

# NMFS pre-consultation response (Inverclyde)

4 December 2019

## Transition to Secondary School From Village Primary Schools and Catchment Areas

Q1. There are no denominational primary schools in Quarriers Village, Kilmacolm, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay. Parents in these areas can and often choose to send their children to the local non-denominational primary school because of the travelling distance to their nearest denominational primary school. In such circumstances parents have the choice, at the end of P7, to seek admission for their child to either a non-denominational or denominational secondary school in their catchment area.

### **STRONGLY AGREE**

It is perfectly reasonable for parents to be able to make their own decisions about which local schools they wish to apply to and for these choices not be artificially restricted by their religious/non-religious convictions or choice of primary school. Parents in such a situation should not be scapegoated for problems in school admissions or provision of places which are the council's responsibility.

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree if the following change to the policy was proposed.

'Only children who have a baptismal certificate into the Roman Catholic faith whose parents have selected to send their child to the non-denominational catchment primary school, will have the choice to seek admission to either the non-denominational catchment primary school, or denominational school assigned to their address'.

### **STRONGLY DISAGREE**

We strongly oppose the introduction of any new religious discrimination or selection in admissions. There is no justification restricting access to a publicly funded school based on pupils' parents' religious beliefs. Introducing religious discrimination/selection in admissions would disadvantage families who do not share the faith of denominational schools and create needless division.

Q3. We would like to know your opinion on the possibility of changing the village schools of Kilmacolm, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay as associated primary schools for denominational secondary schools. This would mean that that:

- 1) St. Ninian's Primary School would be the only catchment school for those pupils choosing a denominational education who live in the villages of Inverkip or Wemyss Bay.
- 2) St. Francis Primary School would be the only catchment school for those pupils choosing a denominational education who live in the villages of Kilmacolm or Quarrier's Village.

### **STRONGLY DISAGREE**

This proposal would punish parents for a failure to ensure adequate secondary school provision which is entirely beyond their control. Families should be free to make their own decisions about which local primary and/or secondary school is most suitable for them without artificial restrictions on religious grounds.

Q4. We would like to know your opinion about how the Council could manage provision if there is a continued pressure on places for Roman Catholic Education at St Columba's High School (and in the West of Inverclyde).

One idea is the creation of a joint denominational and non-denominational campus at Wemyss Bay Primary School. This would essentially create an annex to St. Ninian's Primary School but be based at Wemyss Bay Primary School.

**STRONGLY DISAGREE**

We believe that all new schools should be nondenominational with an inclusive community ethos, rather than promote a specific religious worldview. Joint campuses add needless complexity and duplication. Locating two schools on the same site can bring benefits for some pupils but also reinforces division. A far more obvious and parsimonious solution is for the new school simply to be a shared endeavour for the entire community, i.e. an inclusive nondenominational school.

Q5. Another idea is changing one of the primary schools in either Wemyss Bay or Inverkip to be a denominational school if there is significant demand for a Roman Catholic education in those two villages.

**STRONGLY DISAGREE**

This would be entirely unjustified and result in public services intended to serve the entire community being transformed into religious services with an exclusive and for many exclusionary ethos. Parents considering years in advance their primary school options should have a reasonable expectation that their local school remains open and suitable for them, and indeed for pupils of all backgrounds.

Q7. Please use the space below to provide any other comments you may have.

No More Faith Schools (<https://www.nomorefaithschools.org/>) is a national campaign coordinated by the National Secular Society and with supporters from a broad social, political and religious spectrum. We're dedicated to an end to state funded faith schools. We would like all schools to be nondenominational with an inclusive community ethos, free from any religious discrimination, privilege or control.

We help people challenge new faith schools, particularly where they have discriminatory admissions rules and where there are proposals for inclusive alternatives.

We look forward to the opportunity to assist residents in responding to a full consultation concerning full range of options to improve access to and provision of secondary school places, while protecting inclusive nondenominational education suitable for pupils from all backgrounds.