

# **Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Perth and Kinross Council to establish a new secondary school on a preferred site at Bertha Park, Perth, to alter existing school catchment areas and the transfer arrangements for primary pupils.**

## **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 a new secondary school on a preferred site at Bertha Park, Perth, to alter existing school catchment areas and the transfer arrangements for primary pupils. 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 primary and secondary schools affected and 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 meetings held on 24 and 29 September 2014 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 Auchtergaven Primary School, Dunbarney Primary School, Forgandenny Primary School, Forteviot Primary School, Logiealmond Primary School, Methven Primary School, Inch View Primary School, Perth Academy, Perth Grammar School, Perth High School, Pitcairn Primary School and Ruthvenfield 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*.

2.2 The council previously considered a number of options for the location of a new secondary school and decided to consult on its preferred option of a new school located in Bertha Park, Perth.

2.3 Perth and Kinross Council undertook consultation on its proposal from 11 September to 19 November 2014. Eight public meetings were held and advertisements were placed in local newspapers. Letters containing an electronic link to the consultation document were sent directly to representative bodies, parents and the schools affected. The council issued 8,929 letters. Copies of the consultation document were made available at council headquarters, in the schools affected, at AK Bell Library Perth and in local area offices in the vicinity of the schools affected. Children and young people in the schools affected were consulted and offered the opportunity to discuss the proposal in their schools. The council received 23 written responses. Of those who responded over half agreed with the proposal.

## **3. Educational Aspects of Proposal**

3.1 Perth and Kinross Council's proposal sets out a clear rationale for the establishment of a new secondary school. A forecast of school rolls and existing school capacity demonstrates the need for additional provision. The proposal, if implemented, will result in an increased secondary school capacity and a better balance in numbers of pupils attending secondary schools across Perth.

3.2 Should the proposal be implemented, young people will benefit from a new purpose-built school which will provide a flexible learning environment resulting in potentially increased aspirations, achievement and attainment. Perth and Kinross Council intends the new school will provide high-quality technology to support learning and teaching and excellent facilities for out-of-school hours learning and community. The new school will include facilities for young people with additional support needs, including specialist provision to meet the needs of young people with more severe and complex needs. This has the potential to be of educational benefit to young people with additional support needs. The proposed new school will ensure accessibility for learners with physical disabilities. Specific details of the

design of the new building are not yet available. However, the council has given commitments to continue to consult with staff, parents and young people on the development and design of the new school, should it decide to implement its proposal. It is proposed that a user reference group will be established to represent the views of stakeholders. Consultees welcomed the council's commitment to engage with them further on detailed plans, should the proposal be agreed.

3.3 Staff, children and young people and parents from all schools, who spoke with HM Inspectors, were broadly in favour of the proposals. They recognised the need for a new school. Children were enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn in a purpose-built new secondary school with high-quality facilities.

3.4 The council intends to populate the new secondary school with pupils and staff on a phased basis between 2017 and 2022. The proposal states that as part of the funding offer through the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) a new secondary school requires to be complete and operational by March 2018. It is proposed that in August 2017 the first cohort of S1 pupils will be brought together as one group in another Perth secondary school. This S1 group would then move to the new school in March 2018. This will result in the pupils concerned experiencing two transitions in less than a year. The council commits to creating a transitional leadership team to take forward transition plans. It does not provide specific information about arrangements to ensure continuity in learning for S1 pupils moving to the new school in March 2018. Parents, staff and children and young people, who spoke with HM Inspectors, raised a number of issues linked to the phased implementation of the proposed new secondary school. A high proportion of questions in written responses and at public meetings raised similar issues. Many parents and children were not in favour of the proposal to have children located temporarily in another Perth secondary school from August 2017 until March 2018. They raised a number of issues, including questions on uniform, children's sense of identity and the disruption to their education. Parents were unclear as to how this proposed arrangement would be in the best interests of their children. Overall, they would prefer alternative arrangements to be made such as completing the school by August 2017 or delaying entry for the first S1 cohort until August 2018. Perth and Kinross Council will need to address these concerns in its final consultation report.

3.5 The council proposal to ensure the delivery of a curriculum aligned to the principles of Curriculum for Excellence, including opportunities for personal achievement and interdisciplinary learning in line with best practice will require further detail. Under the current plan, the school will not be fully operational as an S1 to S6 establishment until August 2022. The new school will form part of the Perth City Campus. This involves partnership with Perth College, some common timetabling and pooling of resources amongst existing Perth secondary schools. The Perth City Campus enhances subject choice at senior phase, including in Advanced Higher and vocational educational subjects. Young people attending other secondary schools in Perth will benefit from access to modern, well-equipped facilities for vocational subjects in the new school. These arrangements have the potential to support pupils during the phased transition process prior to the school becoming fully operational as an S1 to S6 establishment. Should the council decide to implement its proposal, it will need to ensure that the first cohorts of pupils at the new school receive their entitlements to Curriculum for Excellence during the phased

implementation. It will need to provide further detail of how it intends to do this in its final consultation report.

3.6 Parents who attended public meetings, who responded in writing and those who met with HM Inspectors raised a number of questions and concerns regarding transport and road safety, including the absence of direct public transport from zoned neighbourhoods to the school. The council has undertaken to produce a School Travel Plan in consultation with parents, pupils and staff. The council will need to include consideration of issues raised on public transport in its travel plan.

3.7 Parents were also concerned about the time required to establish a full school community, including arrangements for lunchtime and after school clubs and out-of-school learning opportunities. Perth and Kinross Council will need to consider these concerns in taking forward its proposal.

3.8 A few parents of children from the Oudenarde area by Bridge of Earn had concerns about the proposal. As a result of school capacity issues at Dunbarney Primary School, children from the Oudenarde neighbourhood are currently zoned to attend Inchview Primary School. Under the proposal, Inchview Primary School will remain part of the Perth High School catchment. However, children from Oudenarde and Dunbarney Primary School will be zoned to attend the new school. Parents of children attending Inchview Primary School were concerned that this aspect of the proposal could impact negatively on their children's primary to secondary school transition arrangements. The council will need to continue to engage with parents and provide assurance that Oudenarde children will not be disadvantaged in arrangements to support their transition from primary to secondary education.

3.9 Staff in the three existing non-denominational secondary schools were keen to see details of proposals to staff the new school, including temporary arrangements during the phased implementation and arrangements for bringing the new school into the Perth City Campus model. Perth and Kinross Council proposes to establish a transitional leadership team at an early stage to develop staff and management plans. The council has provided assurance that staff will be fully consulted and engaged in these arrangements.

#### **4. Summary**

4.1 Perth and Kinross Council has provided a clear rationale for its proposal to establish a new secondary school. If implemented the proposal will provide clear educational benefits. School roll forecasts demonstrate a clear need for additional capacity. Young people will benefit from a new school designed to deliver a 21<sup>st</sup> century education in line with the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. The council has assured stakeholders that they will be fully involved in further detailed decisions regarding the design, travel plans and staffing arrangements.

4.2 The proposal to locate the first cohort of new pupils to another Perth secondary school from August 2017 until March 2018 has the potential to cause disruption and anxiety for pupils and parents. Whilst this aspect of the proposal will result in the council complying with project funding deadlines, it is not clear how this arrangement is in the best educational interests of the pupils affected. Perth and Kinross Council will need to address this in its final consultation report.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
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