

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Dunbartonshire Council to review the Primary 1 enrolment date for children starting school from August 2025. The proposal document relates to all primary schools in West Dunbartonshire Council.

June 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 Dunbartonshire Council to review the Primary 1 (P1) enrolment date for children starting school from August 2025. The proposal document relates to all primary schools in West Dunbartonshire Council. 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 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 24 April 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 site of St Mary's Primary School Duntocher, Sunflower Nursery, St Ronan's Primary School, and Andrew B Cameron Early Education and Childcare Centre, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The council undertook the consultation from 25 March to 31 May 2024. The council published the proposal paper on their website. Paper and electronic copies of the proposal paper were made available to stakeholders. The council advertised the proposal in local newspapers. The council also held a public meeting at Dumbarton Academy. This meeting was also available to attend virtually. No stakeholders attended in person or via the virtual meeting link.

2.3 The council received 31 written submissions. Of these, almost all responses were in favour of the council's proposal to review the P1 enrolment date for children starting school from August 2025. Almost all stakeholders recognise that decisions made earlier regarding placing requests may allow for more timely transition arrangements for children starting school. It may also allow more time for families to organise appropriate wraparound childcare arrangements. Stakeholders recognised that this is particularly important for children with additional support needs. A few responses were not in favour of the proposal. A few stakeholders expressed concern that parents and carers will be asked to make decisions regarding whether they wish their child to start school or defer their school entry too early. They feel that children may need more time to develop before these decisions are made.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council's proposal sets out a number of educational benefits for those directly affected. The current position is that parents and carers are notified of the enrolment in December. The enrolment week normally takes place the second week in January for enrolment into P1 in August that calendar year. The proposal is for a date change for notification of enrolment from December to October, and enrolment week to take place the second week in November. HM Inspectors agree that should the proposal be approved, obtaining earlier information would enable decisions to be made in relation to class configurations, placing requests and identify required teaching posts at an earlier point in time. The proposal also gives earlier confirmation to parents of the school their child will attend.

3.2 Almost all stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors are in favour of the proposal. Parents and staff welcome the opportunity to begin transitions earlier. All stakeholders agree that the revised registration date has the potential to assist the council with earlier planning and identifying necessary teaching posts. This should also help children to build relationships with their class teachers prior to starting primary school. Parents making placing requests, welcome earlier notification of the school their child is to attend. They suggest that earlier notification will be less stressful and will help them to prepare their child for attending school. A few parents are worried that the earlier registration date may be too early to decide on whether to defer their child starting school. Parents would like assurance from the council that there is flexibility, beyond the registration deadline, to change their decision around deferred entry. Staff and parents would also like confirmation that the process for placing children with additional support needs would be considered in line with the proposal. They recognise that this will provide an opportunity to support a longer enhanced transition period.

3.3 A representative of the Archdiocese of the Roman Catholic Church who met with HM Inspectors is supportive of the proposal. They believe that the earlier notification to parents will help support the council, schools and parents and carers to make more informed decisions and prepare their child for starting school.

4. Summary

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.

HM Inspectors
June 2024