

Village schools public consultation document

Proposal: changes to the Policy on Admission and Pupil Placement in Mainstream Schools in relation to the transition from village primary schools (Inverkip, Kilmacolm and Wemyss Bay) to secondary schools.

Why are we consulting?

In January 2020 the Inverclyde Council Education and Communities Committee approved a proposal to undertake a statutory public consultation on the current policy for admission to mainstream secondary schools from village primary schools. Village primary schools in Inverclyde are Inverkip Primary, Kilmacolm Primary and Wemyss Bay Primary. Currently pupils attending these schools have the choice at primary 7 of seeking admission to either the non-denominational or denominational high school assigned to their address. This is because some parents choose to send their children to the local non-denominational primary school because of the travelling distance to their nearest denominational primary school. This option is only available to village schools and is not an option given to pupils attending other schools in Inverclyde.

St. Columba's High School is currently oversubscribed and entry to the school needs to be managed by the Education Authority. A consequence of the policy currently in place in relation to village schools is that if the school becomes oversubscribed for pupils within its catchment area, there is a risk that pupils who have a Certificate of Baptism into the Roman Catholic faith, or pupils from the villages who have attended the associated denominational primary school for their catchment area may not get in. During a recent pre-consultation process some parents felt that the current policy is unfair.

If the proposals outlined in this paper are agreed then transition arrangements will be put in place for those affected by any changes to the policy. The proposed transition arrangements are fully outlined in the consultation paper.

The consultation process

Where a council brings forward proposals to change the admissions policy for schools there is a requirement to carry out a public consultation within the statutory framework defined by the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, amended through the enactment of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

As part of this process consultation papers have been distributed to a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties including:

- The Parent Councils of affected schools
- The parents/carers of the pupils at the affected schools
- Parents whose children are expected to attend the affected schools within 2 years of publication of the proposal document
- Pupils (where they are considered to be of suitable age and maturity)
- Council employees at the affected schools



- Trade Union representatives
- Church representatives
- Education Scotland
- Inverclyde councillors
- Local Members of Parliament and local members of Scottish Parliament
- General public (Inverclyde)
- Community Councils

The statutory consultation document is available at:

- All early years establishments in Inverclyde (including those working in partnership with the council)
- All primary schools associated with Inverclyde Academy, St. Columba's High School, Port Glasgow High School and St. Stephen's High School
- Inverclyde Council education services, Wallace Place, Greenock
- Inverclyde Council customer service centre, Clyde Square, Greenock
- All public libraries
- Online at <https://inverclyde.citizenspace.com/schools/village-schools>

The indicative timetable for the consultation is as per the table below:

Date	Action
13 February 2020	Start of the statutory consultation period
25 February 2020	Public meeting Inverclyde Academy
26 February 2020	Public Meeting St. Columba's High School
27 February 2020	Public Meeting PGHS Community Campus
25 March 2020	End of the statutory consultation period
27 March 2020	Paperwork sent to Education Scotland
May/June 2020	Report to Inverclyde Council's education and communities committee
1 August 2020	Decision implemented if agreed by Inverclyde Council's education and communities committee.

Proposed changes to the Policy on Admission and Pupil Placement in Mainstream Schools to be taken forward to statutory consultation.

Inverclyde Council propose to consult on 2 changes to the Policy on Admission and Pupil Placement in Mainstream Schools.

Change 1 is a change to the wording of Section B paragraph 2.4 (page 4) of the current policy in relation to arrangements for transferring from primary to secondary school.

The policy currently reads:

There are no denominational primary schools in Quarriers Village, Kilmacolm, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay. Parents often choose to send their children to the local non-denominational primary school because of the travelling distance to their nearest denominational primary school. In such circumstances the following admission arrangements will apply:

- children whose parents have selected to send their child to the non-denominational school serving the defined catchment area assigned to their address rather than to their assigned denominational primary school because of travelling distance, will have the choice at primary 7 of seeking admission to either the non-denominational or denominational school assigned to their address. The Council's policy in respect of school transport will apply.

It is proposed to change the policy to:

There are no denominational primary schools in Quarriers Village, Kilmacolm, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay. Parents often choose to send their children to the local non-denominational primary school because of the travelling distance to their nearest denominational primary school. In such circumstances the following admission arrangements will apply:

- Only those children:
 - (a) who before entry to primary school, have a Certificate of Baptism into the Roman Catholic faith; and
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 - (b) whose parents have chosen, because of travelling distance to send to the non-denominational primary school which serves the defined catchment area assigned to their address (rather than to the assigned denominational primary school);
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- will have the entitlement of admission, without the necessity of a placing request, to the catchment denominational secondary school. As with all schools, this entitlement is subject to there being space at the specified school. The Council's policy in respect of school transport will always apply.

Change 2 is a change to the wording of Section C paragraph 1 (page 4/5) of the current policy in relation to the oversubscription of schools

The policy currently reads:

If a school is oversubscribed and cannot take pupils within the defined catchment area and chosen denomination then places will be granted in the following order:

1. A child who has a medical condition or additional support needs, who requires facilities or support only available in the requested school.
2. Those cases where a brother or sister attends the school and will continue in this school during the session.
3. In the case of denominational schools: pupils within the catchment area who can

demonstrate an affinity with the religious ethos of the school and can provide documentary evidence of this in the form of a Certificate of Baptism into the Roman Catholic faith.

4. Distance of home address from the chosen school.

It is proposed to change the policy to:

If a school is oversubscribed and cannot take pupils within the defined catchment area and chosen denomination then places will be granted in the following order:

1. A child who has a medical condition or additional support needs, who requires facilities or support only available in the requested school.
2. Those cases where a brother or sister attends the school and will continue in this school during the session.
3. In the case of denominational schools: pupils within the catchment area who can demonstrate an affinity with the religious ethos of the school and can provide documentary evidence of this in the form of a Certificate of Baptism into the Roman Catholic faith.
4. **In the case of a denominational secondary school which has Kilmacolm, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay (village schools) as an associated school: priority will be given to those who have attended the denominational school associated with that secondary school.**
5. Distance of home address from the chosen school.

Proposed transition arrangements if the decision is taken to amend the policy

If the changes are agreed then arrangements for transition will have to be put into place. If change 1 is put in place then the following transition arrangements are proposed:-

- that those pupils at the village schools with siblings already at St. Columba's are allocated a place at St. Columba's, providing the pupil's older sibling will be a pupil of St Columba's at the time of the pupil's entrance to S1.
- that there does need to be a cut-off date for Certificates of Baptism for village schools and that it is reasonable for this to be prior to the date the child started primary school. This is because a Certificate of Baptism is viewed by the Catholic Church as showing a recognised and accepted testament of belonging to the Catholic Church.

If change 2 is agreed then the following transition arrangements are proposed:

- any child who is in attendance or has enrolled at the village schools prior to the date the decision to change the Council's Policy on Admissions is made and who had a Certificate of Baptism prior to enrolment in P1 will be treated as attending an associated denominational school during the transition period. This is because the parents who chose to send their child to a village school rather than the catchment denominational school, did so in the expectation that they would have equal rights to a denominational secondary education.
- The Education Service will remain sensitive to the concerns parents may have during the transition period and will make every effort where possible to ensure that those with a Certificate of Baptism (obtained before entry to school) who live within the catchment area can access the denominational secondary school associated with their catchment area.

Educational benefits statement for the proposal

It is the duty of local authorities to make sure that every child whose education they are responsible for is able to access an “adequate and efficient” education. This includes managing the number of pupils attending each school through the annual yearly intake. Whilst numbers in all school need to be managed this change to policy particularly affects secondary schools. In secondary schools numbers attending a school have to be managed for a variety of different reasons including the following:

- Providing the curriculum entitlement for each pupil within the school and ensuring appropriate pupil choice
- Ensuring that specialist rooms are available to teach practical subjects or for specific purposes
- Ensuring that class sizes are not exceeded
- Ensuring that the social areas are adequate to meet the needs of the pupils who attend the school
- Ensuring that the school is safe

Inverclyde Council has a policy on admissions and placing requests for mainstream schools. If a local authority does not manage pupil numbers in its schools then this would have a significant effect on the delivery of the curriculum, educational attainment and safety for those in attendance at the school.

Every pupil is entitled to a Broad General Education up until the end of S3 and then progresses onto the senior phase of their education. Each school works with its community to design its curriculum and develops a rationale for the curriculum it delivers. If a secondary school becomes oversubscribed then the timetable needs to be adapted to cope with the additional pressure. This means that the school may not be able to meet the requirements of its curriculum rationale and the needs of the pupils attending the school. This could mean the school being able to provide fewer periods of a particular subject or delivering subjects in a different way e.g. Drama as part of the English curriculum. It is therefore educationally beneficial for a school to control numbers so that the full entitlement to the agreed curriculum is available for pupils who attend the school.

If the curriculum is restricted and there are issues with the availability of teachers and rooms, then there may be a reduction in pupil pathways through the senior phase. This could mean that because classes are full, subject choices become restricted or limited to pupils in the senior phase of education. This could mean that the school curriculum choices for subjects become less flexible and pupils increasingly do not get their first choice of subject. This reduces personalisation and choice for pupils which is an entitlement of the Curriculum for Excellence.

As a school become increasingly full, then it becomes more difficult to timetable for specialist subject areas, e.g. drama, music, science, technical etc. This can mean that specialist or practical subjects need to be taught in a room not specifically intended for this purpose. This could mean for instance that some science lessons would not be taught in a lab. If specialist rooms are not available then choices of subjects for pupils could be restricted and as a result, the quality of the learning experience could be diminished. The flexibility of use rooms for smaller classes to deliver Advanced Highers would be restricted and pupils requiring smaller group work for additional support could also be affected.

Pupils use a variety of social areas within a school (including lunch halls) and ensuring adequate space is available for those attending the school helps to promote and maintain good relationships and appropriate discipline within the school. Overcrowding social areas means that it is more difficult to ensure discipline and leads to pupils feeling less comfortable in their environment. To achieve the best possible education for young people, pupils should feel safe and secure in their environment and discipline should be maintained.

Every address in Inverclyde is assigned to 2 school catchment areas (a non-denominational school and a denominational school). Parents in Inverclyde have the choice on entry to primary school if they wish to pursue a denominational or non-denominational education within their catchment area. Whilst some parents make placing requests to schools outwith the catchment area in which they live, the majority do not and choose to send their child to the catchment school for their chosen denomination. If this option is not available (because a school is full) then this is disruptive to a child's education. This is because if a catchment place is not available in the pupil's chosen denomination, then a child would have to travel further to attend school and could be removed from their friends and peers within their community. Families would also find it harder to engage with schools e.g. school events and parents evenings because of distance. It is not educationally beneficial to remove children from their peer group and separate them from the community in which they live if this has not been their choice.

Transition between primary and secondary schools is an important time for youngsters and can cause some anxiety. If a child within the catchment area who rightly expect to attend a school along with their peer group is denied a place at that school because the school is full then this may cause unnecessary stress and anxiety for that child.

There is currently a pressure on pupil numbers at St. Columba's High School in Gourock. The current policy for the village primary schools associated with St. Columba's High School (Inverkip and Wemyss Bay) allows parents to choose denomination at the point of transition from P7 to S1. This is because of the distance to the nearest denominational primary school. This particular arrangement is not available elsewhere in Inverclyde where pupils have to choose the denominational pathway for pupils in P1. The only exception to this is pupils attending Kilmacolm primary school which is also classed as a village school. A consequence of the current policy is that it is very difficult for the authority to predict numbers attending St. Columba's High School each year.

As numbers of pupils in the catchment area increase, there could be instances in the future where pupils within the catchment area who have attended the associated denominational schools would not be allocated a place because the school is full. If this were the case then this would mean that those pupils would be separated from their peer group and placed in a school further away outside their catchment area. If this situation was to occur then it would cause stress and anxiety for families who quite rightly wish their child to attend their catchment school for their chosen denomination with their friends. Whilst the education authority will always make every effort to accommodate such cases, in reality this may mean that to do so may result in a further increase in the pressure on the St. Columba's School roll.