

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dundee City Council to change the catchment areas for Sidlaw View Primary School, Ardler Primary School, Downfield Primary School and Craigowl Primary School from August 2016.

1. Introduction

This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Dundee City Council's proposal to change the catchment areas for Sidlaw View Primary School, Ardler Primary School, Downfield Primary School and Craigowl Primary School from August 2016. 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 a copy of 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.1 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school; 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.

1.2 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 22 January 2015 in connection with the council's proposal;
- 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 Sidlaw View Primary School, Ardler Primary School, Downfield Primary School and Craigowl Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Dundee City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. Dundee City Council's proposal is to change the catchment areas for Sidlaw View Primary School, Ardler Primary School, Downfield Primary School and Craigowl Primary School from January 2016 for any new pupils and for P1 pupils starting school in August 2016. The consultation process ran from 12 January 2015 to 27 February 2015. The council held four formal public consultation meetings between 19 January and 22 January 2015. During the same period the council held meetings for staff and for the Parent Councils of each of the four schools. Children's views were gathered through meetings of pupil councils where these existed in the four schools. Attendance at each of the formal public consultation meetings was low, varying from one parent to sixteen parents attending. The council received one written response to the proposal. No parents took up the offer to meet with HM Inspectors during the visits to each of the four schools.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Dundee City Council's proposal to change the catchment areas for Sidlaw View Primary School, Ardler Primary School, Downfield Primary School and Craigowl Primary School from January 2016 for new pupils and for P1 pupils starting school in August 2016 has clear educational benefits. The proposal is the most effective way of addressing the over-occupancy in Craigowl Primary School. At present the school's occupancy rate is 115%. The roll is likely to continue to rise placing further pressure on teaching spaces and specialist areas. A reduction in the school roll would free up the specialist areas and provide better opportunities for active learning, team work and group activities. The proposed changes to the catchment areas would not alter arrangements for children moving to secondary school. Children not yet at school would not be affected by the proposal. It is likely that the roll in Sidlaw View Primary School, Downfield Primary School and Ardler Primary School would increase as a result of the proposed changes to the catchment areas. Should the proposal be implemented there is the potential to broaden the curriculum in line with national expectations for Curriculum for Excellence. The council's timescale for implementing the proposal is reasonable and would allow time for children starting school to enrol and to be involved meaningfully in transition activities.

3.2 Implementation of the proposal will not affect other users of the four schools. At Craigowl Primary School a reduction in the roll over time would allow better access to community rooms, music and dance studios which are currently used as classrooms. The council has made it clear that it will conduct a full review of school

crossing patrols to ensure crossings are located in the most appropriate locations. Should the proposal go ahead some children will have slightly further to travel while others will have less distance to travel to school. The council intends to put in place arrangements to establish safe walking routes to school.

3.3 Primary school staff, children and parents who attended the formal consultation meetings are fully supportive of the proposal. Staff and children, who met with HM Inspectors, welcomed the intended changes and felt the changes were long overdue. Staff in each of the four schools recognised that the council needed to take action to address the significant pressures on accommodation in Craigowl Primary School. Children from Craigowl Primary School, who met with HM Inspectors, were looking forward to having more space to play and learn outdoors and to gain access to specialist rooms such as the community room and being able to eat their lunch in the dining room instead of at tables in open areas. Children from Sidlaw View Primary School, Downfield Primary School and Ardler Primary School, who met with HM Inspectors, agreed it was the right thing to do to change the catchment areas and wanted to have more children in their schools.

4. Summary

Dundee City Council's proposal to change the catchment areas for Sidlaw View Primary School, Ardler Primary School, Downfield Primary School and Craigowl Primary School from January 2016 for new pupils and for P1 pupils starting school in August 2016 has clear educational benefits particularly for the children of Craigowl Primary School. The proposal has the full support of those who responded to the consultation and who met with HM Inspectors. The proposal will help address the over-occupancy issues in Criagowl Primary School and allow specialist learning spaces such as music rooms and dance studios to be used more flexibly. In taking this proposal forward the council should work, as planned, with parents and relevant agencies to review school crossing patrols and safe walking routes to school.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
March 2015**