

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Perth and Kinross Council to vary the arrangements for the transfer of pupils to secondary school from Abernyte, Inchtute and Longforgan Primary Schools. The proposal intends that Perth High School will be the only designated secondary school for pupils from these schools from August 2016 and thus end the agreement with Dundee City Council of offering an alternative, previously Menzieshill High School which is due to close in June 2016. The proposal will allow Perth and Kinross pupils already attending Menzieshill High School as entitled pupils at the time of closure to be supported to travel to and from Harris Academy in Dundee to complete their education with effect from August 2016.

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 Perth and Kinross Council's proposal that Perth High School will be the only designated secondary school for pupils from Abernyte, Inchtute and Longforgan Primary Schools from August 2016 following the closure of Menzieshill High School in June 2016. The proposal also details that Perth and Kinross pupils already attending Menzieshill High School in Dundee as entitled pupils as at June 2016 will be supported to travel to and from Harris Academy in Dundee to complete their education with effect from August 2016. 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 the schools; 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 meetings held on 16 and 17 November 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 sites of Abernyte, Inchtute and Longforgan Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Perth and Kinross 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 on the proposal ran from 26 October to 8 December 2015. During this period the council held two public meetings in two of the schools involved in the proposal. One member of the public attended the meeting at Inchtute Primary School and nine members of the public attended the meeting at Longforgan Primary School. At these meetings there were mixed responses to the proposal. The council received one written response.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal is of educational benefit. The most significant benefit is the opportunity children will have to undertake a coherent and extensive transition between primary and secondary education. Appropriate transition arrangements for children moving to Perth High School are already well established. Reducing the number of secondary schools involved in transition will allow more coherent learning and teaching in P7, particularly in the summer term for all children. The proposal would also provide greater certainty for children and families residing within the catchment areas by eliminating the need for placing requests at the point of transition.

3.2 The proposal has the potential to build social cohesion across three small primary schools each with relatively small numbers of children transferring to secondary. There is potential to widen friendship groups prior to transition and in turn, to support children to be more confident as they move on to secondary education.

3.3 Implementation of the proposal will enable the council to make more effective and efficient use of its resources and help it secure the best value in the delivery of its services.

3.4 The proposal makes provision for Perth and Kinross pupils already attending Menzieshill High School in Dundee as entitled pupils as at June 2016 to be supported to travel to and from Harris Academy in Dundee to complete their education with effect from August 2016.

3.5 Pupils who spoke with HM Inspectors from all three schools had a good level of understanding of the proposal. They understood that they may not be able to go to secondary school in Dundee if the proposal is successful. Although this would be disappointing to them they, overall, accepted they would go to Perth High School instead.

3.6 Parents who met with HM Inspectors were largely in favour of the proposal. They recognised that the current arrangements for transfer to a secondary school in another local authority area are unusual.

4. Summary

Overall, the proposal is of educational benefit. It addresses anomalies resulting from arrangements put in place almost twenty years ago. If the proposal is implemented it has the potential to create even more effective transition arrangements for children as they move between primary and secondary education. It would also allow Perth and Kinross Council to make the most effective and efficient use of resources. The proposal also makes suitable arrangements to minimise impact on pupils who already attend secondary school in Dundee. In taking forward this proposal, the council should continue to work with stakeholders to ensure they are clear about all aspects of the proposal.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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