

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEETHURSDAY 9 MAY 2019Report by Director of EducationS1-INTAKE AT ST NINIAN'S HIGH SCHOOL SESSION 2019-20**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise Education Committee of arrangements deemed to be necessary to accommodate the secondary 1 intake at St Ninian's High School for school session 2019-20.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. Members are asked to note the special circumstances at St Ninian's High School and that the S1-intake will be temporarily increased to 320 places for school session 2019-20 in advance of the planned accommodation being established at the school for 2021-22 to temporarily increase the school's capacity.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The agreed planning capacity of St Ninian's High school is 1,704 with a maximum S1-intake of 300 places. The roll at the September 2018 census was 1,776, indicating that the school is at 104% occupancy. Schools can operate above their planning capacity. This is often the case in very popular schools, since they inevitably attract placing requests and so full pupil year groups. Exceptionally efficient timetabling is used at St Ninian's to ensure that there is the most effective use of all resources including maximum room utilisation.

4. On 20 December 2016 the Education Committee approved arrangements for the admissions and the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary in respect of all Roman Catholic and non-denominational primary and secondary schools. These arrangements came into effect in January 2017 for applications for the school session commencing August 2017. Subsequently minor amendments to the associated policy documentation were approved by the Education Committee in August 2017 and have provided the policy context and the procedures for allocating school places since that date.

5. The former admissions/transfer arrangements for St Ninian's HS did not prioritise Roman Catholic faith when the school was oversubscribed by catchment demand, which effectively meant the intake was uncapped. Both the former and current admissions/transfer policies ensure that children residing in the school's delineated catchment area are open to pupils of Roman Catholic faith, other faiths and none, as is legally required for all publically funded schools. The change in policy at 2016 established priorities to better manage places in oversubscribed schools acknowledging capacity across the wider estate. In a Roman Catholic school, should catchment applications exceed available places then the highest priority is given to pupils baptised in the Roman Catholic faith.

6. In approving the 2016 policy change, Council agreed additional capital resources for new temporary teaching rooms at St Ninian's High School as part of the transitional measures necessary to honour commitments to pupils of all faiths/none enrolled (by end December 2016) and entitled under the former admissions/transfer arrangements. The Capital Plan provides for additional accommodation to temporarily increase the capacity at the school and officers are currently progressing this with the school in readiness for 2021-22. Once works are complete the planning capacity at the school will temporarily increase to around 1,818 pupil places and continue to be timetabled very efficiently for its higher occupancy rates.

7. It was initially proposed to phase in the introduction of the new teaching rooms at St Ninian's to cope with the future anticipated enlarged intakes in response to honouring commitments noted in paragraph 6; with the last phase established for August 2023. However in discussion it was agreed that to obtain better value from the additional resources it would be best to have the total additional teaching accommodation ready for 2021-22, which would minimise the impact on school operations. This is reflected in the currently approved 8-year Capital Plan.

## REPORT

8. The additional accommodation to temporarily increase the school's planning capacity is required over the period up until the 2023-24 S1 intake (the P1 of the 2016-17 cohort, the '2016 guaranteed pupils') progresses through the school. Thereafter for the foreseeable future, there are expected to be sufficient places for baptised Roman Catholic children, residing in St Ninian's catchment, to be placed in the school with an S1 intake of 300. It is also expected that there will be some place for pupils who reside in its catchment who are not of Roman Catholic faith. The change in schools' admission/transfer arrangements which were adopted from January 2017 helps manage the intake in a fair and equitable way for all schools.

9. It is planned that once the transitional period is over, accommodation at St Ninian's will be reconfigured to revert to the current planning capacity and provide the school with additional social/ancillary space in discussion with the head teacher. Once the transitional period is over we must review the accommodation requirements to continue to meet the needs of the four associated primary schools.

10. It is acknowledged that circumstances are subject to change and projections are made based on the latest available data and knowledge at that time. As evidenced in the past, school provision and admissions arrangements are kept under review to provide sufficient places including Roman Catholic places for East Renfrewshire residents.

11. Based on data that was available at the time of the consultation approved in December 2016, it was expected that it would be possible to admit all anticipated S1 'catchment pupils' at St Ninian's for August 2019. There were an estimated 282 S1 pupils for August 2019 who would be entitled to a place under the former admissions/transfer arrangements (the 2016-17 cohort enrolled by December 2016) that were effectively guaranteed a place ('2016 guaranteed pupils') when the new admissions/transfer arrangements came into effect from 1 January 2017. With an S1 intake of 300 this left space for a further 18 pupils.

12. During the actual S1 August 2019 application process this year, 279 S1 pupils applying have a guaranteed place; and of them 278 want to take up the offer. These children have been placed, honouring the commitment to the 2016-17 cohort entitled under former admissions/transfer arrangements policy. This left space for a further 22 pupils.

13. Operating under the current policy (applications from 1 January 2017 for pupils not part of the 2016-17 guaranteed cohort) there are an additional number of children (55) now in St Ninian's catchment with applications received this year seeking to attain a place in August, against the 22 available remaining spaces, taking the school into oversubscription. 31 of the 55 applications (56%) are for baptised Roman Catholic pupils.

14. As part of the normal placing round process for August 2019, there are a total of 333 applications for pupils whose families wish them to take up a place for the school for August 2019. This is some 51 pupils higher than that projected in 2016 for August 2019 (282) noted in paragraph 11 above.

15. This can be explained by looking at more up to date information than was available at the time of the 2016 proposal to change the admissions/transfer arrangements; including also the continued popularity of the school in the context of catchment applications and patterns of placing requests.

16. We have seen an apparent link between increased demand through catchment applications and at the same time a decrease in placing request applications since the current policy was adopted. This appears to mean that at least some families wish to guarantee a place in an East Renfrewshire school.

17. More families have moved into St Ninian's catchment area and enrolled their child(ren) in an associated primary school before the 31 December 2016 'cutoff date' from that known at the time that the consultation proposals were issued earlier in the year; thereby such pupils became guaranteed pupils for placement at St Ninian's.

18. As noted to Council by the Director of Environment in late 2018, considerable research and analysis during 2018 as part of local development plan process has shown evidence of an increase in the pupil product ratios (i.e. the anticipated propensity of residential units to generate children of school age). These ratios are higher than those used as part of the projections in 2016 estimating the number of anticipated additional pupils from 2017 onwards.

19. New build housing is in part facilitating this increase but pupil numbers are also increasing in more established residential areas as a result of the rental market and changing demographics as houses in established communities change ownership, i.e. migration to existing areas.

20. As noted in paragraph 13 St Ninian's is oversubscribed by catchment pupils for August 2019. In cases of oversubscription by catchment in a Roman Catholic school, priority is accorded to baptised Roman Catholic children, with succeeding criteria giving a degree of priority for example in secondary schools for attendance at an associated primary school.

21. Under the current arrangements for oversubscription by catchment, this would have meant a ballot of the 22 available places for the 31 pupils of the Roman Catholic faith with 9 pupils being subsequently redirected to the Council's other Roman Catholic secondary school, St Luke's HS. The other 24 pupils not of Roman Catholic faith would be registered for a place in their catchment non-denominational school/ preferred alternative as appropriate.

22. Given that this was the position known at March 2019, noting the situation is as a result of the transition arrangements which give a guarantee to pupils attending an associated primary school at December 2016 irrespective of their faith, it was not considered reasonable to redirect 9 baptised Roman Catholic children to St Luke's HS.

23. Members may note that ten years ago, the S1 intake was temporarily increased to 320 at St Ninian's to meet the needs of the then catchment area. This was managed within the planning capacity of 1,704.

24. For the above reasons and the additional accommodation soon to be established for 2021-22, following consultation with the head teacher, the school timetabler and the Director of Education, it was decided to increase the S1 intake to 320 pupils for August 2019 to be able to place all priority 1 pupils in addition to most (74) other catchment pupils seeking a place (85% which were allocated according to priorities / ballot as required).

25. The consequence of this is that based on applications received at this time, 320 S1 places have been allocated at St Ninian's for August 2019; all pupils who attended an associated primary school have been allocated a place as have those baptised Roman Catholic pupils. The remaining 13 pupils have been allocated a place at their non-denominational catchment school in line with policy. It is noted that there are no reserve places available- the year group is full and any further catchment pupils seeking a place will be redirected/given a register place at another school as appropriate.

26. In summary we have placed all baptised Roman Catholic S1 pupils who applied for St Ninian's August 2019 as known at March 2019; of the total 320 catchment pupils at St Ninian's, 246 are baptised Roman Catholic children; and we have also been able to accommodate an additional 74 catchment children of other faiths/none applying to the school. Of the total 333 applications 74% are baptised Roman Catholic children.

27. The Education Department continues to examine future educational provision in areas throughout the authority to ensure there are sufficient educational places according to future local planning processes and resultant new housing land supplies, other demographic changes and relevant modifications to the educational estate as a consequence of local/national educational policy. This work is done in concert with colleagues in the Environment Department who manage the Local Development Plan process.

## **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS**

28. Council has already recognised the need to temporarily increase the intake at St Ninian's High School to honour commitments to families made under the former admissions/transfers policy.

29. The budget for the extended accommodation for this is within the Council's current 8-year Capital Plan; and associated revenue impact would be considered as part of the budget process at that time.

30. In increasing the intake for August 2019, the additional staffing required and other more minor resource implications will be managed within the department's budget. As noted, additional staffing would be necessary anyway once the extension is established over the next few years as part of the transitional measure enabling the Council to place the '2016 guaranteed pupils'.

31. The department considers that this is a fair and cost-effective way of addressing the intake at the school.

## CONCLUSION

32. The applications from the catchment for August 2019 for a S1 place at St Ninian's High School exceed the S1 intake of 300 available places, meaning the school is oversubscribed in terms of its catchment. Whilst it is possible to accommodate those guaranteed a place under the transitional measures associated with the change in schools' admission/transfer arrangements, there would be a number of pupils, including baptised Roman Catholic children, who would not be able to be accommodated.

33. The planning capacity at the school is being temporarily increased with additional accommodation as previously approved.

34. It is possible to increase the intake to 320 and accommodate all associated primary school pupils beyond the '2016 guaranteed pupils'.

## RECOMMENDATION

35. Members are asked to agree the special circumstances at St Ninian's High School and note that the S1-intake will be temporarily increased to 320 places for school session 2019-20 in advance of the planned accommodation being established at the school for 2021-22 to temporarily increase the school's capacity.

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May 2019

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Local Government Access to information Act 1985

### Background Papers:

1. Arrangements for Admissions and the Transfer of Pupils from Primary to Secondary to All East Renfrewshire Roman Catholic and Non-Denominational Primary and Secondary Schools, Education Committee, 24 August 2017.
2. Consultation Report on the Consultative Proposal: Proposed Changes to the Admissions Arrangements to All East Renfrewshire Roman Catholic and Non-Denominational Primary and Secondary Schools Effective From January 2017, Education Committee, 20 December 2016.

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