



**Clackmannanshire
Council**

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Education Service

Report Following Consultation on Review of Education Provision

**Ladywell Nursery School/
St Serf's Primary School**

January 2013

CLACKMANNANSHIRE COUNCIL: EDUCATION SERVICE

REPORT BY THE HEAD OF EDUCATION

NURSERY AND SCHOOL PROVISION LADYWELL NURSERY SCHOOL/ST SERF'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Education Sport and Leisure Committee of Clackmannanshire Council agreed to undertake formal consultation on the proposal to review the pre-school provision at Ladywell Nursery, with a view to change from a stand alone nursery to a nursery class within St Serf's Primary.
- 1.2 A consultation document on the proposal was circulated to all interested parties in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. A copy of the original consultation document is listed under Appendix 1. The consultation ran from 22nd October 2012 to 7th December 2012.
- 1.3 As part of the Council's consultation process the Education Service undertook the following activities:
 - meeting with staff and parent groups at Ladywell Nursery prior to the Council's meeting to explain the consultation process, timescales involved and the support provided by the local authority during this process;
 - circulation of the consultative document to all interested parties;
 - publicity regarding the public meetings through public notices, Clackmannanshire's website and letters to parents;
 - a public meeting held at St Serf's Primary School on 27th November 2012

2 CONSULTATION

- 2.1 A public meeting was held at St Serf's Primary School on 27th November 2012 to allow officers to explain the proposal and allow interested parties to ask questions regarding the proposal.
- 2.2 A total of 13 people attended the public meeting, including parents, staff, members of the local community and elected members from Clackmannanshire Council.
- 2.3 There were no written responses to the consultation.

3 SUMMARY OF POINTS RAISED DURING CONSULTATION

3.1 There were a number of questions asked. The questions sought were for further clarification and did not indicate opposition to the proposal.

3.2 A parent asked about the nursery children who are out of the St Serf's catchment area and queried whether they would then be able to transfer to the primary school without a placing request.

The Education Service noted that for some parents there may be an expectation that the transition from nursery to primary would include children from outwith the catchment area. Parents were advised that at the point of entry to the nursery that if a child lives outwith the catchment area, that they would still require a placing request to transfer to St Serf's. It was noted that there is legislation surrounding this.

3.3 A parent noted that the majority of the children in Ladywell Nursery are on placing requests and that there would therefore not be an 'ease of transition' for them.

Education Services noted that not every primary school has a nursery class and that very good transition planning is in place for each child. It was also noted that there is currently a review of the school estate and catchment boundaries could possibly change in future years but it could not be guaranteed.

3.4 A parent asked about any future plans to amalgamate schools within the Tullibody area.

Education Services clarified explicitly that this consultation is purely based on the proposal to merge Ladywell Nursery with St Serf's Primary to become a nursery class.

3.5 A parent noted that this is a positive proposal for everyone apart from placing request children.

Education Services re-iterated that if Ladywell Nursery was retained as a stand alone establishment, it would still be the same process for the children transferring to the school. It was noted that it could not be guaranteed that a child who attends the nursery class would automatically get a place in the school but that transition arrangement for other schools will continue.

3.6 A parent asked about the added responsibility on the St Serf's Headteacher.

Education Services noted that a staffing formula would be applied to take account of additional duties and any additional staffing would come from the Council.

3.7 A parent asked about possible additional fencing and queried whether this may change the boundaries.

The Headteacher noted that boundaries would not change but plans were in place to ensure easy and safe access between the buildings.

- 3.8 It was noted that the children in the primary are largely very positive about the idea of the merger. The Parent Council were also positive.
- 3.9 A parent asked about whether there would be a separate budget for the nursery class.

Education Services noted that there would be a separate budget, managed by the Headteacher.

4 HMIE REPORT AND CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 requires HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) to be involved in the formal consultation process.
- 4.2 As part of this process HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:
- 4.2.1. attendance at the public meeting held on Tuesday 27th November 2012 in connection with the council's proposals;
 - 4.2.2. 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;
 - 4.2.3. consideration of further representations made directly to HMIE on relevant educational aspects of the proposal;
 - 4.2.4. visits to the sites, including discussion with relevant consultees.
- 4.3 HMIE considered the likely effects of the proposal:
- for children and young people of the nursery and school;
 - for 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
 - benefits which the authority believes will result from implementation of the proposal and the Council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.
- 4.4 HMIE commentary on the consultation process
- 4.4.1 Parents at Ladywell Nursery School are positive about the merger and the proposed joint leadership of Ladywell Nursery School with St Serf's Primary School. They support the Council's decision to keep the nursery in its original building as they believe it is an effective learning environment.

- 4.4.2 Parents expressed concern about the availability of staff if they needed to visit the nursery for support or to raise a concern. In the past, senior staff and the headteacher provided immediate support and reassurance to parents and children. Parents felt that this was a real strength of the nursery and would like reassurance that this will continue to be the case after the merger takes place.

The Education Authority has indicated within the consultation document that “The nursery class will be managed by the primary headteacher with a member of the senior management team having day to day responsibility for the running of the nursery class”.

- 4.43 Parents and staff are concerned about the implications for the management of the new Ladywell Nursery Class. The expressed concerns about the impact of managing both the nursery and the school on both establishment. Parents and nursery staff would benefit from clearer information on how the new nursery class will be staffed and managed.

The Education Authority has responded to these queries at point 3.6 of this document. There will also be further discussion with the nursery staff on how the establishment will be staffed and managed.

- 4.44 Some parents expressed concern over the issue of placing requests and the impact that this may have on the school and catchment children. Their perceptions is that children in the nursery would be entitled to a place in the primary school in P1 even if they live outwith the catchment area. Parents were not confident in the Council’s explanation of the placing request legislation. They were also concerned that there were plans to rezone catchment areas. The council needs to provide parents with a clear explanation of the placing request legislation and clarification about any plans, if any, it has to rezone catchment areas and the possible impact these may have.

The Education Authority has responded to these queries at points 3.2 and 3.3 of this document.

In addition, the Education Authority will provide parents with a clear explanation of placing request legislation and clarification of any plans for rezoning catchment areas.

- 4.45 Children in both the nursery and in the school were positive about the proposal and could see many benefits to being part of one school.

- 4.46 Staff in both the nursery and the school were positive about the benefits of the proposal.

4.5 Educational Aspects Of The Proposal

- 4.51 The proposal would lead to educational benefit for the young children directly affected by the proposal. There are currently strong links between Ladywell Nursery School and St Serf's Primary School. If implemented, the proposed merger should lead to enhanced transitions for children. This includes improved identification of children's individual needs.
- 4.52 In the inspection report on Ladywell Nursery School published by Education Scotland in August 2012, HM Inspectors noted the need for staff to continue to develop further the curriculum in line with Curriculum for Excellence. The proposal will support this process as it will create enhanced opportunities for closer staff collaboration and joint professional development. It will provide increased opportunities for staff to collaborate on developing the early level of Curriculum for Excellence across all subject areas.
- 4.53 The proposal would establish a single management team across the primary school and nursery class. This should lead to improved sharing of good practice between both establishments and lead to a more consistent, coherent and progressive experience for children across the nursery and primary classes. In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to provide clearer information and reassurance to parents about the proposed management structure for the merged provision.

5 HMIE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

HMIE have supported the proposals as detailed below:-

- 5.1 Clackmannanshire Council has set out a sound case for its proposal to merge Ladywell Nursery with St Serf's Primary School. Overall, the proposal is likely to lead to educational benefit, particularly for children in the nursery class and children in the infant department in St Serf's Primary School. There is the potential for the children to benefit from a more continuous and consistent range of curricular opportunities. There is also the potential for an increased level of collaboration among staff, improved staff development and enhanced progress in taking forward a Curriculum for Excellence, particularly across the early level.
- 5.2 In taking forward the proposal, the Education Authority needs to ensure that arrangements for staffing and management of the nursery class are set out clearly. Parents need clearer information about the implications for placing requests and the authority's plans for catchment area rezoning if any.

6 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Consultation Paper

7 CALL-IN OF CLOSURE PROCEDURES

The Education Authority may not decide to implement the proposal until the expiry of three weeks starting with the day on which this consultation report is published in both electronic and printed form.

Once a final decision has been taken on the closure of a school the Education Authority must notify the Scottish Ministers of this decision within a period of six working days. Ministers have the power to issue a call-in notice regarding a closure decision, but only where it appears to the Scottish Ministers that the Education Authority may have failed in a significant regard to comply with the requirements of the Act, or to take proper account of a material consideration relevant to its decision to implement the proposal. Ministers have six weeks to decide whether or not to issue a call-in notice.

During the first three weeks of the six-week period, anyone will be able to make representations to the Scottish Ministers on whether the decision should be called-in. Any relevant representations must be taken account of by the Scottish Ministers when deciding whether or not to issue a call-in notice. During this period, the Education Authority may not proceed further with the proposed closure. Ministers may come to a decision sooner than six weeks (but not before the three weeks for representations to be made to them has elapsed).