (Scotland) (Consultation) Act 2010, it is a legal requirement that the Council should not reach any formal decision without waiting until a period of three weeks starting on the day on which this Consultation Report is published in electronic and printed form has expired.
- 10.3 This Consultation Report will be published, both electronically and available in written form, if required, on Wednesday 28 August 2024, this meets the statutory requirement to publish this report for three weeks before the report on the consultation is considered by Educational Service Committee on Wednesday 18 September 2024 for final decision. If approved the Council will ensure continued engagement with all stakeholders throughout the implementation of any change to the policy.

