

PE1486/F

Glasgow City Council

Public Petitions Committee

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1486

Petition

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve national quality in the primary one academic year by reducing class sizes to 18 with an upper limit of 20; direct additional funding to resource the measures taken with appropriate staff, accommodation and physical resources; protect the family unit through amendment to current policy to ensure that siblings are not refused placing requests to be schooled alongside their family members, and proactively prepare for future upsurges in the population to avoid displacement of siblings in primary schools.

Questions

1. What are your views on the issues raised in the petition?

Glasgow City Council has consistently argued that a reduction in class sizes alone will do minimal to improve learning and teaching. Additional teaching and other resources will always be welcome. The Council believes however, that such additional resources should be deployed at their discretion targeting resources at early intervention measures such as their highly successful nurture programme and developing the quality of teaching in classrooms.

The capital and revenue implications of the petition would be significant for the City and Scotland at a time when there are significant current and forecast financial pressures across local government and the public sector more generally.

As a preliminary estimate, the proposed reduction in P1 class sizes would require an additional 50 classrooms across the city to be created with the commensurate increase in teaching and other resources. This would likely to require capital funding of circ £15m and revenue of £5M per annum.

2. To what extent do you agree that parents should have a statutory right to place siblings together in their chosen school?

Glasgow fully supports parent choice but recognises that this needs to be considered in the context of ensuring that schools retain adequate capacity for catchment area children to attend their local school. The rights of catchment area children to attend their local school must take first priority.

All parents who make placing requests need to take cognisance of an element of risk they take, particularly in high occupancy, popular schools. An assurance that siblings will automatically be enrolled cannot and should not be guaranteed against a catchment area child's right to attend their local school.

3. Please set out how policies are applied in your area in relation to pupil admissions and how certain factors such as catchment area and sibling placing requests are prioritised.

Catchment area children are enrolled as a matter of entitlement. Thereafter, based on the remaining places available, placing requests are prioritised as follows, in rank order:

- i medical needs that only the requested school can support e.g. suitable access
 - ii in denominational schools only, those parents/carers that can demonstrate or who have declared an affinity with the religious ethos of the school
 - iii if a child/young person already has a sibling at the school
 - iv If the applicant is a lone parent
 - v The distance between home and the requested educational establishment by a safe walking route
 - vi the suitability of the choice of educational establishment of particular teaching methods
4. In your area what is the criteria used to decide on class sizes and what are the constraints to increase the number of classes?

Like all local authorities the Council is required to work within the current statutory class sizes of 25 for P1, 30 for P2 and P3 and 33 for P4 to P7. Actual class configuration from year to year need to take cognisance of these maxima, working within the Council's teacher staffing standard.

The key constraints to support the increase in the number of classes are physical capacity of a number of schools that would require to be extended to accommodate smaller class sizes and the recruitment of additional teaching, support staff and other resources to support the additional classes created. Both would require significant capital and revenue investment.