

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Proposed changes to the arrangements for admissions and the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary in respect of all East Renfrewshire Roman Catholic and non-denominational primary and secondary schools effective from January 2017



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Consultation summary

East Renfrewshire Council (ERC) has launched a public consultation for interested individuals and groups to have their say on proposed changes to admissions arrangements for its primary and secondary schools*.

We are proposing to put in place a single set of admissions criteria for our Roman Catholic and non-denominational schools to ensure that we continue to meet the high demand for places from our residents across our entire school estate, but in particular those seeking a place at a Roman Catholic school.

This is a summary of the key issues within the full formal consultation document. Please note that you can access the full consultation document either online or as a hard copy. How to do this is set out on page six of this leaflet.

*Calderwood Lodge Primary School, which is a Jewish faith school, has a different set of admissions arrangements and there are no plans to change these as part of this consultation.

Introduction

ERC has a reputation as Scotland's leading local authority for the provision of consistently high quality education for children and young people.

Because of this success there is a high demand for places in our schools and in recent years this has increased significantly.

In particular we have seen a significant increase in demand for places in schools within the east of the council area - especially within the following Roman Catholic schools:

- Our Lady of the Missions (OLM) Primary School
- St Cadoc's Primary School
- St Joseph's Primary School
- St Ninian's High School

The ERC area now has the highest proportion of 10 – 14 year olds in the country and the number of 0 -15 year-olds in our area is the second highest proportion anywhere in Scotland.

Meanwhile rates of families moving into East Renfrewshire continue to grow and our population as a whole is expected to grow by a further 5.4 per cent by 2025.

We have already taken steps to address increased demand at our schools by creating additional accommodation and increasing teacher numbers and classes where necessary to manage peak periods.

We are also in the process of investing £77.6 million in our education estate over the next three years to provide even more new and extended nursery and school accommodation. This includes the £18 million faith schools' joint campus in Newton Mearns due for completion in 2017 which will see the opening of a new Roman Catholic primary school - St Clare's - to alleviate pressure currently being experienced at St Cadoc's.

However despite these significant measures, the rate at which demand is now increasing means these actions will still not provide the capacity needed to meet the appetite for Roman Catholic school places in future years.

Many of these schools are in fact either at or approaching full capacity.

We are therefore consulting on new admissions arrangements which will provide a fair and equitable solution to these issues and ensure availability of Roman Catholic places for children whose families want them to be educated in their Roman Catholic faith environment.

These proposed new arrangements, together with some of the background and key drivers for change, are set out below.

The current situation

ERC has a number of legal requirements it must meet in terms of its school provision and admissions arrangements. These include:

1. The duty to provide sufficient places for its resident population
2. Maintaining Roman Catholic school provision
3. Every public school must be open to pupils of all denominations
4. The right of parents to express a preference for a particular school that they want their child to attend by submitting a placing request, which must be granted if places are available.

We operate a catchment policy where every address in the area is associated with a Roman Catholic and non-denominational primary and secondary school. This is referred to as the 'delineated catchment' i.e. the schools to which children from specific addresses can attend. In order to change sector or school from the 'delineated catchment school' a placing request must be made.

Placing requests will only be considered if there are places still available in the school after pupils from the 'delineated catchment' have been provided for.

What we have seen over the past few years, as more people move into the area and the population of school age children in East Renfrewshire grows, is an increase in 'delineated catchment demand' from our resident population – particularly for Roman Catholic schools in the east of East Renfrewshire.

This means that demand is now beginning to exceed the number of places available for our residents.

St Ninian's has historically been the ERC secondary school with the highest levels of demand both inside and outside of its catchment population. In 2010 – 11 the Council consulted with the public on revised arrangements for the delineated catchment for St Ninian's High School, which did alleviate the capacity issues at that time. However, demand for places at the school, and in particular for future years, has continued to increase.

Why is change necessary?

More and more ERC families are choosing a Roman Catholic school for their children and over recent years the number has increased by around one fifth in the east of the council's area.

Our data shows that in the east of the council area, where our capacity issues are being felt most strongly, there are in fact sufficient school spaces. However our Roman Catholic schools are now becoming oversubscribed.

In order to provide places for children in Roman Catholic schools during 2015 we have already had to create additional classes and this trend is continuing.

Our Lady of the Missions Primary School has been extended into four P1 classes to meet demand - making it by far the largest Roman Catholic primary school in Scotland. For the August 2016 intake we had to increase this further to five P1 classes. Should this trend continue it would present, amongst other things, a number of challenges in terms of physical space and the resources required to ensure the appropriate staff to pupil ratios.

Primary school intakes typically indicate the capacity required at secondary schools because children generally remain in either a Roman Catholic or non-denominational setting throughout their schooling.

If the current P1 intake for Roman Catholic schools continues at its current trajectory in the east of the council area - and all the signs are that it will - we will not have sufficient capacity in St Ninian's going forward to meet demand from our resident 'catchment' population under the current arrangements.

Another factor we must consider when looking for solutions to manage demand for places from our resident population is the fact that in some of our schools there is a sizeable percentage of pupils who live outwith the council area.

In St Ninian's for example 25 per cent of its school roll in 2015 was from outwith East Renfrewshire.

Until now we have always been able to accommodate our catchment pupils but for the first time this year (August 2016 S1 intake) we have had to re-direct a small number of pupils to other East Renfrewshire schools when their catchment school should have been St Ninian's.

As more families want a place at a Roman Catholic school for their children it is essential that we either create more capacity for Roman Catholic education or change admissions arrangements for our existing schools.

We also know we have space in our very high performing non-denominational schools in the east of the council area and as such we must seek to use all available capacity across our full school estate to achieve a fair and equitable solution and best value for the public purse.

The proposed way forward

We are proposing to change current admissions arrangements to give priority to Roman Catholic baptised children if they live in the school's catchment in the event that a Roman Catholic school is oversubscribed.

In cases of oversubscription children not of the Roman Catholic faith will therefore be offered a place in their local non-denominational catchment school.

It is important to stress that this policy will **only** be used in the event that the school is oversubscribed. However our analysis shows that we have and will continue to have sufficient places for East Renfrewshire Roman Catholic families.

Families of other faiths or no faith will still be able to apply for a place at a Roman Catholic school if they wish.

At times of peak demand in certain years there may only be a limited number of places available in high occupancy schools for children not of the Roman Catholic faith, however in other years we do anticipate that places will still be available.

The practice of requesting a baptismal certificate is not new in Scotland and is already a practice adopted by a number of Local Authorities.

Moving to this new model of admissions will ensure that we can continue to provide Roman Catholic baptised children with an education in their faith environment and also better use the available capacity across our entire school estate.

We will also be able to reduce the increasing reality of high occupancy rates at certain sites which is not optimal for either our pupils or teaching staff.

The proposed arrangements would also mean changes for pupils seeking a place at an ERC school if they live out with the Council area because placing request priority will be given to East Renfrewshire residents in all cases other than siblings.

In addition, we are also proposing to change the current order of placing request criteria to give greater priority to children already at an associated primary when applying for a S1 place. This is as opposed to the current arrangement which prioritises children who already have a sibling at the secondary school being applied for.

These proposed new arrangements would create a single set of admissions criteria for ERC primary and secondary schools regardless of denomination (with the exception of Calderwood Lodge). However, the new policy primarily affects those wishing a place at one of our Roman Catholic schools.

All pupils already at our Roman Catholic schools are unaffected by these proposals as we will honour all existing arrangements for children currently in all our schools. Temporary accommodation would be created at St Ninian's to accommodate children already in Primary 1 – 3 who are due to progress to St Ninian's for their senior education.

The proposed changes will only apply to new primary and secondary pupils from January 2017 onwards.

It is also important to stress that these proposed arrangements will see no changes to existing school catchment areas or re-zoning anywhere in ERC.

The proposed new priorities for placing requests are listed in full at the back of this summary.

Transport policy

The proposed new arrangements would mean a small change to the current transport policy in that any pupil admitted to a school through a placing request would not be entitled to Council provided transport except if their designated catchment school is oversubscribed and they would also qualify under home to school distance.

Tell us what you think

Our consultation on these proposed changes runs from 26th August 2016 to 10th October 2016.

The full consultation document contains more detail on the need for change and the various options considered by ERC and sets out why, after detailed analysis, we have arrived at our consultation proposal.

Your comments, views and feedback on our proposal is welcome. You are encouraged to respond using our online consultation; or alternatively a hard copy of the response proforma is attached to the full consultation document.

Hard copies of the full consultation document are available at the schools affected, local libraries or at the Council's Head Office, Eastwood Park, Rouken Glen Road, Giffnock, East Renfrewshire, G46 6UG and at the Council Offices, 211 Main Street, Barrhead, East Renfrewshire, G78 1SY.

An electronic version can also be accessed at the East Renfrewshire Council website www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/schoolconsultation

The link below provides more information about the consultation process including the respective roles and responsibilities of the local authority, Education Scotland and the Scottish Government; in particular how parents / carers can play their part.

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00492810.pdf>

Schools Affected

The schools affected by the proposals are:

- all East Renfrewshire primary and secondary schools
- St Angela's and St Vincent's primary schools in Glasgow City Council

Consultation meetings

During the consultation period we will hold two public meetings. All are welcome to attend to find out more about the proposed new admission arrangements.

These will be held at:

Carlibar Primary School, Barrhead at 19:00 on 21 September 2016
Eastwood Park Theatre, Giffnock at 19:00 on 28 September 2016

Over the course of the consultation period we will consult direct with a range of groups including:

- parents/ carers of all children/ pupils in the affected schools
- Parent Councils of the affected schools
- parents/ carers of any child(ren)/ pupil(s) expected to attend an affected school within the next 2 school years
- pupils of each affected school (in so far as the education authority considers them to be of a suitable age and maturity)
- school staff (teaching and otherwise) of each affected school
- trade unions representing staff employed in the affected schools
- the Catholic Church
- East Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership
- community councils
- local elected members
- local Members of Parliament and local Members of Scottish Parliament
- members of East Renfrewshire Council's Education Committee
- Glasgow City Council
- Education Scotland

The Proposed Order of Priorities for Granting Placing Requests to All Roman Catholic and Non-Denominational Primary and Secondary Schools Effective from January 2017.

Where the number of requests is greater than the number of places available, the priorities below are used to allocate places and are listed in order of priority:

1. The child is resident within the school's delineated catchment area.
2. In the case of a Roman Catholic school, the parent with whom the child resides is resident within the school's delineated catchment area and the child is a baptised Roman Catholic as evidenced by a baptismal certificate.
3. East Renfrewshire residents where the child has a medical condition, supported with evidence from a medical practitioner, and requires facilities or support available only in the requested school.
4. Non-East Renfrewshire residents where the child has a medical condition, supported with evidence from a medical practitioner, and requires facilities or support available only in the requested school.
5. East Renfrewshire residents: when applying for secondary schools children who attend a primary school associated with the secondary school according to the length of time at the associated primary. This means that pupils who have attended the school for the longest time will have the highest priority.
6. Non-East Renfrewshire residents: when applying for secondary schools children who attend a primary school associated with the secondary school according to the length of time at the associated primary. This means that pupils who have attended the school for the longest time will have the highest priority.
7. Those cases where a brother or sister attends the school and will continue in this school during the next session.
8. East Renfrewshire residents: the child is part of a single parent/carer family where it would be advantageous to the care and welfare of the child to attend the requested school. Please provide details with your application.
9. Non-East Renfrewshire residents: the child is part of a single parent/carer family where it would be advantageous to the care and welfare of the child to attend the requested school. Please provide details with your application.
10. East Renfrewshire residents with no other listed priority
11. Non-East Renfrewshire residents with no other listed priority.

Note: The criteria will be applied in the order shown above. If for any category the number of requests exceeds the number of places available, the next succeeding criteria will be used to prioritise these requests and so on until all priority criteria have been exhausted. If, after this process, two or more requests cannot be distinguished as having priority, then a ballot will be held to allocate the places available. This ballot will be organised by a senior education officer.



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