

Report

8

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	16 March 2010
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Class Sizes in P1 to 3
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ inform the committee of proposals to allow flexibility in applying the Council policy in relation to class sizes in primary 1.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the Executive Director be authorised to vary class sizes in primary 1 in response to local circumstances and taking cognisance of the Education (Lower Class Sizes) (Scotland) Regulations 1999; and
- (2) that the proposal to extend the period that reserved places be held, as outlined in paragraph 5.3, be approved; and
- (3) that the progress to introduce a class size maximum of 18 in schools with the highest free meal entitlements (FME) be noted.

3. Background

3.1. It has become necessary to review and adjust staffing arrangements for primary 1-3 to take account of a number of factors over the last year:-

- the continued absence of a legislative basis for a primary 1 class size maximum of 25 pupils
- experience of the operation of the Reserved Places Scheme for primary 1 in selected schools
- the introduction of a commitment to increase the number of pupils in primary 1 to 3 who are taught in classes of 18 or less

4. Class sizes of 25 in primary 1

4.1. At the Education Resources Committee on 19 May 2009, South Lanarkshire Council agreed a policy of continuing its commitment to operating a class size maximum of 25 pupils in primary 1 for the school term starting in August 2009 following Guidance issued by the Scottish Government in Circular 1/2007.

4.2. The class size of 25 was used to determine the allocation of staff for catchment pupils and the availability of spaces to accommodate placing requests. Last session this position was challenged by 19 parents who argued successfully in the Sheriff Court that the definitive legal position was that stated in the Education (Lower

Primary Class Sizes) (Scotland) Regulations 1999: "No lower primary class at a school shall contain more than 30 pupils while an ordinary teaching session is conducted by a single qualified teacher." As a result of these rulings, the Council accommodated the children as 'excepted places' and they were placed in classes beyond the policy maximum of 25.

- 4.3. The Government subsequently indicated that it would establish a legislative basis for a primary class size maximum of 25 pupils in primary 1. It is understood that any new arrangement will now not be in place before August 2010. As a result of this status quo position, until such times as the national position changes, there is a need to allow flexibility in applying the current policy.
- 4.4. It is, therefore, proposed to maintain the current policy position of a maximum of 25 for pupils in primary 1 but permit the Executive Director to vary the class size to take account of local circumstances and relevant legislation and adjust the maximum class size up to 30 pupils. In effect this would mean that a primary 1 class could be increased to 30, taught by 1 teacher, if catchment pupil demand and/or placing request demand makes this necessary.

5. Reserved Places

- 5.1. At the Education Resources Committee on 3 March 2009, South Lanarkshire Council approved a policy of reserving places in primary and secondary schools to prevent all places being used to accommodate placing requests at the expense of children moving into an area before the start of term.
- 5.2. Within the policy it was stated that reserved places would be allocated, 'on or before the first day of the August term each year.' Having operated the policy for a year it has become clear that accommodating catchment demand would be helped by extending the period for which reserved places are retained.
- 5.3. It is proposed that the policy (the detail of which is contained in the Report to the Education Resources Committee of 3 March 2009) be amended to the extent that the Executive Director has the discretion to reserve such number of places as he considers reasonable, from the time of consideration of placing requests up to and for the whole of the session to which the placing requests relate.

6. Update of class sizes of 18 in primary 1 to primary 3

- 6.1. In 2008, as part of the Concordat, South Lanarkshire Council committed resources to enable the 11 schools with the highest FME to operate with class sizes of 18 in primary 1. This was approved by the Council's Executive Committee in May 2008.
- 6.2. The Council is now committed to ensuring that 20% of children in primary 1-3 are taught in classes of 18 or less (whilst abiding by the 1999 Regulations). A list showing existing schools with class sizes of 18 and the proposed schools for class sizes of 18 is attached at Appendix 1.

7. Employee Implications

- 7.1. Education Resources will ensure that staffing arrangements for classes in P1 to P3 are implemented in line with class size policy.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1. All financial implications are accommodated within existing budgets.

9. Other Implications

9.1. None

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

10.1. There is no requirement to carry out an impact assessment in terms of the proposals contained within this report.

10.2. Consultation is taking place with a range of stakeholders, including the Trade Unions and employees.

Larry Forde

Executive Director (Education Resources)

25 February 2010

Link(s) to Council Objectives

- Raise Educational Attainment for All

Previous References

- Education Resources Committee - 3 March 2009
- Education Resources Committee - 19 May 2009
- Executive Committee – 28 May 2008
- Executive Committee – 11 February 2010

List of Background Papers

- Scottish Government Circular 1/2007

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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**Primary Schools where P1-P3 pupils
in classes of 18 or less from Aug 2010
will achieve 20% national target**

Proposed Schools for Class Sizes 18, P1-3
Carstairs Junction Primary School
Neilsland Primary School
Netherburn Primary School
St Anthony's Primary School
St Mark's Primary School – Rutherglen
St Peter's Primary School
Stablestone Primary School
Woodpark Primary School

Existing Schools with Class Sizes of 18
Auchinraith Primary School
Beckford Primary School
Burgh Primary School
Cathkin Primary School
Hareleeshill Primary School
Loch Primary School
Rigside Primary School
Robert Smillie Memorial Primary School
Spittal Primary School
St Ninian's Primary School
St Paul's Primary School
Udston Primary School