

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

4 June 1996

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Report No 309/96

PLACING REQUESTS FOR ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

This report describes current arrangements for placing requests and recommends that the Council embark on a consultation exercise to establish a clear system of prioritising placing requests for the two Roman Catholic schools which it manages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee instructs me to undertake a consultation exercise, in terms of The Education (Publication and Consultation Etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1981, as amended, on a proposal that:

when it is necessary, due to the imposition of an intake limit, to refuse any placing requests for either of the Council's two Roman Catholic schools, to operate the same three priority categories as are outlined in the Council's current policy, but when it is necessary to refuse only **some** placing requests within any one of these three categories -

- (i) to determine priorities within any one category firstly by giving priority to those applicants who declare an affinity with the religious beliefs of the school
- (ii) otherwise to give priority **within** the Priority 1 Category to children having a brother or sister (or relative permanently living at the same address as part of an extended family) in attendance at the specified school and thereafter, if necessary, by giving priority to children whose normal place of residence is closest to the specified school.

NOTE - In cases where priority does require to be given to applicants declaring an affinity with the religious beliefs of the school, it should be a requirement that the pupils concerned have been baptised in the Roman Catholic Church. Parents should be able to confirm this by the provision of a baptismal certificate.

BACKGROUND

- a) At its meeting on 23 August 1995, the Education Committee instructed me to maintain in place the educational policies of Tayside Regional Council with effect from April 1996, but to review these policies regularly (Article 2 refers).
- b) Tayside Regional Council's policy on the operation of school placing requests was that the Director of Education be authorised:
- "i to continue to encourage parents to send their children to the school designated by the Education Authority, but nonetheless to agree to parental placing requests whenever possible
 - ii when it is necessary, due to the imposition of intake limits, to refuse any placing requests, to operate the following priorities:
 - Priority 1 Children normally resident within the delineated area of the specified school.
 - Priority 2 Children not normally resident within the delineated area of the specified school, but having a brother or sister (or relative permanently living at the same address as part of an extended family)* in attendance at that school.
 - Priority 3 Children not normally resident within the delineated area of the specified school and having no brothers or sisters in attendance at that school.
 - * provided that the member of the extended family for whom the placing request has been made has lived within that extended family for a period of at least 2 years.
 - iii when it is necessary to refuse only some placing requests within any one of the above three categories, to determine priorities by the single criterion of distance from the specified school, with priority being given to children whose normal place of residence is closest to the specified school
 - iv to treat as an exceptional case for entry into secondary school any child who has been required by the Education Authority to attend a primary school not normally designated for the child's place of residence, and to assign such a child to Priority 1 within the secondary school whose delineated area includes the delineated area of the primary school which the child has been required to attend
 - v to intimate to all parents whose placing requests are refused due to the imposition of an intake limit for a specific school that their children's names will be held on a waiting list for that school, that any vacant places arising in the school will be allocated to children whose names are on the waiting list in accordance with the Council's system for deciding priorities, and that the waiting list will remain operational until the end of September in the year in which the placing request was made, after which it will cease to operate."

- c) At its meeting on 27 September 1995, the Education Committee agreed to offer its support in principle to a proposal mooted by Tayside Regional Council that formal consultation be entered into with a view to amending the aforementioned policy on the prioritisation of placing requests in respect of Roman Catholic schools (Article 7 refers). This proposal was subsequently referred back to Angus Council to allow it to take forward the consultation exercise if it so chose.
- d) I understand that at least one of the former mainland Scottish education authorities operated a prioritisation system similar to that being recommended. I also understand that there is no legal impediment to adopting the recommended system of prioritisation, provided a formal consultation exercise is undertaken in terms of the appropriate legislation, prior to any final decision being taken.
- e) The two Roman Catholic schools in Angus are St Thomas' Primary School (Arbroath) and St Margaret's Primary School (Montrose).

St Thomas' Primary School - The delineated area of St Thomas' Primary School is an amalgamation of the delineated areas of the non-denominational primary schools serving the burgh of Arbroath. In addition, Roman Catholic pupils enrolled in the school and residing in Auchmithie, Lunan, Marywell, Boysack, Woodville, Inverkeilor, Friockheim and Arbirlot were granted free transport by Tayside Regional Council.

The notional capacity of St Thomas' Primary School is 125 pupils, and for several years now it has operated very close to this figure. Approximately 66% of pupils in the current school population are Roman Catholic

St Margaret's Primary School - The delineated area of St Margaret's Primary School is an amalgamation of the delineated areas of the non-denominational primary schools serving the burghs of Montrose and Brechin, and the area between Montrose and Brechin which is the historical parish of St Margaret's.

The notional capacity of St Margaret's Primary School is 75 pupils, although for several years it has operated well below this figure. With very few exceptions, only Roman Catholic children are enrolled in St Margaret's Primary School.

PROPOSALS

It is proposed that the policy of Tayside Regional Council remain unchanged for non-denominational schools. For Roman Catholic Schools two changes are proposed. Firstly, if it is necessary to refuse some placing requests within any of the three priority categories, then priority should be given to those children whose parents declare an affinity with the religious beliefs of the school. In these cases it will be necessary to establish that the pupils concerned have been baptised in the Roman Catholic Church. Secondly, since the delineated areas of these two schools include some large **potential** school populations, it may be possible that a strict application of the distance criterion (iii above) would result in some children being in the delineated area, and having a brother or sister already in the school, being refused a place. In accordance with the spirit of the priority categorisation, therefore, it is proposed to give priority within the Priority 1 Category, to children who also have a brother or sister in attendance at the school. Thereafter, if it is still necessary to distinguish between pupils in a given category, priority should continue to be given using the single criterion of distance from the specified school, with priority being given to children whose normal place of residence is closest to the specified school.

In accordance with the statutory regulations, these proposals should form the basis of a formal consultation process which seeks views from the School Boards of all primary schools affected by these proposals and also from the Bishop of Dunkeld.

CONSULTATION

This report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive and the Director of Law and Administration.

JIM ANDERSON

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

JAA/RB

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.