

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The City of Edinburgh Council to realign the catchment areas of Currie Primary School, Nether Currie Primary School, Dean Park Primary School, Currie High School and Balerno High School.

January 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her 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 The City of Edinburgh Council proposal to realign the catchment areas of Currie Primary School, Nether Currie Primary School, Dean Park Primary School, Currie High School and Balerno High School. 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 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 statutory 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.

1.2 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.

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

- 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 Currie Primary School, Nether Currie Primary School, Dean Park Primary School, Currie High School and Balerno High School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 23 October 2018 to 3 December 2018. The proposal paper was made available electronically on the council website and in paper format. Copies were also available for inspection at, Central Library, Currie Library, Balerno Library, Ratho Library and at the schools affected by the proposals. Public meetings were held on 14 and 19 November 2018 at Balerno and Currie High Schools. The council received 420 responses to an online survey. Responses from those affected by the changes to Balerno High School, Dean Park Primary Schools and Nether Currie Primary School were generally supportive. Almost all parents, children

and other stakeholders affected by the catchment area changes in Currie High School and Currie Primary School were not positive. A significant number of respondents across all schools were concerned about the impact of increased traffic on safety, congestion, and the separation of siblings across primary and secondary schools if the proposals are implemented.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The authority believe that the proposed changes will allow them to accommodate a growing population of children and young people in the area which has resulted from new housing developments and a general increase in school age population. The growth is predicted to continue year on year. An analysis by the council suggests that:

- Currie Primary School will require 22 classes by 2024.
- Nether Currie Primary School has capacity to support additional demand.
- Currie Primary School and Dean Park Primary School would need new accommodation due to new housing development if the council does not take action.
- The proposal to change catchment areas would mean new accommodation would only be required at Dean Park Primary School.
- The proposal would align school catchment boundaries with Community Council Boundaries.

Given the above, the proposal would provide an educational benefit in the longer term because of the more efficient use of existing school buildings. It would ensure that all schools in the area affected would be working at full capacity, and able to accommodate the projected community need going forward. A few stakeholders questioned the accuracy of the figures used by the council to predict pupil growth resulting from the new housing estates being built. Educational benefits are subject to these figures being correct.

Aligning school catchment areas with Community Council Boundaries has the potential to facilitate community planning, and strengthen further the communities sense of belonging.

Attainment and achievement in all schools are broadly similar as evidence by data provided by the council.

3.2 Children, young people and parents of Balerno High School and Dean Park Primary School appreciate the benefits of the proposal. Dean Park Primary School will have new accommodation that will enhance the current learning space. Balerno High School will have an increased school population which has the potential for them to offer a broader curriculum with more choice. Young people will also have a larger social group to develop their social and emotional skills.

Children and parents in Currie Primary School whose children will be re-aligned with Dean Park Primary School and Balerno High School have significant concerns that:

The journey to school is longer and entails crossing a busy main road which may place their children at increased risk. Parents are more likely to drive their children to school which will increase congestion on Lanark Road and Balerno village. The council need to ensure that safe routes to school are available for children, taking account of their age, and physical wellbeing.

Siblings will be separated which will fracture family cohesion, and make parental engagement in their child's education more difficult because their children may be in different primary and or secondary schools. The council need to consider the possible negative impact of siblings being educated in different schools, and how they might minimise these effects.

Parents feel that their children's connections with the Currie community will be diluted and this will affect long term friendships for their children and wider family relationships. Currently, these families use facilities in Currie for shopping, out of school leisure activities, and health services. They have a strong identity with the Currie community.

Children, parents and other stakeholders from Nether Currie Primary School can see the advantages of the proposed changes. Class sizes will be more consistent across stages, and more opportunities for working in groups, and socialising with a wider range of children will be afforded by the bigger class sizes.

4. Summary

The council's proposals are of educational benefit in the long term. The proposed changes will complement any future regeneration and economic growth by better aligning mainstream schools to potential housing developments and existing growth in the school aged population. More efficient use of the school estate will result from the proposals. In its final consultation report, the council will need to indicate how it plans to address the issue of siblings being educated in different schools, the possible risks to children walking to and from school along a busy road, the congestion concerns raised by stakeholders in both the Currie and Balerno communities, and the accuracy of figures used to predict the increased number of pupils requiring education generated from the new estates.

**HM Inspectors
January 2019**