



Response to Inverclyde Council's public consultation on village schools

March 2020

What is your name? (Required)

Megan Manson (on behalf of the National Secular Society)

Please complete your address (Required)

25 Red Lion Square, London

Postcode (Required)

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Please confirm you have read the statutory consultation document (full document) by ticking this box.

Yes

Please let us know your interest in this consultation (Required)

Other

If you chose 'Other' please specify

The National Secular Society works for the separation of religion and state, and for equal respect for everyone's human rights so that no one is either advantaged or disadvantaged on account of their beliefs. We regard secularism and equality as essential features of a fair and open society. This includes within state-funded education.

If your child attends an Inverclyde Council school or early years centre, please let us know which school.

N/A

Change 1 is a change to the wording of Section B paragraph 2.4 (page 4) of the current policy in relation to arrangements for transferring from primary to secondary school.

The policy currently reads:

There are no denominational primary schools in Quarriers Village, Kilmacolm, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay. Parents 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 the following admission arrangements will apply:

children whose parents have selected to send their child to the non-denominational school serving the defined catchment area assigned to their address rather than to their assigned denominational primary school because of travelling distance, will have the choice at primary 7 of seeking admission to either the non-denominational or denominational school assigned to their address. The Council's policy in respect of school transport will apply.

It is proposed to change the policy to:

There are no denominational primary schools in Quarriers Village, Kilmacolm, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay. Parents 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 the following admission arrangements will apply:

Only those children:

(a) who before entry to primary school, have a Certificate of Baptism into the Roman Catholic faith; and

(b) whose parents have chosen, because of travelling distance to send to the non-denominational primary school which serves the defined catchment area assigned to their address (rather than to the assigned denominational primary school); will have the entitlement of admission, without the necessity of a placing request, to the catchment denominational secondary school. As with all schools, this entitlement is subject to there being space at the specified school. The Council's policy in respect of school transport will always apply.

Are you for or against change 1?

Against

If you wish you can give your reason(s) for or against this proposal. Please fill in one reason per line.

Reason 1

We welcome Inverclyde Council's decision to rule out its previous proposals to convert one of the non-denominational primary schools into a Catholic faith school; open a new campus with

both a Catholic and non-denominational school in West Inverclyde; or remove non-denominational village schools as feeder schools for denominational secondary schools.

However, we do not agree with either of the proposed changes in the public consultation, because both would put children from non-Catholic families at a disadvantage.

Change 1 would directly disadvantage children from non-Catholic families by prioritising children who have obtained a certificate of baptism prior to entry to primary school.

Reason 2

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 the religious beliefs of children or their families.

Reason 3

Introducing further religious selection in admissions would needlessly exacerbate sectarian divisions as well as ethnic and socio-economic segregation.

Reason 4

We need to educate our children together, rather than dividing them according to their parents' religion. For these reasons, religion should not play any role at all in the admissions process.

Change 2 is a change to the wording of Section C paragraph 1 (page 4/5) of the current policy in relation to the oversubscription of schools

The policy currently reads:

If a school is oversubscribed and cannot take pupils within the defined catchment area and chosen denomination then places will be granted in the following order:

A child who has a medical condition or additional support needs, who requires facilities or support only available in the requested school.

Those cases where a brother or sister attends the school and will continue in this school during the session.

In the case of denominational schools: pupils within the catchment area who can demonstrate an affinity with the religious ethos of the school and can provide documentary evidence of this in the form of a Certificate of Baptism into the Roman Catholic faith.

Distance of home address from the chosen school.

It is proposed to change the policy to:

If a school is oversubscribed and cannot take pupils within the defined catchment area and chosen denomination then places will be granted in the following order:

A child who has a medical condition or additional support needs, who requires facilities or support only available in the requested school.

Those cases where a brother or sister attends the school and will continue in this school during the session.

In the case of denominational schools: pupils within the catchment area who can demonstrate an affinity with the religious ethos of the school and can provide documentary evidence of this in the form of a Certificate of Baptism into the Roman Catholic faith.

In the case of a denominational secondary school which has Kilmacolm, Inverkip and Wemyss Bay (village schools) as an associated school: priority will be given to those who have attended the denominational school associated with the secondary school.

Distance of home address from the chosen school.

Are you for or against change 2?

Against

Reason 1

Change 2 would indirectly disadvantage children from non-Catholic families by prioritising those children who attend a denominational primary school (and are therefore more likely to be Catholic) *in addition to* prioritising children with a certificate of baptism.

Reason 2

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 the religious beliefs of children or their families.

Reason 3

Introducing further religious selection in admissions would needlessly exacerbate sectarian divisions as well as ethnic and socio-economic segregation.

Reason 4

We need to educate our children together, rather than dividing them according to their parents' religion. For these reasons, religion should not play any role at all in the admissions process.

Please let us know if you agree for your comments to be made public.

Yes