

## **Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Renfrewshire Council to relocate Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and Community Learning Centre to a new build St Paul's Primary School.**

### **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 Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and Community Learning Centre to a new-build St Paul's Primary School. 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 St Paul's Primary School and Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and Community Learning Centre; 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 9 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;

- visits to the site of Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and Community Learning Centre and St Paul's Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- meeting with a representative of the Catholic Church.

## **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 consultation took place from 9 June to 10 September 2015. The consultation included a public meeting and invitations to provide written submissions, including an online submissions form. Twenty-eight members of the public attended the public meeting and the council received 16 written responses. Almost all of the responses were supportive of the proposal. Council officers held meetings with staff from St Paul's Primary School and Foxlea Pre-Five Centre to discuss the proposal. In addition, the council gathered children's views from both St Paul's Primary School and Foxlea Pre-Five Centre.

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

3.1 The council has set out a range of educational benefits which it reasonably expects the proposal to deliver for children who attend Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and St Paul's Primary School. The buildings currently occupied by the two establishments have limited suitability in terms of promoting inclusion and delivering Curriculum for Excellence. The proposed new building will support children's learning very well and the council has outlined clearly how the proposal supports best value in the use of its resources across the Renfrewshire school estate. It has summarised how the new accommodation will improve learning environments and social spaces for each establishment and increase equality of opportunity, inclusion and accessibility.

3.2 The co-location of Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and St Paul's Primary School will strengthen transitions for children moving from Foxlea Pre-Five Centre to P1 in St Paul's Primary School. It will also provide valuable opportunities for staff to work together and learn from each other, particularly across the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. The proposal provides increased opportunities for Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and St Paul's Primary School children to work together and share experiences in various aspects of their learning.

3.3 During the consultation phase there were no designs or plans for the new building. Therefore it was difficult for stakeholders to know how much outdoor space would be available, or where this would be located. In taking forward the proposal the council should provide further information on how each establishment will continue to have the variety and diversity of their current outdoor environments.

3.4 Stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They cited the many challenges they experience with each of their current buildings. These include stairs throughout the primary school which cause difficulties with accessibility, including access to the outdoor area of Foxlea Pre-Five Centre. They welcomed the prospect of modern purpose-built accommodation which will better meet the needs of children and adult learners than the current buildings. Stakeholders are justifiably keen to know more about the council's proposed timescales for the temporary relocation of Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and the Community Learning Centre within St Paul's Primary School. The council will need to communicate clearly with stakeholders in order to manage the transition phase successfully and minimise any disruption to children's learning.

3.5 Staff and parents from Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and St Paul's Primary School who met with HM Inspectors had a number of understandable concerns about how the transition to the proposed new building would be managed. These included the potential impact on learners of the temporary relocation of Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and the Community Learning Centre within St Paul's Primary School, the potential loss of outdoor space and the arrangements that would be needed to ensure safe traffic management. The council will need to work with stakeholders to address these concerns. The proposal states that co-location will provide the opportunity for improving traffic management arrangements. In taking forward the proposal, the council should outline specifically how traffic management will be improved.

3.6 The Diocese of Paisley is supportive of the proposal and is in agreement with the educational benefits outlined by the council. The Diocese is keen that the ethos, values and identity of St Paul's Primary School are retained in the new building. The council acknowledges that, in taking forward the proposal, it will need to ensure that the headteacher of St Paul's Primary School and the managers of the other two establishments have opportunities to represent the interests of their respective communities.

#### **4. Summary**

HM Inspectors found that the council has set out its case and summarised clearly the educational benefits of the proposal. It has shown how the proposal will improve the learning environment and learners' experiences for children at Foxlea Pre-Five Centre and St Paul's Primary School, along with users of the Community Learning Centre. The new building will provide accommodation which is more suitable to delivering Curriculum for Excellence. In taking the proposal to the next stage, the council should clarify timescales and address concerns over the safe management of traffic. It should communicate clearly with stakeholders and provide detailed plans and updated information at regular intervals in order to manage the transition phase successfully.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
September 2015**