

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Renfrewshire Council to relocate Spateston Pre-5 Centre to a refurbished St Anthony's Primary School.

1. Introduction

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 Spateston Pre-5 Centre to a refurbished St Anthony'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.

1.1 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school and centre; any other users; 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.

1.2 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 1 August 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 Spateston Pre-5 Centre and St Anthony's Primary School, including the Autism Spectrum Disorder classes (ASD) and discussion with relevant consultees; and
- discussion with representatives of the Diocese of Paisley.

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 formally opened on 1 September 2015 and closed at 12:00 noon on 28 October 2015. Renfrewshire Council issued copies of the consultation document to all interested parties, including individual parents and Parent Councils of the establishments involved. Copies of the document were distributed to local libraries and a copy placed on the council's website. The council placed an advert in the local press giving details of a public meeting which was held on 1 August 2015. The meeting was attended by 18 people. Meetings were also held with staff from both establishments. A total of 32 responses were received. Twenty nine of these were supportive of the proposal and three responses were against.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal will provide an enhanced physical environment for learning. It has the potential to provide breakout spaces and flexible learning areas which will facilitate and enhance opportunities for active learning and deliver the curriculum better. For both groups of children, the opportunity for enhanced outdoor play areas will help to improve children's experiences. In considering the benefits set out by the council, HM Inspectors agree that a refurbished building will also enhance the locality and be in keeping with the regeneration of the surrounding area. Such a development may allow better community engagement with greater space to bring parents and carers together to support their own and their children's learning. Currently, the pre-5 centre has limited space and as a result parental involvement activities are held in the staff room. The refurbishment will provide the opportunity to create more appropriate facilities to enhance current parental involvement programmes. In its proposal, the council notes that bringing the two establishments together will enable better use of space and greater flexibility of use. This will be particularly helpful for those children with ASD who attend St Anthony's Primary School from across the council area. The potential for providing more appropriate quiet areas for these children will be particularly beneficial. The bringing together of the pre-5 centre, primary school and unit also has the potential to enhance inclusive educational experiences for all children. The council will need to manage the refurbishment very carefully to ensure that children with ASD are able to integrate into their new environment with ease. Currently the nurture and soft play areas in the school are adequate, but have potential to be improved during the refurbishment. In the pre-5 centre, the parents' room is used as a nurture area and whilst this is comfortable, it could be improved if incorporated in the design of the refurbishment. The provision of more and better flexible working spaces in the pre-5 centre, the

school and unit also has the potential to enhance opportunities for professional development, including the provision of greater opportunities for staff to share practice more easily and facilitate transition between age stages.

3.2 In considering the educational benefits outlined in the proposal, HM Inspectors believe that there are significant potential educational benefits from the refurbishment proposal of Spateston Pre-5 Centre and St Anthony's Primary School.

3.3 Almost all parents who met with HM Inspectors felt that a refurbished building would enhance the physical learning environment for their children and provide a more conducive place for teaching and learning. They were pleased that their community would have a better integrated facility which they felt would enhance the locality and provide the potential for more community involvement. The majority of parents who met with HM Inspectors were keen that the proposal proceeds quickly, and that further details of the design are made available. Almost all stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were seeking reassurance that building works would be well managed to minimise the disruption to learners and staff. This is particularly important for ASD pupils. The council is aware of the need to assure parents, staff and other interested stakeholders, that a robust traffic management system will be put in place to ensure children's safety. Children from both the pre-5 centre, school and ASD provision were keen for the refurbishment to go ahead quickly. Almost all felt that they would have better facilities and were looking forward to being involved in the design.

3.4 The Diocese of Paisley was in favour of the proposal, feeling that it would provide a much better learning environment for all children. The Diocese expressed a desire that the building works should be well managed to avoid disruption to children's learning.

4. Summary

The proposal is of clear educational benefit. The council outlines the educational benefits for children, families and the local community well. A refurbished building will enhance the learning environment and provide more flexible learning spaces which will allow the school to meet children's needs better. The inclusion of the pre-5 centre, primary school and ASD provision in one campus, will enhance children's experiences. Sharing of facilities will allow better use of space and has the potential to improve the current provision for nurture, soft play, outdoor learning and the use of quiet areas. Staff development will also be facilitated by allowing all staff to share practice more easily. The local community will benefit from an improved building and the potential for better community engagement in learning. The council is aware of the need to ensure that a robust traffic management system is put in place, and that children's learning is not compromised during the building works.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland**

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