

Consultation on changes to the admissions policy for denominational schools in Clackmannanshire.

Report from Clackmannanshire Council on outcome of consultation.

The Proposal

Clackmannanshire Council are proposing to change the primary schools Admissions Policy is so that pupils that can demonstrate affiliation to the RC church by means of baptismal certificate, would remain entitled to enrol at their catchment denominational school in these circumstances, but all other pupils would be required to submit a placing request

It is proposed that the revised policy would take effect from school session 2019/20 but that the revised policy would not apply to children currently attending either of the two Roman Catholic Primary schools or siblings of children currently attending these schools.

Consultation Process

The consultation document was published on Clackmannanshire Council's website where interested parties were invited to either submit an online questionnaire (Appendix 1) 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 two Catholic schools which were open to 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 Bishop of Dunkeld in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland. Clackmannanshire is within Dunkeld diocese. They were also sent to the Vicar Episcopal for Education in the diocese, Canon Tom Shields, as well as the church Representative for Clackmannanshire Council, Father Mike Freyne. 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.

Consultation public meetings

The first public meeting was held at St Bernadette's Primary in Tullibody. In addition to the headteacher and officers from the Education Service, the only people who attended this meeting were the Catholic church representative for Clackmannanshire, the church representative on St Bernadette's Parent Council and a former teacher in the school who is a parishioner of St Bernadette's Church. An officer of Education Scotland was in attendance at this meeting. The Church representative, Father Freyne, advised that the church had no opposition to be charge in admission's policy. The other attendees at the meeting also advised that they had no objection to the changes in the policy.

The second public meeting was held at St Mungo's RC Primary in Alloa. In attendance were the church representative of the Parent Council, Canon Harty and the chair of St Mungo's Parent Council as well as the headteacher and officers of the Education Service. There were no objections to the proposed changes to the admissions policy from those present at the meeting.

The chair of the Parent Council advised that the feedback that she received from parents was that at the Council had given an undertaking that the charges to the admission. Parents were not concerned about the change. She felt that the parents who would be impacted were parents whose children were below school age and who had not considered which school they wish to send their children to. The officers of the Authority explained that the revised admissions policy was not intended to prevent non-Catholic

children attending the schools, but the Council reserved the right to manage the admissions through the placing request mechanism.

Consultation also took place with the parents of both St Mungo's and St Bernadette's 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.

Other responses to the Consultation

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.

The reasons stated for disagreeing are outline in the table below:

Respondent 1	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.
Respondent 2	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.
Respondent 3	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.
Respondent 4	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 .
Respondent 5	No other segregation is allowed based on ethnicity, gender etc so why should it be allowed with religion
Respondent 6	Think couldn't matter what religion u are should be able to attend any school

Council response to objections

The Council has a statutory duty to offer Catholic Education and the issue of whether or not people wish to have Catholic schools is not a matter devolved to Clackmannanshire Council.

The purpose of the consultation is not to limit the number of pupils enrolling in Catholic schools, but to more clearly define the priority for admission in the same way as exist for non denominational schools. Parents can choose to submit a placing request for any school, but all schools must have a catchment area

Education Scotland findings

Education Scotland visited both schools in January and met with staff, parents and pupils, they also reviewed the Council's proposal and consultation process prior to reporting on their findings . The conclusions of the Education Scotland report are:

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

A copy of the report from Education Scotland is contained in Appendix and can be found on their website.

Conclusions of consultation

Based on the feedback from the consultation process and the conclusions of the Education Scotland report, a report will be made to the meeting of the People Committee of Clackmannanshire Council on 14 March 2019 recommending acceptance of the change in the Admissions policy.