



7th October 2016

Mrs Mhairi Shaw
East Renfrewshire Council
Council Offices
Main Street
Barrhead
G78 1SY

Dear Mrs Shaw,

ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL RESPONSE TO "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"

For and on behalf on the Parent Council of St Ninian's High School ("the Parent Council"), I would like to respond to the consultation on East Renfrewshire Council's proposals contained within the above document.

St Ninian's High School was established to serve the Catholic community of Eastwood but has always been a school which has been open to all, has welcomed all and has valued the contribution made by all its pupils.

St Ninian's High School has placed the Catholic Faith at the heart of its ethos and as a result has achieved outstanding success in raising attainment and wider achievement levels throughout all areas of curricular and non-curricular activities. This approach has been promoted by the school's two headteachers since formation and supported by its senior management team and staff, both teaching and non-teaching. This approach is fully supported by the Parent Council.

For a number of years, the Parent Council has been concerned with capacity issues, both current and projected, at the school as its popularity has grown and the retention rates of pupils in the senior school has increased.

The Parent Council identified that the increase could become unmanageable without a change in admission policy and has sought to engage with East Renfrewshire Council to find a solution to this. In seeking to find this solution the Parent Council has used the following criteria :-

- That the school should remain open to all
- That in the event of over-subscription to the school, priority be given to members of the Catholic community for whom the school was established

- That any pupils currently with a first right of access to St Ninian's retain this right ("transition rights")
- That sufficient resources be put in place to address to handle any temporary increase in roll whilst the transition rights are honoured.

The Parent Council is pleased that the Director of Education has brought forward these proposals and thanks Mrs Shaw and her staff for their attention to this matter. Since the proposals have been published the Parent Council has met to discuss and consider them in detail and following this consideration were unanimous in its recommendation of them to the Parent Forum of the school. A letter was sent to all parents (a copy of which is attached) and comments were invited. An extraordinary meeting of the Parent Forum was convened and held on Thursday 22nd September 2016 which was attended by number of parents, carers and school staff. Members of the Parent Council attended both of the public meetings held by East Renfrewshire Council on Wednesday 21st & 28th September and also attended the meeting of "east" Parent Councils held in Clarkston Halls on Monday 19th September.

There was a significant minority of respondents who identified the prejudicial effect of the proposals on pupils who have first placing request priority under the current arrangements, (that is pupils resident in the catchment areas of St Angela's or the former St Louise's Primary school as at 17 March 2001 and who are baptised into the Catholic faith). The Parent Council has agreed that this is indeed the case.

The Parent Council has also engaged with and communicated with the Diocese of Paisley, the Archdiocese of Glasgow and the Scottish Catholic Education Service and it understands that all three of these bodies will be supporting the proposals made and has no significant reservation in their implementation.

Parent Council Response

The Parent Council met on Monday 3rd October 2016 and discussed the various points and issues which has been raised at the various meetings and in written correspondence and has come to the following position.

The Parent Council supports the proposals made by East Renfrewshire Council subject to the following conditions :-

- **That the placing request order within the proposals remains as detailed**
- **That the placing request policy is properly managed and enforced at both primary and secondary school level to ensure that there is no over-capacity at any of the schools**
- **That adequate resources are committed to manage the capacity issues from 2021-29 and would ask you to note our comments below.**

The Parent Council would also ask East Renfrewshire Council to consider giving children who fall into Priority 1 of the current admission arrangements priority over other non-East Renfrewshire residents.

Additional Capacity

We note that ERC has committed financial resources to provide for temporary accommodation to handle the additional capacity. We estimate that at its peak the numbers of pupils attending St Ninian's will increase by 5% and this will put pressure on the core infrastructure within the school including PE, changing facilities, bathroom, lunch areas as well as arts and science classrooms which are already being utilised almost constantly. We would suggest that ERC explore innovative and value adding solutions to the capacity issues

which will leave a legacy of permanent and improved facilities at St Ninian's High School for future generations of pupils. This could include, for example, the building of permanent classrooms which could at a later date be converted into multi-functional or specialised teaching areas. There also needs to be suitable and full provision for the non-classroom facilities described above for the additional pupils.

Existing Capacity

This consultation has come about as a result of the increased rolls at the Roman Catholic denominational schools in the east of the council area, primarily because of the continued popularity of and pressure on St Ninian's High School. St Ninian's has achieved outstanding levels of achievement and attainment and as a result is experiencing unprecedented demands on its current facilities as the school roll increases due to the high retention rates of pupils from S4 through to S5 and S6. There are already examples of classes taking place outwith the designated areas for these subjects and without the requisite facilities e.g. science classes in non-science rooms. We would seek to engage with East Renfrewshire Council to identify opportunities to improve the number and quality of classroom, specialist arts, science and PE facilities as well as recreational areas at the school to enable it to continue to build on this success.

Commitment to St Ninian's and Education

It would be entirely remiss of the Parent Council not to note and comment on the outstanding commitment and diligence of the headteacher, Mr Docherty, the senior management team and all other staff at the school (both teaching and non-teaching). The Parent Council expresses its gratitude to them all for their efforts in making St Ninian's High School a truly exceptional environment for all our young people, regardless of social, religious or previous educational background to be educated in.

The Parent Council also would like to take this opportunity to thank the Director of Education, East Renfrewshire Council and the elected and co-opted members of the Council and Education Committee for their continued commitment to the provision of an education system which we consider to be amongst, if not the, best in the country.

We trust that these proposals, if accepted, will provide a long term solution for the education of the Catholic community. In its short existence St Ninian's has gone through four very difficult consultations (which has not been the case in the non-denominational sector), each one having the effect of limiting access to the school. It would appear to us that Roman Catholic education is highly valued by all sections of the community and we would suggest the establishment of a new Roman Catholic High School should there prove to be continued increased demand, and not any further restriction by whatever means

We also hope that the consultation process has not compromised the excellent relations between all communities within the area and assure all of our commitment to the education of all pupils attending St Ninian's High School now and in the future.

Yours faithfully,



Michael Ward
Chair

For and on behalf of St. Ninian's High School Parent Council