

# **Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Renfrewshire Council to relocate Bargarran Primary School and St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class to a new shared campus.**

## **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 Renfrewshire Council's proposal to relocate Bargarran Primary School and St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class to a new shared campus. 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 of the Bargarran Primary School and St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children 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 3 June 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 site of Bargarran Primary School and St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 Renfrewshire 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 formal consultation ran from 3 June 2015 until 3 September 2015. The council posted the consultation document on its website. Copies of the document were also distributed to local libraries. An advert to notify the public of the consultation meeting was placed in the local press. Copies of the consultation document were issued to parents of every pupil in attendance at Bargarran Primary School and St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class and to all parent council groups. In addition, the consultation document was issued to council officers, local elected members, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Members of Parliament for the Renfrewshire area and to Education Scotland.

2.3 The council made arrangements to gather the views of children at both Bargarran Primary School and St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class. One hundred and forty two Bargarran Primary School pupils took part in the consultation. Ninety two were in favour of the proposal. Forty five pupils were against the proposal with the remaining five undecided. One hundred and thirty five pupils at St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class took part in the consultation. One hundred and eleven pupils were in favour of the proposal with 24 against. A public meeting on 3 June 2015 was attended by 52 stakeholders. The majority of those present were in agreement that a new building would benefit all.

2.4 The council received 116 written responses from interested parties. These included: parents, school staff, children, Church representatives and Renfrewshire residents. In principle, despite the lack of detailed plans, the majority of responders were cautiously in favour of the proposal. The proposal was seen to bring positive opportunities for the schools to share modern, purpose-built facilities. However, a number of issues were raised. These included: retaining the individual identity of each school; possible design layout of classrooms; and the management of shared areas. The majority of responses came from parents and carers at St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class. Overall, the majority of St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class parents were supportive of the proposal. However, this support came with the caveat that the catholic identity of St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class should not be compromised. This was also the key reason given against the proposal by some St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class parents. All of the St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class staff who responded supported the proposal.

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

3.1 In terms of 'Best Value' the proposal sets out a strong case. Bargarran Primary School and Nursery Class has a capacity of 424. However a current pupil roll of 244 means it is only 57.55% full. The projected roll over a ten year period is fairly static with a revised capacity of 260 places recommended. Bargarran Primary School is rated 'B' (satisfactory) for educational suitability and for building condition. St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class has a capacity of 262. A current pupil roll of 151 means it is only 57.63% full. However as a result of potential housing developments a significant increase in roll at St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class is forecast. St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class is rated 'B' (satisfactory) for educational suitability and building condition.

3.2 Despite the lack of detailed design proposals, the council has set out a reasonable case in support of the proposal. The council states that there will be a number of potential educational benefits for children if the new-build, shared campus proposal goes ahead. These include: a new, purpose-built, shared campus providing an attractive and improved learning environment which better suits the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century curriculum. The new school would provide improved breakout spaces and flexible learning areas. It would be more environmentally friendly and provide a range of improvements, including better access to digital technology. Improved physical education (PE) facilities will support children's health and wellbeing. Improvements to the outdoor environment will provide increased opportunities for outdoor learning and for continued engagement by both schools in the Eco-Schools Scotland programme. The proposed new-build campus will help to extend early years provision locally and increase family learning opportunities.

3.3 Children from both St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class and Bargarran Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They liked the idea of a modern school with new equipment. They were excited about the possibility to engage in a wider range of activities such as outdoor learning. The opportunity to make new friends and ability to see existing friends in school and at break times was a major attraction. They were particularly enthusiastic about a possible shared playground. Children welcomed the improved security the proposed merged campus would bring.

3.4 Teaching, nursery and support staff from both St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class and Bargarran Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were cautiously supportive of the shared campus proposal. Nursery staff welcomed a purpose-built, fully accessible setting which catered for early years children. The shared campus would further improve and enhance transitions between the nursery and the two schools. Teaching staff from both schools could clearly articulate the benefits access to improved, purpose-built facilities would bring. Outdoor learning activities would be improved. The proposal would address concerns relating to parking, safety and security of children. Whilst overall supportive of the proposal, teaching and nursery staff from both schools were concerned about the lack of any design detail in relation to the proposed shared campus and classroom layout. St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class staff stressed the need for the Catholic identity of the school to be openly displayed within any shared campus

facility. In taking forward its proposal the council needs to involve the teaching staff from both schools in the design development process at an early stage.

3.5 St John Bosco Nursery parents were supportive of the proposal. They felt the proposal built on the existing joint working whilst offering improved transition and integration for all children. Children will benefit from access to up to date facilities. They welcomed improvements to parking and security. In the absence of any detailed plan, parents were concerned to ensure their children get access to increased resources rather than less.

3.6 Community representatives and existing non-school lets generally supported the proposal. Children will benefit from updated facilities. Organisations who currently offer services on a let basis would welcome the opportunity to engage with the council more fully should the proposal go ahead.

3.7 Members of St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class Parent Council who met with HM Inspectors did not support the proposal as it currently stands. In particular they expressed concerns about the potential for the Catholic identity to be lost in a shared campus. They did not support the suggestion of a shared entrance, staffroom and playground. The need for St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class to publicly display its Catholic identity was strongly reinforced. Parent Council representatives cited the Scottish Catholic Educational Services Shared Campus Arrangements as their point of reference. Concerns about possible layout and allocation of class space were also shared. In taking forward its proposal the council needs to engage with the parent council to address areas of concern.

3.8 Bargarran Primary School parents who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They felt it offered an improved learning environment, with better opportunities for children from both schools to mix and integrate. The proposal would improve traffic management and safety for children. However, parents expressed concerns about possible class layout and the possibility of the shared entrance displaying religious symbols. Parents also raised possible capacity issues arising from the shared use of dining and PE facilities by the two schools and the nursery. In taking forward its proposal, the council will need to engage with parents to address these concerns.

3.9 The Diocese of Paisley, in its response to the council, recognises the potential for more effective resource management and improved learning opportunities for children and staff. However, the Diocese makes clear this must not be at the expense of the distinct catholic ethos of St John Bosco Primary School and Nursery Class, which is highly valued by the Catholic community in Erskine. The Diocese of Paisley is willing to enter into discussions with the council regarding the shared campus proposal, provided the integrity and distinctive ethos of each school is retained. In taking forward its proposal, the council will need to engage with the Diocese to address these concerns.

#### **4. Summary**

The proposal has clear educational benefits for children who may attend the shared campus in future. These include: improved transitions from nursery, the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence within modern, purpose-built, sustainable accommodation, and a rich digital learning environment with appropriate outdoor learning spaces. Children will potentially have access to increased learning opportunities and better socialisation across both schools. Traffic management and site security will be improved. It will also assist the council to deliver 'Best Value' and make efficient and effective use of its resources by addressing significant under-occupancy in each of the two primary schools concerned. Whilst the majority of stakeholders were overall supportive of the proposal, the lack of detail in terms of proposed design made it difficult for those consulted to give their full support. In its final consultation the council needs to clearly set out how it intends to engage with key stakeholders such as the Diocese of Paisley, parent representatives and teaching staff from both primary schools around the design development process. Also, the council needs to set out how it intends to address concerns raised during the consultation. In particular, it will need to clarify what arrangements it will put in place to retain the ethos and identity of each school and manage the shared facilities.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
September 2015**