

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEETHURSDAY 9 JUNE 2016Report by Director of EducationDENOMINATIONAL (CATHOLIC) SCHOOL PLACES
IN THE EAST OF THE COUNCIL AREA**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To apprise members of the pressure on denominational (Catholic) places in the east of the Council area and proposed next steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Elected members are asked to:
- i. Note the pressure on denominational (Catholic) places in the east of the Council area; and,
 - ii. Instruct the Director of Education to bring a further report to Education Committee in August 2016 to consider options for the management of denominational places, including where necessary the need to carry out a formal education consultation.

BACKGROUND

3. All councils must ensure effective management of their school places and have a duty to provide sufficient pupil places for their resident population.

4. East Renfrewshire Council asks parents/carers to commit to the denominational or non-denominational sectors on entry to primary school. In this way, those who exhibit in practice a longstanding conviction to have their child schooled in the faith environment of such a denominational school are able to do so. A change of sector requires a placing request to be submitted.

5. It has been the Council's practice to provide a Catholic education for anyone who requests this – in line with legislation which requires that “every public school and every grant-aided school shall be open to pupils of all denominations,” and the general principle that children should be educated in line with the parents' wishes. These provisions make no reference to prioritising admissions.

6. The Council has also taken into account the terms of the Equality Act, which address issues of religious discrimination in schools. The guidance code accompanying the Equality Act explicitly provides that “The only area where education authorities can discriminate on religious grounds in relation to pupil admission is in their criteria for accepting placing requests.”

7. New housing developments in the East Renfrewshire Council area has led to increased demand for school places in the east of the authority. As a consequence the Council extended and built new school provision at both primary and secondary level for both the denominational (Catholic) and non-denominational sectors; and changed admissions arrangements. For example the Council has expanded provision with new larger schools e.g. Mearns Primary School and Eastwood and Williamwood high schools, and extended provision e.g. at Kirkhill, Netherlee, Our Lady of the Missions, St Cadoc's and St Joseph's primary schools and Mearns Castle and St Ninian's high schools.

8. In 2010 the Education Committee approved that a statutory consultation exercise be undertaken regarding a proposal to change St Ninian's High School's admissions arrangements.

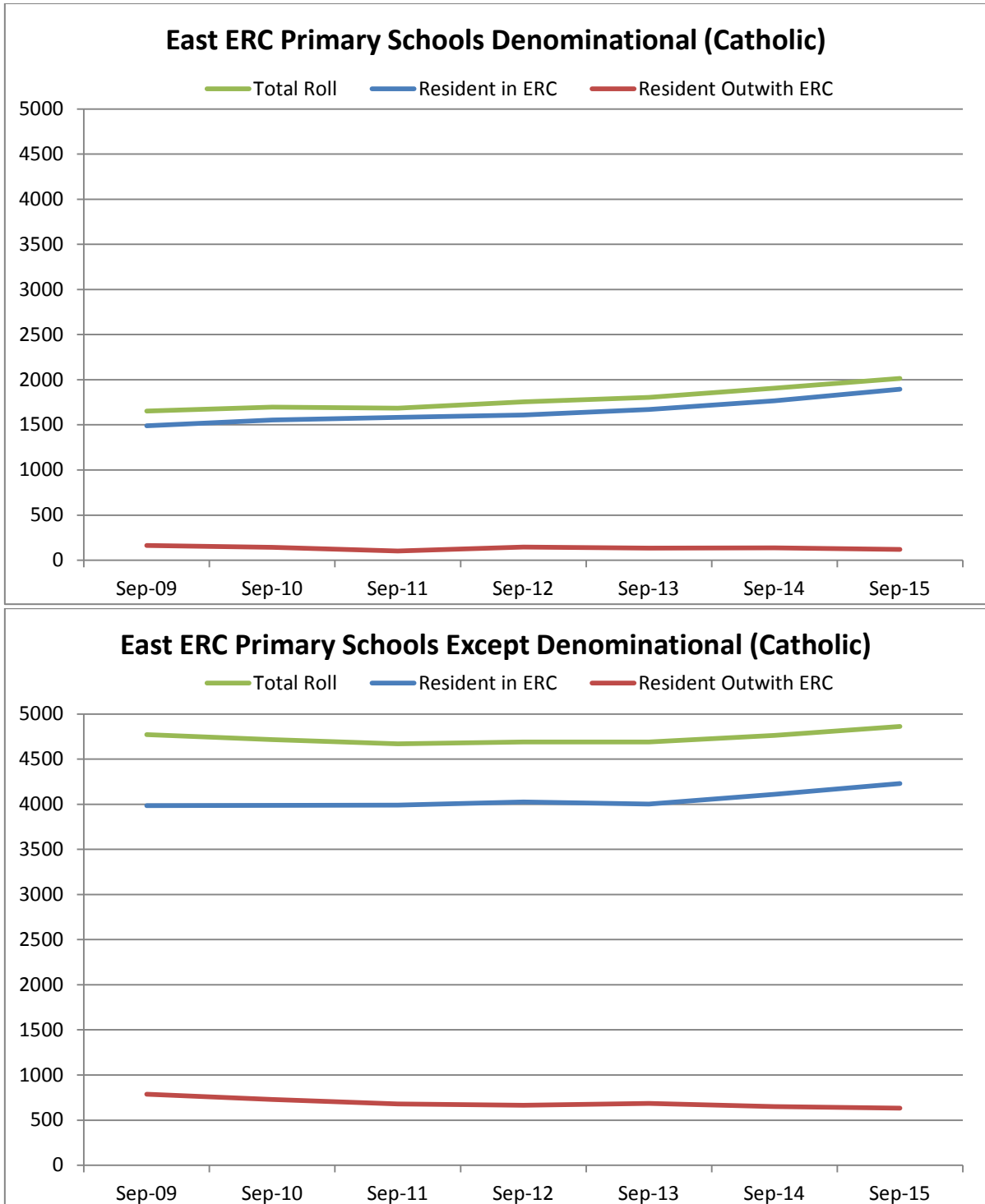
9. Subsequently in 2011 the Education Committee approved the resulting consultative document which changed the delineated catchment area of St Ninian's High School, its associated primary schools and the priorities for granting placing requests to the school. The primary schools associated with St Ninian's High School under this change of admissions arrangements are Our Lady of the Missions, St Cadoc's and St Joseph's.

REPORT

Increased Numbers

10. There has been continued increase in the number of pupils attending schools in the east of the Council area, particularly those pupils following a denominational (Catholic) education. Further residential development has contributed to increased pupil numbers.

11. The charts overleaf show that primary school rolls have been increasing in the east of the Council area as a consequence of a rise in the local population. The greatest increase has been in the denominational (Catholic) sector where the number of families choosing this route for their child's education has increased by over one fifth. The increase has been just over 6% for other primary schools in the east of the authority. As expected, places available for acceptance through the placing request process to families residing out with East Renfrewshire has decreased in both sectors as 'catchment demand' increases.



12. There has been expansion in denominational primary places to help meet increased demand. In 2012 Education Committee approved the proposal to extend Our Lady of the Missions Primary School to 4-streams to address demand for denominational places from its delineated catchments area.

13. In 2015 the Education Committee approved the proposal to establish a faith schools' joint campus at Newton Mearns that includes a new Catholic primary school which will be an associated primary to St Ninian's High School. This was to address pressure on denominational (Catholic) places in the Newton Mearns area which is currently served by one denominational primary, St Cadoc's. The existing St Cadoc's delineated catchment

would then be served by two 2-stream primary schools, thereby increasing the denominational (Catholic) places by 1-stream. The new school is to open for August 2017.

14. In reducing St Cadoc's to 2-stream provision, there are plans to remodel part of the school to establish an early learning and childcare facility (non-denominational nursery class). This would be subject to a statutory consultation and planned to be operational from August 2019.

15. St Ninian's High School has an S1 intake equivalent to the 10-streams, comprising the 4-stream Our Lady of the Missions, and the three 2-stream primary schools namely, St Cadoc's, St Joseph's and the new Catholic primary in the faith schools' joint campus.

16. Appendix 1 shows the increase in pupils in St Ninian's High School and its associated primary schools from September 2009 to the most recent census in September 2015.

17. Although there has been an increase in 'catchment pupils' at Our Lady of the Missions and St Cadoc's primary schools it is only in the last couple of years that the numbers from the catchment as a percentage of available places (capacity) has reached over 90% in planning terms; with St Joseph's around 80%. The planning capacity of Our Lady of the Missions is currently 840, St Cadoc's 690 and St Joseph's 420. The maximum class size from P4 to P7 is 33, and so it is possible for the planning capacity to be exceeded at these stages by 3 places per class thereby increasing the actual capacity. However East Renfrewshire seeks to manage its estate based on the lower planning capacity figures.

18. It is considered that councils should plan for changes when a school sustains occupancy levels of around 90% (based on 'catchment pupils') with no sign of abatement and the prospect of further increases through for example additional residential development. Of course occupancy levels can reach higher levels where available places are filled by means of successful placing requests.

19. Over the period from 2009 to 2015 the number of 'catchment pupils' at St Ninian's has increased by 75; however there are still many places at the school which are taken up through the placing request process. Of the total roll in 2015, over 450 pupils reside out with East Renfrewshire.

20. Whilst evidence shows that there are still spaces available in St Ninian's to meet catchment demand over the medium term, the growth now seen in its associated primary schools from 'catchment pupils' will impact on future intakes to St Ninian's High School as well as exert pressure on primary accommodation under current arranged provision should the pattern over the last few years continue.

Future Direction

21. The Council has made a considerable investment to increase denominational (Catholic) school capacity to meet an increasing demand for places. Despite this, the demand for places at a number of denominational schools is increasing.

22. From the St Ninian's consultation in 2010/11 it is known that the Catholic Church and others propose that when over-subscribed, places at a denominational (Catholic) school should be prioritised for Catholic children.

23. The Council has always managed to provide a Catholic education to those East Renfrewshire families who wish that for their child(ren). East Renfrewshire education authority will continue to plan to provide requisite places in discharging its duty.

24. The Director of Education has asked officers to undertake further analysis to seek to better understand the increase in the number of pupils attending denominational schools and explore options to satisfy local demand taking account of relevant and appropriate legislation and effective and efficient management of resources. It should be noted that any options put forward for consideration must provide East Renfrewshire Council with the ability to offer a denominational education to Roman Catholic families and plan effectively and manage pupil places across its school estate.

25. The Director of Education will consult with the Catholic Church regarding future options.

26. Further analysis is now planned to be undertaken and options considered and brought to the next Education Committee on how best to address the management of denominational places.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

27. There are no other specific finance and efficiency implications related to this particular report.

CONSULTATION

28. In establishing any new school provision, proposing changes to admissions arrangements and proposing changes to delineated catchment areas, the Education Department would need to undertake formal education (statutory) consultation including with affected parents and pupils.

29. Should Education Committee approve this report's recommendations, details of any necessary formal education consultation for the options under consideration for the management of denominational places will be taken forward at that time.

30. The Director of Education will ensure the Catholic Church is fully consulted.

CONCLUSION

31. The Council has invested in its school estate through planned expansion to ensure sufficient pupil places.

32. There is pressure on denominational (Catholic) places in the east of the Council area.

33. The Council must comply with the duty to provide sufficient pupil places for East Renfrewshire's resident population and offer denominational education to Roman Catholic families.

34. The Council has always managed to provide a Catholic education to those East Renfrewshire families who wish that for their child(ren); however we must now re-examine provision and explore viable and legal options to continue to do so in the years ahead.

RECOMMENDATIONS

35. Elected members are asked to:

- i. Note the pressure on denominational (Catholic) places in the east of the Council area; and,
- ii. Instruct the Director of Education to bring a further report to Education Committee in August 2016 to consider options for the management of denominational places, including where necessary the need to carry out a formal education consultation.

Mhairi Shaw
Director of Education
9 June 2016

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Denominational (Catholic) school places, delineated catchment area, pressure on places, placing requests, St Ninian's High School, Our Lady of the Missions Primary School, St Cadoc's Primary School, St Joseph's Primary School, Faith Schools' Joint Campus, new Catholic primary school

