

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to change the catchment boundary between Inverlochry Primary School and Lundavra Primary School.

1. Introduction

1.1 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 The Highland Council's proposal to change the catchment boundary between Inverlochry Primary School and Lundavra 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' 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of Inverlochry Primary School and Lundavra Primary 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 site of Inverlochry Primary School and Lundavra Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 The Highland Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 6 February 2017 until 23 March 2017. The proposal paper was published on the council website and made available at Inverloch Primary School, Lundavra Primary School, Fort William Library, and the Area Care and Learning Office at Camaghael Hostel. A public meeting was held on 8 March 2017. No members of the public attended. The council received eight written responses to its proposal. All of these responses were from pupil council members from Inverloch Primary School and Lundavra Primary School. Each of the responses indicated support for the proposal. The key reasons given for supporting the proposal were that, as a result of the proposal, children would be able to walk safely to school without crossing the busy A82 and that friendship groups of children living in the same housing development would not be split.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The council has set out a reasonable case for the proposal to change the catchment boundary between Inverloch Primary School and Lundavra Primary School. In arriving at its proposal it gave good consideration to pupil safety. As a result of the proposal, children would be able to walk safely to Inverloch Primary School without the need to cross a busy road. The proposal also addresses an anomaly created by new housing developments. All properties within the new development would now be within a single catchment area. The revised boundary is more in line with local developments and landmarks. School transport is not a relevant consideration as both schools are within the statutory walking distance of the catchment boundary.

3.2 All parents, staff and children from Inverloch Primary School and Lundavra Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. In terms of space and teaching staff, Inverloch Primary School has the capacity to accommodate increased numbers. Inverloch Primary School is close to the new housing development thereby encouraging children to walk to school. As a result, parents would incur less expense in terms of fuel costs or bus fares. Children in both schools strongly supported the proposal on the basis that the journey to school would be shorter, avoiding busy roads which would make it safer for walking to school. In addition, opportunities to mix with and socialise with friends from the same housing development and access to after-school activities would be improved.

4. Summary

The council's proposal is of clear educational benefit. The proposal addresses an anomaly created by new housing developments. All properties within the new development will be within a single catchment area. The safety of children walking to school would be improved.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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