

PE2129/C: Standardise criteria and consultations for assessing demand for denominational schools

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills written submission, 19 April 2025

Thank you for your letter dated 3 March 2025 regarding *PE2129: Standardise criteria and consultations for assessing demand for denominational schools* updating me on the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee consideration of the above petition at its meeting on 19 February 2025.

The Committee asked whether Scottish Ministers are confident that the consideration of proposals for denominational schools is fair and consistent across Scotland and if so, what evidence exists to support this view.

As I noted in my previous response to the Committee, local authorities are responsible for the school estate, including in relation to denominational schools. It is a longstanding feature of Scottish education that decisions about the establishment of new schools rest with local councils, in consultation with their communities.

When establishing a new school, local authorities are required to carry out a consultation under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 which has to include at least 30 school days, engage with a specific list of relevant consultees and include a public meeting. Education Scotland also produce a report about the educational benefit of the proposal and the LA has to produce a final report summarising responses to the consultation.

The position reflects the importance of local democracy in Scotland. Local communities also have the opportunity to reflect any concerns about local decision making at the ballot box in local council elections.

I have no evidence to support the view that the current arrangements for the establishment of new schools, including denominational schools, is unfair or inconsistent.

We do, of course, keep our policies under regular review and, in the event we receive compelling evidence of poor practice, I would be happy for my officials to consider this issue further.

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