

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Perth and Kinross Council to establish Additional Support Needs Specialist Provision at Oakbank Primary School with effect from August 2015.

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 to establish specialist provision for children with additional support needs at Oakbank Primary School with effect from August 2015. 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 school any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- 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 meeting held on 2 February 2015 at Oakbank Primary School 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;

- visit to the site of Oakbank Primary School, 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*. Perth and Kinross Council approved a new combined Oakbank Primary School and nursery building on the playing field adjacent to the existing school in 2012. The new building is expected to be operational in June 2015. The existing buildings will then be demolished. Perth and Kinross Council added Additional Support Needs Specialist Provision to its plans for the new school building. This required Perth and Kinross Council to undertake a formal consultation on their proposal to establish specialist provision for children with additional support needs within the new Oakbank Primary School with effect from August 2015.

2.2 Formal consultation on the proposal ran from 7 January until 27 February 2015. Notices about the proposal were placed in local newspapers and on Perth and Kinross Council's website. Letters containing an electronic link to the consultation proposal document were sent directly to all relevant consultees. A public meeting was held at Oakbank Primary School on 2 February 2015. Those who attended the public meeting asked a number of questions seeking more specific details. Perth and Kinross Council received one written representation.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Perth and Kinross Council's proposal to establish specialist provision for children with additional support needs within Oakbank Primary School with effect from August 2015 is of clear educational benefit. If implemented, the proposal will establish additional support needs specialist provision within a new purpose-built modern school building with high-quality accommodation and facilities. It will result in additional specialist provision and enhance Perth and Kinross Council's capacity to meet the learning needs of children with complex additional support needs within mainstream school settings. The specialist provision will include a dedicated drop off area; separate entrance for children using the facility; two additional support needs classrooms; specific purpose designed rooms, and shared areas within the school including a medical room, a personal care room and outdoor play area. The specialist provision is intended to accommodate up to 12 children.

3.2 Children attending the Additional Support Needs Specialist Provision will benefit from access to modern facilities and specialist staff. This will enable children in the Oakbank locality with complex additional support needs to attend their local school. This will reduce the need for some children to spend time travelling to other schools providing specialist support.

3.3 Children with complex additional support needs will benefit from support from specialist staff. Additional support needs staff will work in partnership with other specialists to ensure appropriate learning, therapeutic and health needs are met.

3.4 All parents, staff and children who met HM inspectors were in favour of the proposals. Parents who attended the public meeting asked a number of specific questions on the detailed implementation of the proposal, including information on the range of additional needs which the provision will specialise in. They sought and were given reassurance that the proposals will be of benefit to all children attending Oakbank Primary School. Staff were of the view that Oakbank Primary School already has a strong inclusive ethos. They would welcome more detail on the potential for additional opportunities for professional learning. Parents sought more specific details about the level of support provided and other day-to-day operational issues. They would welcome the opportunity to be involved more fully in discussions should the proposal be approved.

3.5 Perth and Kinross Council proposes to establish the provision from August 2015. When allocating places to children the council will need to ensure effective transition arrangements are put in place.

4. Summary

Perth and Kinross Council's proposal to establish Additional Support Needs Specialist Provision at Oakbank Primary School has clear educational benefits. Children with complex additional support needs in the Oakbank area will be able to attend their local school. The proposal, if implemented will enhance the capacity of Perth and Kinross Council to meet the needs of children with complex needs in a new building with facilities designed to modern standards. The proposal is supported by parents, children and staff. There is no recorded opposition to the proposal. If Perth and Kinross Council decides to implement the proposal it needs to continue to engage parents, children and staff further in discussion of the detailed plans for implementation.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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