

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Ayrshire Council to relocate Invergarven School to a site within the grounds of Girvan Academy.

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 South Ayrshire Council's proposal to relocate Invergarven School, Girvan to a site within the grounds of Girvan Academy. 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:

- 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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and

- visits to the sites of Invergarven School and Girvan Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 South Ayrshire 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 period lasted from 25 February to 24 April 2015. A public meeting to explain the proposal and the consultation process to stakeholders was held in Girvan Academy on 10 March 2015. The meeting was attended by two parents/members of the community. The council took appropriate steps to consult with children and young people from both Invergarven School and Girvan Academy. The consultation document was posted on the council's website and hard copies were available in various council buildings within the town of Girvan and beyond. The consultation document included a proforma for stakeholders to submit their views and a dedicated mailbox was set up to receive electronic responses. A total of 15 written responses were received and almost all were in favour of the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Invergarven School provides education for primary and secondary-aged children and young people who have complex additional support needs. South Ayrshire Council's proposal to relocate the school to a site within the grounds of Girvan Academy has clear educational benefits for current and future pupils of Invergarven School and for the local community. It has the potential to enhance inclusion and positively support diversity within the local community.

3.2 The current school building dates from 1870 and its condition and suitability are rated as poor. In particular teaching spaces are not fit for purpose; there are accessibility issues and no external soft areas for outdoor learning. Children and young people currently travel to other buildings for aspects of their educational programmes. For example, physical education classes take place in a local hall, and those requiring hydrotherapy have to travel to a school in Ayr. The building has a planning capacity for 15 children and young people and is currently full.

3.3 The proposed new school building will be tailored to the specific needs of children and young people who have a range of complex support needs. It will allow Curriculum for Excellence to be delivered in purpose-built learning spaces which take account of sensory needs, moving and handling, the development of life skills and transitions to employment, education or further training. New sports and learning facilities designed for children and young people with additional support needs will be available for community use. The successful curricular links which Invergarven School has in place with Girvan Academy will be further enhanced and there will be opportunities for wider educational experiences due to the proximity of the proposed site to the local primary and nursery school. Invergarven School will maintain its own identity and management structure.

3.4 The indicative budget for the new school shows an increase in non-employee costs. This is due to the inclusion of a hydrotherapy pool, which will be a significant asset to the local community, and the potential increase in the school's roll to a maximum of twenty. This will be subject to the council's roll adjustment exercise to reflect the actual size of the school roll on completion of the new building.

3.5 All parents and staff of Invergarven School who met with HM Inspectors were very positive about the proposal. They were enthusiastic about the prospect of moving to purpose-built accommodation which they felt would ensure a more effective environment for learning and teaching and better meet the complex needs of the children and young people. In particular, they thought that opportunities for parents to be involved in their children's education would be enhanced. They are keen to work with the council on the design process. All children and young people who attend the school had been involved in a consultation exercise which indicated that they felt happy and excited about moving to a new school building with modern facilities.

3.6 Almost all members of the Girvan Academy community who met with HM Inspectors welcomed the proposal. They thought that it would provide an opportunity to support diversity within the community and strengthen the well-established links which the two schools already have in place. They are interested in working with the council to ensure that appropriate traffic management and parking arrangements on the new site are put in place.

4. Summary

The proposal to relocate Invergarven School to a site within the grounds of Girvan Academy has almost unanimous support from stakeholders and will deliver a number of significant educational benefits. It will provide an improved and appropriate environment for learning and teaching which will be suited to meeting the complex needs of the children and young people who attend Invergarven School. It will also provide enhanced opportunities for parental involvement in children's education. The council recognises that in taking forward its proposal, it will need to continue to consult with stakeholders in relation to the design of the new building and in relation to its arrangements for traffic management and parking.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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