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**Report to: People Committee**

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**Date of Meeting: 14 March 2019**

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**Subject: Consultation on amending the Schools Admissions Policy**

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**Report by: Chief Education Officer**

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### **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 This paper provides a report on the outcome of the consultation that was undertaken on amending the schools admission policy to change the policy for denominational primary schools.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

It is recommended that the People Committee:

- 2.1 Notes that the majority of people who responded to the consultation expressed support for the proposed change in the admissions policy.
- 2.2 Notes that Education Scotland concluded that the proposed change would have educational benefits.
- 2.3 Agrees to change the admissions policy for Roman Catholic primary schools. The new policy is: Children whose parents can demonstrate affiliation to the Roman Catholic church, by means of a baptismal certificate, and who live in the geographical catchment area, are entitled to enrol in the school.

Parents who are not entitled to automatic admission can apply via the placing request mechanism.

- 2.4 Agrees that changes to the admissions policy should only apply to children who do not currently attend either school or the siblings of children who currently attend either school.

### **3.0 Considerations**

- 3.1 The consultation process took place during November and December 2018. The consultation document was published on Clackmannanshire Council's website where interested parties were invited to either complete an online questionnaire or provide comments directly to the Council via e-mail or by submitting a paper copy of the questionnaire which was available in the schools and other Council offices.

Public Meetings were held in the two Roman Catholic primary schools, which were open to all parents from across the Council area. Copies of the consultation were sent to Stirling Council as Roman Catholic Secondary School provision for Clackmannanshire is provided at St Modans High in Stirling. Copies were also sent to the Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Dunkeld. Copies were also sent to all schools and Parent Councils. Schools were asked in particular to ensure that nursery parents were alerted to the consultation.

- 3.2 The Catholic Church was represented at the two public meetings, by Fr Freyne and Canon Harty. The Church representatives advised that the church had no opposition to the change in the admissions policy. The other attendees at the meetings also advised that they had no objection to the changes in the policy.
- 3.3 Consultation also took place with the parents of both St Mungo's and St Bernadette's RCPS as well as the pupils. In all cases, they were supportive of the change. They expressed concerns over admission to St Modan's High in Stirling, but this is a matter for Stirling Council
- 3.4 Twenty one responses were received to the online consultation. 14 of these agreed with the change and 7 disagreed. 6 out of the 7 who disagreed advised that they had a child currently attending a Clackmannanshire school. Most of the people who disagreed with the change made comments around issues which are outwith the control of Clackmannanshire Council namely issues concerning the principle of having denominational schools. A summary of the responses is contained in Appendix 1
- 3.5 As part of the consultation process, Education Scotland attended one of the public meetings, received a report from the Council on the outcome of the consultation and then met separately with parents, staff and pupils of both St Mungo's and St Bernadettes RCPS. Education Scotland submitted a written report on the outcome of their findings following their meetings. They conclude that the proposed change has a number of educational benefits for children as it will reduce the risk of oversubscription of the schools and demonstrate best value through making effective use of its school estate. It also enables the Council to meet its legislative requirements in relation to denominational education.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications

#### **5.0 Sustainability Implications**

- 5.1 Implementation of this policy will allow the Council to manage the admission to denominational schools in the same way as it manages admissions to non denominational schools therefore reducing the risk of capacity/ accommodation pressures on schools.

#### **6.0 Exempt Reports**

- 6.1 Is the report exempt? No

#### **7.0 Declarations**

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

(1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box )

Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all

Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life

Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential

Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish

The Council is effective, efficient and recognised for excellence

(2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

Schools Admissions policy

**8.0 Equalities Impact**

8.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?

Yes  No

**9.0 Legality**

The consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

**10.0 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Responses received to online consultation on proposed changes to school admissions policy

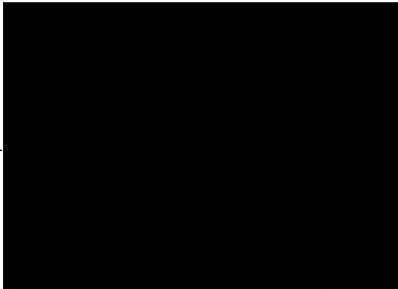
Appendix 2: Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Clackmannanshire Council to change the admissions policy for denominational schools in Clackmannanshire effective from August 2019

**11.0 Background Papers**

**Author(s)**

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Michael Boyle	Improving Outcomes Business Manager	01259 452454

Approved by

<b>NAME</b>	<b>DESIGNATION</b>	<b>SIGNATURE</b>
Anne M Pearson	Chief Education Officer	
Fiona McOmish	Strategic Director (People)	

**Responses received to online consultation on proposed changes to school admissions policy**

Do you agree with the proposed change in the policy?	Do you have any further comments on this proposal?	Submitted Date
Agree		2018-11-06 14:59:57
Agree		2018-11-06 18:36:58
Agree	<p>This is a long overdue change and should have been implemented a while ago. I do not think the proposal is very clear though. I presume this change means RC baptised children will automatically be enrolled in an RC school, therefore if they want to go to a non denomination school then subsequently they will need to put in a placing request for this.</p> <p>If this does not happen, then the council are been blatantly prejudiced and are saying RC children have a place at either a RC school or their local primary, whereas non RC children only have a place at their local primary.</p> <p>Following on from this, I presume a similar policy will be put in place for St Modans high school?</p>	2018-11-07 13:00:59
Agree		2018-11-07 13:13:42
Agree	No	2018-11-07 14:30:26
Agree	No	2018-11-07 14:31:00
Agree		2018-11-08 07:56:44
Agree	I would like to see all schools in Clacks become non-dom schools. I do not believe that segregating one religious group from others is right, education is the priority and giving one religious group preferential treatment is wrong.	2018-11-08 10:18:04
Agree		2018-11-13 11:48:28
Agree		2018-11-14 22:46:25
Agree	I would be interested to know how many non RC pupils attend denominational primaries therefore inflating the need for denominational schools	2018-11-14 23:22:46
Agree		2018-11-16 13:19:33
Agree	I would have assumed this was already the policy. I thought children would also have to be regural church goers as well.	2018-11-19 19:26:01
Agree		2018-11-23 11:19:06

Disagree	All children should attend their own catchment school wherever it is. Having attended a RC primary school myself I feel that children should not be divided because of RC religion. This only causes problems between other children.	2018-11-07 18:27:31
Disagree	We live in the 21st century and there should be no denominational schools of any kind that are council funded. If parents want their children to have a particular education they should pay for it out their own pocket, it shouldn't be paid for by tax payers. Any particular religious teachings should be taught at home and at church - school should be a place where children learn about all religions in a non-biased way to allow them to understand and accept the beliefs of the different religions of the world. Our society is divided enough - schools should be a place to eradicate these divides, not actively promote differences between friends and neighbours.	2018-11-07 23:06:18
Disagree	I am concerned that by limiting the intake of children into the schools, the end result will be that the dwindling numbers will result in the closure of the Catholic primary schools. Or the school operating on very small numbers resulting in composite classes spread over several year groups in order to save staff salary costs. The combination of St Mungos Primary being moved longer term to Alloa Academy and now this proposal suggests that the council are aiming to cut right back on expenditure for Catholic primary schools.	2018-11-09 20:23:04
Disagree	I think it is wrong people who live in tullibody don't get their child into abercromby because off catchment area, but people from Alloa Alva etc if catholic get place no problem i am non religious placing requests from residents in tullibody should get first refusal before people from other areas because of religion .	2018-11-10 11:39:08
Disagree	No other segregation is allowed based on ethnicity, gender etc so why should it be allowed with religion	2018-11-14 22:47:40
Disagree	Think couldn't matter what religion u are should be able to attend any school	2018-11-14 23:17:26
Disagree		2018-11-14 23:22:48

## **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Clackmannanshire Council to change the admissions policy for denominational schools in Clackmannanshire effective from August 2019.**

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 Clackmannanshire Council's proposal to change the admissions policy for denominational schools in Clackmannanshire. 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 Clackmannanshire; 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 20 November 2018 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 St Bernadette's Roman Catholic Primary School (RCPS) and St Mungo's RCPS, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 2 November until 14 December 2018. Public meetings were held on 20 November and 6 December 2018. These meetings were not well attended. There were no objections to the proposal. The council posted the consultation document on its website.

Interested parties were invited to comment. Copies were also sent to all Clackmannanshire schools and Parent Councils with paper copies of the proposal made available in schools and public offices. Copies of the consultation were sent to Stirling Council as Roman Catholic Secondary School provision for Clackmannanshire is provided at St Modan's High School in Stirling. Copies were also sent to the Bishop of Dunkeld and the Catholic Church representative for Clackmannanshire Council.

2.3 The council received 21 responses to the proposal. Of these 14 were supportive. The majority of positive respondents did not include any further comment as to why they were supportive. Six out of the seven respondents who did not support the proposal had a child currently attending a Clackmannanshire school. The main area of objection raised was in regard to the existence of denominational schools and the potential for segregation based on religious grounds.

2.4 No formal, written response was received by the Diocese Catholic Church. All other Parent Councils in the two council areas were invited to take part in the consultation but chose not to submit any comments.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 It is proposed that the council's Admissions Policy is changed, so that pupils who can demonstrate affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church by means of a baptismal certificate would remain entitled to enrol at their catchment denominational school, but that all other pupils would be required to submit a placing request. In 2015-16 school years, St Bernadette's RCPS did not have sufficient capacity to accommodate Roman Catholic children who wished to enrol during the academic year. To meet its legal obligations, the council provided transport to St Mungo's RCPS in Alloa. This meant children had to attend a school outside the community in which they were living. St Bernadette's RCPS will move into Tullibody South Campus in August 2019. The new school will have the same number of classrooms as the current school. As a new school, St Bernadette's RCPS may be attractive to parents which may result in the demand exceeding the number of places available. The current admissions policy allows any child living in Tullibody, Menstrie or Alva, irrespective of their denomination, to attend St Bernadette's RCPS. The new St Bernadette's RCPS is not designed to accommodate such a broad catchment. The proposed changes will allow the council to better fulfil its duty to provide education to children and young people who are baptised into the Roman Catholic Church in a denominational school, including when a denominational school is oversubscribed.

3.2 The proposal has a number of educational benefits for children. The council's proposal, if it proceeds, would reduce the risk of over subscription and resulting high occupancy in denominational primary schools. It will also enable the council to meet its legislative requirements in relation to denominational education and potentially demonstrate best value through making effective use of its existing school estate as a whole. St Bernadette's RCPS will have sufficient capacity to accommodate Roman Catholic children who wished to enrol during the academic year. A more systematic approach to placing requests will be introduced.

3.3 Management, support and teaching staff from St Bernadette's RCPS and St Mungo's RCPS who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They saw the proposed changes in policy as bringing Clackmannanshire into line with other Scottish local authorities. They welcomed the introduction of a more systematic approach to placing requests. Staff at both schools did not see the proposed change in policy having a negative impact on themselves, children or parents. They were confident both schools had capacity to accommodate others. However, they were concerned that the need to complete a placing request might act as an additional barrier for parents considering their school.

3.4 The small number of parents from both St Bernadette's RCPS and St Mungo's RCPS who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They agreed that where capacity issues arose, that children baptised into the Catholic faith should be given priority when applying for places at the denominational schools. They were reassured that existing pupils and their siblings would be able to attend St Bernadette's RCPS and St Mungo's RCPS. However, they were concerned that the inclusive ethos that both schools currently enjoy might be compromised if children of other faiths are not admitted. Representatives from St Mungo's RCPS Parent Council shared a concern that completion of a placing request might act as an additional barrier for those families for which English is not their first language.

3.5 Children from both St Bernadette's RCPS and St Mungo's RCPS who met with HM Inspectors agreed that where demand exceeded capacity there was a case for prioritising in favour of children baptised into the Catholic faith. However, they expressed the desire that their schools should be open and welcoming to all children irrespective of faith. They saw this as a major strength in their existing schools.

3.6 The representative from the Diocese of Dunkeld who met with HM Inspectors was supportive of the proposal. He recognised the proposal brings Clackmannanshire into line with other Scottish authorities. However, he expressed the need to retain the inclusive, open to all, welcoming nature that currently exists in both denominational schools.

## 4. Summary

Overall, the council's proposal is of educational benefit. The council's proposal, if it proceeds, would reduce the risk of over subscription and resulting high occupancy in denominational primary schools. It will also enable the council to meet its legislative requirements in relation to denominational education. St Bernadette's RCPS and St Mungo's RCPS will have sufficient capacity to accommodate Roman Catholic children who wished to enrol during the academic year. A more systematic approach to placing requests will be introduced.

**HM Inspectors  
January 2019**