Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Argyll and Bute Council to rezone the catchment area of Dalmally Primary School.

October 2024

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 Argyll and Bute Council to rezone the catchment area of Dalmally Primary 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' 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 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 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 17 September 2024 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 Dalmally Primary School and Crianlarich Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The council conducted a public consultation on the proposal from 26 August to 4 October 2024, in line with statutory requirements. Copies of the proposal document were sent to parents and relevant stakeholders. A public meeting was held at Dalmally Primary School on 17 September 2024, which no members of the public attended. The council received no responses to the proposal through their online platform or by post. Council officers met with children at Dalmally and Crianlarich Primary Schools to gather their views. At these meetings children were positive about having new children at their school. They stated they want to go to school with their friends and siblings. Children at both schools think that choice is important. Children at Dalmally

© Crown Copyright

Primary School were worried that their school would become too large and would need more teachers. Children at Crianlarich Primary School were concerned that there would be less children at their school. They were also concerned about the additional transport costs for parents.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council propose to rezone the catchment area, so that children living in the Bridge of Orchy area will attend Dalmally Primary School. Under the current arrangements, parents can choose Crianlarich Primary School, which is in Stirling Council, or Dalmally Primary School. Dalmally Primary School has a current roll of 26. Crianlarich Primary School roll is 23, six of whom are from Bridge of Orchy. In their proposal, the council have stated that children currently attending Crianlarich Primary School will continue to have their transport costs met. In its statement on the educational benefits of the proposal, the council has highlighted the potential for an increased school roll at Dalmally Primary School. They state that this will bring increased opportunities for personal and social development and add to the diversity, strength and vibrancy of the school. HM Inspectors agree with the educational benefits outlined by the council. The rezoning of the catchment area has the potential to ensure a stable school roll for Dalmally Primary School. The school also has the capacity to accommodate the projected numbers of children who may wish to attend.

3.2 HM Inspectors met with children, parents and staff at Dalmally and Crianlarich Primary Schools. The majority of children at Dalmally Primary School, who met with HM Inspectors, are in favour of the proposal. They are proud of their school and ready to welcome new children. Children think that it is important that friends can go to school together. A few children do not agree with the proposal. They are concerned that new children will make the school larger. A few children think it is important that they and their parents continue to have a choice about which school they attend.

3.3 Parents who met with HM Inspectors do not agree with the proposal. They want to continue to have a choice of the most appropriate school for their child and for transport costs to be met. In parts of the rezoned area, the journey to Dalmally Primary School is longer than the journey to Crianlarich Primary School, impacting on the length of the child's day. Parents are also concerned about the impact of this decision on the most disadvantaged in their community. For example, parents who do not have their own transport. Parents feel that their community crosses both council boundaries and would like to see more collaborative working between the two councils. They think this is important to help keep families living in the area. Parents agree that the proposal has the potential to protect the school roll at Dalmally Primary School. However, they do not wish to protect one school at the expense of another.

3.4 Staff at Dalmally Primary School agree with the proposal. They think that a number of families from Bridge of Orchy already attend Dalmally Primary School and the impact of the proposal will be minimal. They are confident that they can accommodate any children who wish to attend. Staff also see the benefit to Dalmally Primary School of a wider catchment area, which has the potential to increase the school roll. They believe that this helps protect resources at the school. However, staff at Crianlarich Primary School are concerned that the proposal may reduce their already small school roll.

© Crown Copyright

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree with the proposal to rezone the catchment area of Dalmally Primary School. Dalmally Primary School has the capacity to accommodate the projected increased numbers. Children are enthusiastic to have new peers to play and learn with. If this proposal is agreed by Argyll and Bute Council, stakeholders would appreciate Argyll and Bute Council working closely with Stirling Council to address their concerns. These include the potential impact on any disadvantaged families living in the Bridge of Orchy area, the importance of choice and the potential additional travel time for children.

HM Inspectors
October 2024

© Crown Copyright