

## **Consultation proposal by Dundee City Council**

### **Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dundee City Council to revise guidelines on enrolment and the management of placing request procedures in its primary and secondary schools.**

#### **Context**

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the 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 a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation 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. Introduction**

1.1 Dundee City Council proposes to revise its guidelines on enrolment and for managing placing requests in primary and secondary schools.

1.2 The report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.3 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:

- attendance at a public meeting held at Grove Academy on 3 February 2014 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 Dundee City Council including discussion with representative groups of parent councils, young people, headteachers and officers of the council, including the Director of Education.

#### 1.4 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for 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
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

## 2. Consultation process

2.1 Dundee City Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. The council issued over 20,000 letters to parents and made the proposal document available on the council's website. The council held five public meetings. It also consulted with other councils affected by the proposal.

2.2 The council received around 30 responses to its consultation. These were from a range of consultees and included Perth and Kinross Council, parent councils and individual responses from parents. The Director of Education provided written replies to almost all those who made individual responses. Some of the individual responses were from parents whose children attended primary schools in Dundee as a result of successful placing requests, but who did not reside in Dundee City. The council did not receive any responses from children or young people.

2.3 Perth and Kinross Council and almost all the parent councils who submitted responses to the consultation supported the proposal. One parent council was less supportive of the proposal and suggested that, if the changes were to go ahead, they should apply only to children entering primary school from August 2014.

2.4 Headteachers, young people and representatives of parent councils who met with HM Inspectors all supported the proposal. They welcomed the proposal and felt it would provide a clear and workable approach to managing enrolment and placing requests in Dundee City's primary and secondary schools. In the council's final consultation report, young people would welcome more information on the impact for each secondary school of the forecast increase in the roll in Dundee's schools. Headteachers, young people and parents would welcome greater clarity on the priority the council will give to placing requests for those children who attend associated primary schools in Perth and Kinross and Angus if their parents make placing requests to attend a secondary school in Dundee City that is not the secondary school associated with the primary school they have attended.

2.5 The responses from individual parents to the council were mixed. A small number complained about a lack of clarity and communication in the consultation process. A few comments from parents represented a misunderstanding of the proposal and the Director of Education had provided parents with clear explanations. A few individual responses from parents supported the proposal. Around ten parents opposed the proposal. Those who opposed the proposal were concerned that their

children might not be able to continue their education in the secondary school of their choice. They felt this would mean that their children would not be able to continue their education with the friends they had made in primary school. With regards to priority four within the proposal, some parents suggested that, in managing a placing request, the council should take into account the number of years a child had spent at the primary school. In written responses, the Director of Education had given an undertaking to give consideration to this in the final consultation report.

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

3.1 Dundee City Council is proposing to amend its arrangements for enrolling children and young people, including the management of placing requests, in primary and secondary schools. Under the current arrangements for transition from primary to secondary school, priority is given to children who attend the primary school that is associated with a specific secondary school. This arrangement includes children who may reside permanently outwith the catchment area of a secondary school but who, as the result of a successful placing request, attend a primary school that is associated to a specific secondary school. The council is proposing that, at the point of transition from primary school to secondary school, top priority will be given to those children and young people who normally permanently reside within the catchment area of the specified secondary school. This will include children who attend primary schools in Perth and Kinross and Angus that are associated with secondary schools in Dundee City Council. These primary schools and their associated secondary schools are named in appendix 4 of the proposal.

3.2 Parents of children who reside permanently outwith the catchment area of a secondary school will need to make a placing request to attend the secondary school of their choice at the end of their child's education in primary school. In the proposal, the council has set out a ranked order of priorities it will use for managing placing requests. The rationale for ranking the priorities is fair and reasonable. The Director of Education has indicated that, when considering placing requests, the council may amend priority four to take account of the number of years a child has attended a primary school when that primary school is associated with the secondary school the parents wish their child to attend. In its final consultation report, the council also needs to clarify the priority that will be given to children who attend associated primary schools in Perth and Kinross and Angus should their parents make a placing request for their child to attend a school in Dundee City that is not the secondary school associated with the primary school they have attended.

3.3 From a base line figure of 26,748 in 2011, Dundee City Council is projecting that, by 2025, the child population in the city will increase by 16% to around 31,000. The council anticipates that this increase will be seen first in primary reception classes leading in later years to an increase in the roll in upper primary and secondary schools. In anticipating this increased demand for places, the proposal provides a reasonable and sustainable approach to maximising the capacity in each of Dundee City's schools for children and young people who live within the catchment area of the school.

3.4 The proposal is of overall educational benefit to the children and young people across the council area. If implemented, the proposal will ensure that the arrangements for securing places for children and young people who reside within the catchment areas of Dundee City's primary and secondary schools are open and transparent. It will also ensure that arrangements for handling placing requests from parents of children and young people who reside outwith the catchment area of Dundee City's primary and secondary schools are fair, clear and consistent. Implementation of the proposal will help the council to meet its duties to secure best value in the delivery of services as set out in the *Local Government in Scotland Act 2003*. It will also enable the council to meet its legislative duties to secure for its area adequate and efficient provision of school education under the terms of the *Education (Scotland) Act 1980*.

3.5 The council has taken reasonable steps to minimise any adverse impact of the proposal. The ordering of priorities set out by the council within the proposal ensures that, for the next few years, almost all children will be able to attend the secondary school of their parents' choice. This includes those who will need to make placing requests for secondary school, particularly those who have siblings in attendance at the relevant secondary school.

#### **4. Summary**

Dundee City Council has set out a fair and reasonable case for revising its guidelines on enrolment and for managing placing request procedures in primary and secondary schools. If implemented, the proposal will be of overall educational benefit to the children and young people who reside permanently within the catchment areas of the primary and secondary schools of Dundee City Council. It will help the council to secure best value in the delivery of its services while ensuring that the council is able to provide sufficient school education as efficiently and effectively as possible. If implemented, the proposal will ensure that arrangements for securing places for children and young people who reside within the catchment areas of primary and secondary schools in Dundee City are open and transparent. It will also ensure that arrangements for managing placing requests from parents of children and young people who reside outwith the catchment area of the primary and secondary school they wish their child to attend are fair, clear and consistent.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
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