

25 August 2016

PUBLIC CONSULTATION TO BE LAUNCHED ON CHANGES TO ADMISSIONS ARRANGEMENTS FOR ERC SCHOOLS

East Renfrewshire Council's Education Committee has today given approval for a public consultation on proposed changes to admissions arrangements for our primary and secondary schools*.

The consultation will launch tomorrow (Friday August 26 2016) and will run until 10 October 2016.

The Council is urging interested individuals and groups to have their say on proposals for a single set of school admissions criteria to ensure 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.

ERC Leader, Jim Fletcher, said: "East Renfrewshire Council 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 – particularly so in our Roman Catholic schools.

"We are very proactive in ensuring that our residents can get into the schools of their choice wherever possible and have already taken a range of steps to increase capacity. However demand for Roman Catholic school places is continuing to grow at a rate that requires us to now take further measures to ensure we can meet demand from our resident population.

"We are a listening council and will consider all views expressed as part of the consultation process."

ERC Director of Education, Mhairi Shaw, said: "Over recent years the number of East Renfrewshire families choosing a Roman Catholic education for their children has increased by around one fifth and many of these schools are in fact either at or approaching full capacity.

"We have already taken action to address increased demand at our schools by creating additional accommodation, increasing teacher numbers and classes where necessary and are also in the process of investing £77.6 million over the next three years to provide even more new and extended education facilities.

"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.

"We also know that we have space in our very high performing non-denominational schools in 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.

“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 will be consulting on changes to 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.

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

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.

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

The proposed arrangements would also mean changes for pupils seeking a place at an ERC school if they live outwith 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 an 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.

Ends

For further information contact Emma Edwards on 0141 577 8536.

Notes to Editor and background information

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

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.

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.

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 current arrangements.

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.

*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.

How you can have your say

Hard copies of the full consultation document will be 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 on the East Renfrewshire Council website www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/schoolconsultation

Feedback can be either made in writing or online.

A summary of the full consultation document can also be found at www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/schoolconsultation and hard copies of this summary will be distributed to parents and carers direct via schools in the coming weeks.

We are holding two public meetings and all are welcome to attend.

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

We are also consulting directly with a number of key groups and stakeholders including meetings with all ERC school parent councils.