

# Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

**Report by HMIE addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Stirling Council to amalgamate policies to create an Education Admissions Policy.**

November 2025

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report from HMIE 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 Stirling Council to amalgamate policies to create an Education Admissions Policy. 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 and young people of the schools and settings; 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 4 September, 16 September and 1 October 2025 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 Balfron High School, Bannockburn High School, St Modan's High School, Wallace High School, Balfron Primary School, Riverside Primary School, St Mary's (Bannockburn) Primary School, Balfron Nursery and Fallin Nursery, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

2.1 Stirling Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

2.2 The statutory consultation process ran from 25 August to 31 October 2025. The council published the proposal paper on its website, social media accounts and made copies available to

relevant stakeholders. The council held three public meetings on 4 September, 16 September and 1 October 2025. Twelve stakeholders in total attended. Interested parties were invited to respond to the statutory consultation through the council's online platform or by email. In total, the council received 142 written responses to the consultation. The council's online survey asked stakeholders to make comments about different aspects of the proposed Education Admissions Policy, which received 127 responses. Stakeholders raised queries and concerns including placing requests and transparency in updates in relation to additional support needs. The council extended the consultation period by two weeks to allow stakeholders to respond to the updated information.

2.3 The council invited schools and settings to consult children and young people and received responses from 13 schools, the vast majority of which were positive. Children and young people agree it is important to have a policy relating to school admissions where parents and carers can access relevant information.

### **3. Educational aspects of proposal**

3.1 Stirling Council proposes to combine and update separate policies and guidelines in relation to admission to its nurseries, schools and specialist additional support needs provisions. The aim is to create a single Education Admissions Policy that would make the process clearer, whilst reducing duplication and inconsistency. This policy would provide one clear point of reference for admissions across all educational establishments in Stirling, reflecting current practice. HM Inspectors agree that a single, clear policy would better support pupils, parents and carers now and in the future.

3.2 All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors agree that creating a single Education Admissions Policy would provide one point of reference for parents, carers, children and young people. They acknowledged the benefit of having admissions information for all stages contained in one document.

3.3 Almost all stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors noted improved information within the proposed policy to better support parents applying for a nursery place. Parents feel better informed about the process for admissions for two-year-olds. Senior leaders, staff and parents believe the information regarding different models for delivering 1140 hours of early learning and childcare across nursery settings within the local authority will better support parents to apply for places in settings where the pattern on offer best suits their needs.

3.4 HM Inspectors agree that there are education benefits in a clearer admissions policy that supports parents and carers with placing requests and transition from primary school to secondary school. Senior leaders, staff and a few parents who met with HM Inspectors are concerned that the proposed changes do not address current issues around supporting transition to secondary school. A few parents and young people described interrupted transition due to uncertainty of which secondary school they would be allocated. As a result, children who require enhanced transition support can miss out on the full experience. A few stakeholders are worried that the current timescales may negatively affect children and their families, causing stress and disrupting transition experiences.

3.5 HM Inspectors agree that, wherever possible, decisions should be made early enough to support children to have an equitable transition experience as their peers. This could reduce

anxiety and help children to be confident about moving to secondary school. For those children who are awaiting decisions about placing requests, it may be helpful for the council to consider further what transition activities outwith their catchment school children should attend, given they may not receive a place at their preferred school. A few stakeholders believe the criteria for granting placing requests from outwith the catchment area could be clearer.

3.6 Currently, St Modan's High School is the catchment school for young people from Clackmannanshire Council and a small area of Falkirk Council. Almost all stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors, suggested that the council include an additional priority to the proposed admissions list. They recommend giving higher priority to children attending a denominational primary school through a placing request, so that they can progress to the denominational high school with their peers. Stakeholders believe that the current criteria could disrupt the continuity of learning, particularly for those who wish to transition to St Modan's High School. Their preference is that places for children from catchment primary schools should be prioritised alongside those residing in the Stirling area. The council have indicated that they agreed to change its Education Admissions Policy to give higher priority to those children attending catchment primary schools. In taking forward its proposal, it will be important for the council to consider the views of relevant church representatives.

3.7 Currently, Bun-sgoil Taobh na -Aibhne - Riverside Primary school is the designated school for Gàidhlig Medium Education within Stirling Council. Young people can progress to Àrd-sgoil Uallais - Wallace High School to continue to learn Gàidhlig as a subject choice. Children and young people from Clackmannanshire and Falkirk Councils wishing to access Gàidhlig Medium Education in Stirling are required to submit a placing request. HM Inspectors believe that the council's proposal could be clearer on the educational benefits for children and young people accessing Gàidhlig Medium Education. Parents and staff expressed concerns around the transition arrangements for young people moving from primary school to secondary school, including those from Clackmannanshire Council. This includes how Gàidhlig Medium Education places are prioritised in the relevant schools, and to clarify support for transport and travel arrangements for learners in Gàidhlig Medium Education.

3.8 Although the amalgamated and updated Education Admissions Policy does not make any changes to Gàidhlig Medium Education, the council should invite Bòrd na Gàidhlig to provide a report or express their views on its proposal. The council may also benefit from engaging with Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta) to ensure full representation of parents' views on their proposals. It should give further consideration to users of Gàidhlig Medium Education to enable their proposed Education Admissions Policy to be fully a one-step and inclusive reference for all educational provisions. In so doing, the council should take account of legislation specific to Gàidhlig and specify how their proposal, should it be progressed, meets outcomes to promote Gàidhlig and Stirling Council's Gàidhlig Language Plan.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the council should combine existing policies and create a single Education Admissions Policy. Most stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors are in agreement. However, stakeholders expressed concerns that the timing of decisions about the granting of placing requests could disadvantage children and young people. Should this proposal be agreed, it will be important for Stirling Council to work with schools to support cohesive and effective

transitions for all children. The council could also consider making decisions earlier and that the outcomes are communicated to parents to help address their concerns.

Families living outwith Stirling, but whose children and young people attend Stirling schools, are concerned about the proposal. This is particularly relevant for those planning to transition to, and in the catchment area for, St Modan's High School or continue learning Gàidhlig at Wallace High School. Stakeholders are worried that the proposal could negatively impact on the continuity of learning as children move into secondary education. If the proposal is agreed, it will be important for councils to continue to work together to minimise any potential disruption to children's learning.

In finalising its report and Education Admissions Policy, the council should consult stakeholders including church representatives and Bòrd na Gàidhlig to seek their views on its proposal.

**HM Inspectors**  
**November 2025**