



Educational Services

Consultation Report

Report on the outcome of the statutory consultation relating to the proposed changes to the placing request arrangements

September 2015

CONTENTS

Section	Page
1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Considerations	3
3.0 Consultation	4
3.1 Overview of responses to consultation	4
3.2 Summary of the points and views expressed during the consultation	4
4.0 Report by Education Scotland	8
4.1 Process	8
4.2 Education Scotland summary	8
4.3 Responses to main points raised by Education Scotland	8
5.0 Review of the proposal	9
6.0 Council decision making process	9

Appendices

Appendix 1	Summary of responses from consultation process
Appendix 2	Views/Comments expressed at public meeting
Appendix 3	Education Scotland Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Leadership Panel of South Ayrshire Council at its meeting of 28th April 2015 agreed to undertake a consultation on proposed changes to its placing request arrangements.
- 1.2 The proposal document was made available to all consultees as prescribed by the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010. A copy of the proposal document is available on the Council's website at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/consultations. The consultation process ran from 6th May 2015 to 26th June 2015, a period of 40 school days.
- 1.3 As part of the consultation process, the Educational Services Directorate undertook the following activities:
- Placed a consultation advert in the local paper.
 - Publicised the consultation exercise and public meeting through letters to parents/carers,
 - Held a public meeting in the County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr on Wednesday, 27th May 2015.
 - Copies of the proposal document were made available from all South Ayrshire Council's schools, libraries, customer contact centres, the County Buildings, Ayr and the Council's website.

2.0 Considerations

The proposed amendments that were issued for consultation included a change in the criteria for determining placing requests and to discontinue the role of the Local Attendance Council in the initial stages of the placing request process.

- 2.1 The proposed changes to the criteria for determining successful placing requests will ensure a consistent approach to its application. It will also ensure that the Council is better placed to accommodate the wishes of parents who reside within South Ayrshire. The revised criteria are as follows:

Where there are more placing request applications than there are places available the following amended priority criteria will be used to determine the allocation of places;

- (i) those cases where the medical needs of the child or young person can only be met in the school requested;
- (ii) those children who do not live in the delineated area of a secondary school but attend an associated primary school;
- (iii) the presence of older brothers or sisters in the school requested;
- (iv) allocation by ballot.

In relation to (i) - (iii) above, if there are more applications being considered than there are spaces available as each stage of the priority criteria is being applied, a ballot will be held to determine the successful applications.

In applying (iv) above, it is proposed that priority will be given to placing requests for children and young people who reside within South Ayrshire, after which any remaining spaces will be allocated by a further ballot.

- 2.2 It is also proposed to discontinue the role of the Local Attendance Council in the initial stages of the placing request process. The functions relating to the management of the above criteria will be undertaken by the Director of Educational Services.

- 2.3 If approved the proposed changes will be incorporated into the 2016/17 primary registration and secondary school transfer arrangements which begin in January 2016.

3.0 Outcome of the Consultation

The consultation was undertaken in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and all prescribed consultees were given an opportunity to participate in the consultation process and submit views on the proposal. In addition to this, other individuals and groups with an interest in the proposal were also given an opportunity to participate and submit their views.

3.1 Overview of responses to consultation

- 3.1.1 Overall the response to the consultation proposals was very low. A total of 10 written responses were received and a summary is shown in Appendix 1.

7 of the responses supported the overall proposal to amend the placing request arrangements and 3 disagreed. 5 responses disagreed with the proposal to give priority to placing requests to children and young people resident in South Ayrshire at the final ballot stage. 3 responses disagreed with the proposal to discontinue the role of the Local Attendance Council.

- 3.1.2 5 people attended the public meeting in the County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr on the 27th May 2015. The attendees were all parents of children who attend Coylton Primary School. A note of the points raised and views expressed at the public meeting are listed in Appendix 2.

3.2 Summary of the points and views expressed during the consultation

The main issues/views arising out of the consultation are listed below along with a response from Educational Services.

- 1) View expressed: Children from Coylton Primary School predominantly make a placing request to Kyle Academy at the P7/S1 transfer stage. Children from Stair who attend Coylton Primary School as their catchment school will be discriminated against as they are resident within East Ayrshire and therefore will not be balloted along with their peers.

Response: Coylton Primary School has an agreed cross boundary arrangement with East Ayrshire Council and this arrangement is not affected by the Council's proposed changes. Parents choosing to make a placing request are informed that there is no guarantee that their placing request will be successful.

Historical data confirms that not all children from Coylton Primary School choose to go to Kyle Academy and therefore peer relationships are not maintained in all cases. Experience has shown that maintaining peer relationships are not essential to a child's education and that their relationships may change several times during their time at school.

- 2) View expressed: Children from Stair who attend Coylton Primary are in a unique situation.

Response: South Ayrshire Council has a number of cross boundary school catchment areas in operation. These include Barassie Primary (Dundonald Camp), Carrick

Academy (Dalrymple) and Queen Margaret Academy (Patna and Dalmellington). Cross boundary arrangements should not be seen as an automatic gateway to other schools in South Ayrshire Council.

- 3) Question raised: How will the process remain open transparent and fair, when the ballot will be carried out behind closed doors?

Response: The placing request arrangements are widely publicised to ensure that parents are fully aware of the process from the outset. This includes the criteria that will be used to determine the successful placing requests when there are more applications than there are spaces available. The administration of the ballot is straightforward and does not require independent scrutiny. The Council does not have a vested interest in which school a parent wishes to send their child to and is therefore well placed to administer the ballot.

It is important to note that the placing request legislation does not require the involvement of the Local Attendance Council in the initial stages of the placing request process. However, members of the Local Attendance Council will continue to be involved in an Education Appeals Committee which is required under statute to hear an appeal against a refused placing request.

- 4) View expressed: It should be made clear in the procedures that parents whose child attends a nursery class attached to a primary school that there is no guarantee that if they are required to make a placing request when moving to the primary stage at the same school, that it will be successful.

Response: The existing primary school registration paperwork explains that if the child does not reside within the catchment area of the school that the parent wishes their child to attend then they need to complete a placing request application. The guidance notes also explain that there is no guarantee that a placing request will be successful.

The Council will also include this information in the paperwork for nursery registration so that parents are aware of the primary registration/ placing request arrangements at a much earlier stage in the school process.

- 5) Question raised: Is there an appeal process if a child's medical condition changes prior to the start of the school session?

Response: A child's medical condition would only be considered when processing the initial placing request. Medical conditions are only relevant if they can only be met in a particular school and if the placing request is refused the parent has the right to appeal the decision. If a child's medical condition changes after the initial placing request has been dealt with, they can submit a further placing request. This would only be considered if there were places available at the requested school. It is important to highlight that only one placing request appeal can be made within any 12 month period.

- 6) View expressed: This may be detrimental to the educational attainment, health and wellbeing of children from Coylton Primary School.

Response: Experience has shown that a child's peer relationships change a number of times during their time at school. This is particularly the case when children move from nursery to primary and from primary to secondary where they are part of a much larger peer group and are likely to make new friends.

- 7) View expressed: Stair School was closed in the 1960's and the children moved to Coylton Primary School. Stair became part of East Ayrshire Council when the new Councils were set up. Children will now be penalised by South Ayrshire Council if their parents wish to send them to another secondary school other than Ayr Academy.

Response: South Ayrshire Council has a legal obligation to provide education for the children that are resident within the Council boundary. The inter authority agreements regarding cross boundary arrangements only apply to specific schools and are not affected by this proposal. Parents who choose to send their child to an alternative school using the placing request process do so with the knowledge that their request may not be successful.

- 8) View expressed: The distance between the school and the child's address should be given some consideration.

Response: The distance from home to school would only be considered a material factor if the distance involved was greater than those which entitle a child or young person to free school transport i.e. 2 miles or more for primary school children and 3 miles or more for young people attending secondary school. Currently around 80% of children and young people make their own way to school within the distances referred to above.

- 9) View expressed: Historically children from Coylton Primary have gone to Kyle Academy as it is closer.

Response: The Council recognises that Kyle Academy is closer for children from the Coylton area. However, the children are entitled to free school transport if they attend Ayr Academy which is their catchment school and therefore distance is not an issue.

- 10) View expressed: Moving to secondary school is an important stage in a child's development and the inability to remain with their peer group will be detrimental to them.

Response: The Council does not share this view. There are many examples where peer relations are not maintained during the primary 7/ S1 transfer stage or during a young person's time at secondary school. If the peer group wish to remain together this is more likely to happen if the group transfer to their catchment secondary school.

- 11) View expressed: Children from Stair should not be balloted along with all non Ayrshire residents who have not attended a South Ayrshire School.

Response: South Ayrshire Council has a legal duty to ensure that there is sufficient education provision in place for children resident within the Council area. The Council is therefore of the view that some priority should be given to South Ayrshire children in the placing request process.

- 12) View expressed: Stair children will be treated different from their peer group.

Response: South Ayrshire Council has a legal obligation to manage the education provision for children who are resident in South Ayrshire. There will be no impact on cross boundary catchment children if they transfer to their associated secondary school. This only relates to the placing request arrangements.

Historical data has shown that not all the children from Coylton Primary will make a placing request to Kyle Academy and of those that do there is a risk that not all will be successful.

13) Question raised: Do you know how many children from Stair the change will impact on?

Response: The number of children fluctuates from year to year but from the September 2015 census there were 10 children who stay in the Stair area and attend Coylton Primary School. However, in 2014 there were approximately 51 primary school children from other authorities attending a South Ayrshire school and the proposed changes may also impact on them.

14) Question raised: Has a rezoning of Coylton Primary been considered?

Response: No rezoning of Coylton Primary School has been considered.

15) Question raised: Will the Council consider rezoning Stair?

Response: This would be a decision for East Ayrshire Council as Stair falls within their Council area.

16) Question raised: When will the new Ayr Academy open?

Response: The new school is expected to open in summer 2017.

17) Question raised: Where exactly will the new Ayr Academy be built?

Response: The new school is being built within the Craigie estate, Ayr on land previously owned by the University of the West of Scotland.

18) Question raised: With the development of the Corton site for new housing is it likely that Kyle Academy and Belmont Academy will be extended?

Response: There is no intention to extend Belmont Academy which has limited space available. There is an option to extend Kyle Academy, however the Council has decided that the new Ayr Academy will be used initially to create additional capacity for any future increase in secondary student numbers in the Ayr area.

19) Question raised: What route will the school buses take to get to the new school?

Response: Normally the Council does not specify the actual route that a bus operator should use. There are however a number of potential routes that they can opt to use including Whitletts Road, Ayr and Holmston Road, Ayr.

20) Question raised: What size will the new Ayr Academy be?

Response: The new school will initially be built for approximately 1000 students but has the potential to be extended for up to 1300 students. This additional capacity has been built-in to ensure that there is sufficient education place for young people who reside within South Ayrshire.

4.0 Report by Education Scotland

The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the amendments contained in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires HM Inspectors from Education Scotland to be involved in the formal consultation process. As part of this process HM Inspectors undertook a number of activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal. A copy of Education Scotland's report on the educational aspects of the proposal is attached as Appendix 5.

4.1 Process

4.1.1 Inspectors considered all relevant documentation provided by the Council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others;

4.1.2 In addition, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 27 May 2015 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the site of Barassie, Coylton and Straiton Primary School Nursery Classes, Belmont and Kyle Academies, including discussion with relevant consultees.

4.2 Education Scotland summary

4.2.1 South Ayrshire Council has set out a reasonable case for amending its current arrangements relating to placing requests for its primary and secondary schools. Overall, the proposal will benefit children and young people who live within the council area by increasing the likelihood of their placing request being successful. Should the council decide to implement the proposal, it is unlikely that there will be any negative impact on quality of learning and teaching or the learning environment. The proposal will help the council to make effective and efficient use of its resources in view of the number of new homes that are planned. It will ensure that arrangements for processing placing request applications for children and young people, whether or not they live within South Ayrshire are open, clear and consistent. In taking forward this proposal, the council should seek to minimise any impact on families who may be affected, for example, through high-quality transition arrangements.

4.3 Response to the main actions raised by Education Scotland

South Ayrshire Council welcomes the report by Education Scotland which acknowledges the benefits of the proposal. Officers from Educational Services have considered the content of the report and the actions highlighted in section 3. These are listed below along with the proposals to address them.

4.3.1 **Paragraph 3.2:** Residents of other councils whose children are zoned for a South Ayrshire school who met with HM Inspectors were concerned that the proposed arrangements may disadvantage them, should they decide to put in a placing request. The council should seek to reassure these families at the point of transition to any new school.

Response: South Ayrshire Council has very good primary/secondary transition arrangements in place which help prepare our young people for their move onto secondary education. We

will work with Ayr Academy to look at ways in which they can reassure children from Coynton Primary School who may be affected by the proposals. This may include an increase in the transition visits to Ayr Academy and promoting the exciting educational opportunities that the new Ayr Academy will offer all of its students.

5.0 Review of the Proposal

The Director of Educational Services has considered the responses to the statutory consultation including Education Scotland's report and is of the view that the proposed changes to the placing request arrangements do not need to be amended.

6.0 Decision making process

In accordance with the Schools (Consultation)(Scotland) Act 2010, this report will be published on Tuesday 22nd September 2015 and made available for further consideration for a minimum period of 3 weeks. Copies of the report are available at County Buildings, Ayr, all customer contact centres, schools and libraries. The report is also available on the Council's website at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/consultations.

The consultation report will be submitted to the meeting of South Ayrshire Council's Leadership Panel on Tuesday, 1st December 2015 for consideration and a decision.

Appendix 1

Nos:	Category:	Date Response Received	Method of Response	Response:
1.	Parent/Carer	6.5.15	Email	<p>Disagrees with proposed placing request consultation.</p> <p>I note from your proposed amendments children attending and living in South Ayrshire will be balloted ahead of those living out with South Ayrshire. Therefore you are indicating that fellow pupils from Coylton PS who live in South Ayrshire will be balloted ahead of my child.</p> <p>I believe that you are therefore discriminating against my child by not allowing him to be balloted along with his classmates. After all we are in a slightly unique situation being zoned for a South Ayrshire school but living in East Ayrshire.</p>
2.	Community	7.5.15	Email	<p>Disagrees with proposed placing request consultation.</p> <p>You say the proposed process will remain open, transparent, and fair. For that to be certain, how will the ballot operate to ensure that confidence remains with the public. Carrying it out behind closed doors without independent scrutiny may well be open to legal challenge.</p>
3.	Parent/Carer	15.5.15	Online Response Form	<p>Agrees with proposed placing request consultation.</p> <p>Do you agree with the proposal amend the priority criteria for accepting placing requests? :Yes</p>
4.	Parent Council (Kingcase Primary School)	28.5.15	Online Response Form	<p>Agrees with proposed placing request consultation.</p> <p>Additional Comments: We discussed this at our Parent Council meeting last week and there were some comments that the procedure could be made a bit clearer, especially to parents of children in a nursery attached to a school, who need to submit a placement request, and that a place is not guaranteed. Also, it was queried if there would be an appeal process if, for example, medical conditions were to change prior to the start of a new school session.</p>

Nos:	Category:	Date Response Received	Method of Response	Response:
5.	Parent/Carer	14.6.15	Online Response Form	<p>Agrees with the proposal to amend the priority criteria for accepting placing requests.</p> <p>Disagrees with proposal to give priority of applications for children and young people who are resident in South Ayrshire. Under these new proposals I feel my children would be severely disadvantages if they wished to submit a placing request for another South Ayrshire secondary school in their P7 year. As historically the vast majority of children attending Coylton Primary School submit placing requested for Kyle Academy (due to the close vicinity of the school), this could result in children from the Parish of Stair not being able to transition to a secondary school with the peer group they have known since nursery age. As transition to secondary school is such a vital and important stage of a child's development, the inability to remain with their bonded peer group throughout their secondary years may be detrimental and affect the child's educational attainment, health and wellbeing.</p>
6.	Parent/Carer	19.6.15	Online Response Form	<p>Agrees with the proposal to amend the priority criteria for accepting placing requests.</p> <p>Disagrees with proposal to give priority of applications for children and young people who are resident in South Ayrshire.</p> <p>Under these new proposals I feel my children would be severely disadvantaged if they wished to submit a placing request for another South Ayrshire secondary school in their P7 year. As historically the vast majority of children attending Coylton Primary School submit placing requested for Kyle Academy (due to the close vicinity of the school), this could result in children from the Parish of Stair not being able to transition to a secondary school with the peer group they have known since nursery age. As transition to secondary school is such a vital and important stage of a child's development, the inability to remain with their bonded peer group throughout their secondary years may be detrimental and affect the child's educational attainment, health and wellbeing.</p>

7.	Grandparent	23/6/15	Response Form In writing	<p>Disagrees with proposal.</p> <p>Stair School closed as a primary school late 60's and under the old County Council it was agreed children in the catchment area would be transported to Coylton Primary School with the option to transfer to Ayr Academy. The new district council was set up, Stair came into East Ayrshire – it would appear if parents or the present generation wish to send their children to another secondary school (other than Ayr Academy) in South Ayrshire they are being penalised for a decision made by the old council.</p>
8.	Parent/Carer	23/6/15	Online Response Form	<p>Agrees with the proposal to amend the priority criteria for accepting placing requests.</p> <p>Additional Comments: I also feel that distance the school is from the child's address should be given some consideration. In my case the catchment secondary school my child should attend is a 25-30 minute walk away or 2 local buses, as there is no school bus available. Whereas the nearest secondary school is 2 minutes walk from the house.</p>
9.	Parent/Carer	24/6/15	Online Response Form	<p>Agrees with the proposal to amend the priority criteria for accepting placing requests.</p> <p>Disagrees with proposal to give priority of applications for children and young people who are resident in South Ayrshire.</p> <p>Disagrees with the proposal to remove the use of a Local Attendance Council to consider placing requests.</p> <p>Additional Comments: As a parent living in stair parish, my children are currently zoned for Coylton primary (South Ayrshire school). Many children in South Ayrshire have historically chosen to apply for placing requests for Kyle Academy as it is logistically closer for them, and I feel detrimental to my children's education, health and wellbeing, by being separated from their peers whom they have studied with since nursery. I am aware that there are only a few children affected, however would request an amendment to the proposal is made to ensure East Ayrshire residing pupils zoned for a South Ayrshire primary school are given fair and equal consideration in any secondary school placing request process rather than being placed in a second ballot along with all other non South Ayrshire residents.</p>

10.	Parent/Carer	24/6/15	Online Response Form	<p>Agrees with the proposal to amend the priority criteria for accepting placing requests.</p> <p>Disagrees with proposal to give priority of applications for children and young people who are resident in South Ayrshire.</p> <p>Disagrees with the proposal to remove the use of a Local Attendance Council to consider placing requests.</p> <p>Additional Comments: As an East Ayrshire parent living at stair, my children are zoned for Coylton primary in South Ayrshire. By attending Coylton primary they are therefore zoned for Ayr academy, however historically many due to the close vicinity of the school have placed placing requests for Kyle academy. Under your new proposals I feel my kids will be severely disadvantaged if they were to submit a placing request for a South Ayrshire school. I am aware that there is only a small amount of children residing in stair so only a few effected. As transition to secondary is such a vital and important stage of a child's development the inability to remain with their bonded peer group could be very detrimental and effect the child's education, health & wellbeing. I would therefore request an amendment to the proposal is made to ensure East Ayrshire residing pupils zoned for South Ayrshire primary school are given a fair and equal consideration in any secondary school placing requests, rather than being placed in a second ballot along with all non ayrshire residents who have not attended a South Ayrshire primary school.</p>

Public Meeting at County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr: 27th May 1015 at 7:00pm

Total attendees: 5

View expressed

- Stair is an exceptional situation and needs to be treated as one. Children who live in Stair have one catchment primary school which is Coylton Primary. This has been the case since 1969 when Stair Primary school closed.
- Historically pupils who attend Coylton Primary make placing requests to Kyle Academy. Pupils in Stair will be disadvantaged as they will be treated as East Ayrshire pupils.
- Stair pupils are being discriminated against as they are being treated differently from their peer group.
- Do you know how many children from Stair will be impacted on by this change in the placing request arrangements?
- Will the Council consider rezoning Stair?
- Only a very small percentage of placing requests received from pupils who reside in East Ayrshire are from pupils from Stair, can they not be treated differently?
- Has a rezoning of Coylton Primary been considered?
- When will the new Ayr Academy open?
- What size will the new Ayr Academy be?
- Where exactly will the new school be located?
- With the development of the Corton site for new housing is it likely that Kyle Academy and Belmont Academy will be extended?
- What route will the school buses take to get to the new Ayr Academy?

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Ayrshire Council to amend the current arrangements relating to placing requests for primary and secondary schools within South Ayrshire Council.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of South Ayrshire Council's proposal to amend the placing request arrangements for its primary and secondary schools. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of South Ayrshire Council; any other users; and children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 27 May 2015 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the site of Barassie, Coylton and Straiton Primary School Nursery Classes, Belmont and Kyle Academies, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 South Ayrshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The consultation process ran from 6 May 2015 until 26 June 2015. A public meeting was held on 27 May 2015. Appropriate arrangements for both electronic and postal responses were put in place. The council received responses from ten individuals. Overall, a majority agreed with the aspect of the proposal to amend the priority criteria for accepting placing requests. However, a number of respondents disagreed with the aspect of the proposal which gives priority to applications for children and young people who reside in South Ayrshire.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 South Ayrshire Council publicises its arrangements for admitting children and young people to its schools and for the management of placing requests. This fulfils all relevant statutory duties. Where there are more requests than places available for a particular school, the council currently sets up a Local Attendance Council to consider the requests using agreed criteria. This arrangement is not a statutory requirement.

3.2 The council has identified that there are approximately 2600 children and young people in South Ayrshire who are not attending their catchment school. Each year the council receives around 600 placing request applications. Approximately 80 of these are for children and young people who reside outwith South Ayrshire. Placing requests from outwith South Ayrshire are currently considered on an equal basis with those from within the council area. This places considerable pressure on accommodation in some South Ayrshire schools. Residents of other councils whose children are zoned for a South Ayrshire school who met with HM Inspectors were concerned that the proposed arrangements may disadvantage them, should they decide to put in a placing request. The council should seek to reassure these families at the point of transition to any new school.

3.3 The council is proposing amendments to the criteria for determining placing requests and to discontinue the role of the Local Attendance Council. This is in response to South Ayrshire Council's Local Plan which includes land supply for approximately 10,000 new houses. This will increase the overall demand for school places and is also likely to result in an increased number of placing requests for particular schools. The council reasonably asserts that its proposed amendments will improve the efficiency of its arrangements for managing demand for school places arising from planned new housing. The proposal does not seek to change the present catchment areas and children and young people within a school's catchment area will continue to be given priority when places are being allocated. Therefore, should the council decide to implement the proposal, it is unlikely that there will be any detrimental effect on quality of learning, teaching or the learning environment.

3.4 In the proposal, the council has set out a ranked order of priorities it will use for managing placing requests. The rationale for ranking the priorities is fair and reasonable. It will ensure that the council is well-placed to accommodate the wishes of parents who live within South Ayrshire. The council acknowledges that the proposal may result in an increase in unsuccessful placing requests for children and young people who are not resident within South Ayrshire and who do not have a sibling already attending the school which is the subject of the placing request. In the proposal document, the council outlines a number of reasonable steps it will take to minimise any adverse impact of the proposal, should it go ahead. These include making arrangements for the early communication of its priority criteria to those who may be considering making a placing request.

3.5 The proposal is of overall educational benefit to the children and young people across the South Ayrshire Council area. It will ensure that arrangements for deciding on the allocation of places within the council's schools are open, transparent and fair. It will also ensure that arrangements for handling placing requests from parents of children and young people who live outwith the South Ayrshire Council area are fair, clear and consistent. Implementation of the proposal will help the council to meet its duties to secure best value in the delivery of services as set out in the *Local Government in Scotland Act 2003*. It will also enable the council to meet its legislative duties to secure for its area adequate and efficient provision of school education under the terms of the *Education (Scotland) Act 1980*.

4. Summary

South Ayrshire Council has set out a reasonable case for amending its current arrangements relating to placing requests for its primary and secondary schools. Overall, the proposal will benefit children and young people who live within the council area by increasing the likelihood of their placing request being successful. Should the council decide to implement the proposal, it is unlikely that there will be any negative impact on quality of learning and teaching or the learning environment. The proposal will help the council to make effective and efficient use of its resources in view of the number of new homes that are planned. It will ensure that arrangements for processing placing request applications for children and young people, whether or not they live within South Ayrshire are open, clear and consistent. In taking forward this proposal, the council should seek to minimise any impact on families who may be affected, for example, through high-quality transition arrangements.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
August 2015**