

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HMIE addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dumfries and Galloway Council to discontinue education provision at Carsphairn Primary School and Nursery and realign its catchment area to Dalry Primary School and Nursery.

November 2025

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 Dumfries and Galloway Council to discontinue education provision at Carsphairn Primary School and Nursery and realign its catchment area to Dalry Primary School and Nursery. 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, there are specific additional obligations. These include notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers. There are special provisions that apply to close a rural school.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children 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.

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

- attendance at the public meeting held on 16 September 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 site of Dalry Primary and Secondary Schools, Carsphairn Primary School and Lagwyne Hall, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 As the proposal, if implemented, will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of any reasonable alternatives to closure of Carsphairn Primary School and Nursery, the likely effect on the local community and the likely effect of any different travelling arrangements of the proposed closure.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation period ran from 3 September to 29 October 2025. The council published the consultation paper on its website and provided a summary to all consultees. The council held a public meeting on 16 September 2025, which was attended by two members of the local community. Attendees asked a range of questions, mostly around the impact of the travel arrangements, and raised concerns about the deteriorating condition of the school building. The council received nine responses to the online consultation from parents, community members and one community organisation. Eight responses supported the permanent closure of the school with one opposed. There were two alternative proposals around catchment changes. One parent expressed a preference to home school young children to reduce travel time. Another suggestion was to align the catchment area to Dalmellington Primary School, East Ayrshire, which is a similar distance away from Carsphairn as Dalry.

2.3 The council also met with a group of nine children in Dalry Primary School, which included six children from the Carsphairn Primary School catchment. The council asked the children their views about the differences, advantages and disadvantages of smaller or larger schools. The children were also interested in the community's plan to repurpose the school building as a potential youth club. Six children supported the closure proposal and three were opposed.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 In the proposal, the council sets out a comprehensive educational benefits statement in relation to learning and teaching, educational outcomes, experiences and opportunities, and the environment for learning. HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits for the children attending Dalry Primary School. Dalry Primary School, like Carsphairn Primary School is also classed as a remote rural school. HM Inspectors agree that children from Carsphairn Primary, attending Dalry Primary can continue to benefit from a curriculum design that supports their rural location and the skills and attributes to meet their individual needs in a rural context. The children from the Carsphairn Primary School catchment have never attended the mothballed school. They are settled at Dalry Primary School and enjoy their educational experiences there.

3.2 All of the children, staff and community representatives that HM Inspectors met with support the council's proposal to discontinue education provision at Carsphairn Primary School and Nursery and realign its catchment area to Dalry Primary School and Nursery. Almost all stakeholders expressed sadness and regret that Carsphairn Primary School would likely be closing, given its 300 year history.

3.3 As the proposal, if implemented, will lead to the closure of a rural school, HM Inspectors also took account of the council's consideration of the factors to which it should have special regard. The council considered two alternatives to the current proposal, to reopen Carsphairn Primary School and Nursery or the continued Mothballing of Carsphairn Primary School and Nursery with the temporary catchment of Dalry Primary School. The council state they do not consider increasing the catchment area to be a reasonable alternative, They have set out the reasons for this clearly in the proposal. As part of the options appraisal, the council considered a range of

factors. HM Inspectors agree with the conclusions set out in the proposal regarding the educational benefits in the current context.

3.4 The council has given due consideration to the likely effect on the local community. In particular, they have responded to a request from Carsphairn Community Council to formally close the currently mothballed school in order to facilitate a community asset transfer. This should help to ensure the building does not fall into further disrepair and is instead brought back into use for the benefit of the community. The community representatives that HM Inspectors met with have a clear vision for how they might repurpose the building moving forward. The recently formed Carsphairn Learning and Development Committee hopes to take ownership of the building, should it close as a school. They are enthusiastic about the possibility of repurposing it as an informal learning space for current and future generations of children and young people to complement formal schooling in the area.

3.5 The biggest adverse effect of the proposal is the increased travel distance for children, in particular the distance pupils living in Carsphairn Village or to the North West. The travel distance from Carsphairn Primary School to Dalry Primary School is 9.4 miles and takes approximately 14 minutes. HM Inspectors do not consider this to be excessive in this rural context noting that the council has committed to continuing to provide funded school transport for primary aged children should this proposal be implemented. The children and young people that HM Inspectors met with estimate that their travel time to school can be around twice as long, although this is not currently having a negative impact on their attendance or wellbeing.

3.6 Whilst all of the stakeholders that HM Inspectors met with support the proposed closure, they did raise significant concerns about the falling school roll at Dalry Primary School, which the Carsphairn catchment will be realigned to. Although outside the scope of this proposed closure, it will be important for the council to continue to engage with parents and the community to explore how best to provide and sustain school provision locally.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that there are potential educational benefits arising from the council's proposal. Children from the Carsphairn catchment can continue to benefit from a curriculum design that supports their rural location through attending Dalry Primary School. Children are settled at Dalry Primary School and enjoy their educational experiences there. In considering reasonable alternatives, the council considered a range of factors and HM Inspectors agree with the educational benefits set out in the current context. Stakeholders are concerned about the falling school roll at Dalry Primary School. Should the proposal proceed, it will be important for the council to continue to work closely with the wider local community when planning for adequate and efficient school education in the area. The council should also continue to work with local community groups around the community asset transfer timeously after any closure decision has been taken.