

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Lanarkshire to establish nursery provision in St John the Baptist Primary School, Uddingston.

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 Lanarkshire Council's proposal to establish nursery provision in St John the Baptist Primary School, Uddingston. 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;

- a visit to the site of St John the Baptist Primary School, Uddingston, including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- a discussion with a representative of Diocese of Motherwell.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 South Lanarkshire 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 process ran from 20 April 2015 until 5 June 2015. During this period the council held a public meeting on 12 May 2015. Twelve people attended the meeting. The council received 13 written responses to the proposal, 12 were in favour and one undecided. The consultation documentation was published on the South Lanarkshire Council website and made available in a number of locations across the council.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal has a number of strong educational benefits. It will offer new early learning provision within the local area. This will provide opportunities for closer working between the primary school and nursery, with the potential of leading to better progression in learning for children. Children in the primary school and proposed nursery will be able to work together and learn from each other, developing a range of social skills. The caring ethos which exists in the school will help children in the nursery to settle in much more quickly as they transfer to the school. School and nursery staff will be able to share ideas and develop their practice, providing opportunities for better learning. Using existing facilities to house the proposed nursery will help to secure best value for South Lanarkshire Council.

3.2 Almost all primary school staff, children and parents were very positive and saw the benefits of the proposal. All parents and children, and almost all staff, who met with HM Inspectors, felt the proposal would be of great benefit to families in the local area and improve local education. However, they all had similar concerns. These were around the possible increase in traffic caused by the proposed nursery; the loss of the school's garden area to accommodate the proposed nursery; and the lack of appropriate parking to accommodate the increased number of parents and staff coming to the campus. Parents, children and staff are keen to engage with the council to discuss options for a new garden space, to improve parking and increase the safety for children whose play area is within metres of a motorway. Parents and staff would like to know the outcome of the council's recent 'traffic risk assessment'. The council has discussed some of these issues with the headteacher and should now work closely with staff, parents and children in addressing these concerns. It will need to set out clearly in its final consultation report how it proposes to address these issues.

3.3 The representative of the Diocese was very positive about the proposal and could see many benefits to having a nursery attached to the school. The Diocese shared others' concerns about traffic, safety and the loss of garden space. The

council should continue to discuss with the Diocese and parents how best to support children from North Lanarkshire Council who will attend the primary school and whose parents would like them to attend the nursery at the same location.

4. Summary

South Lanarkshire Council's proposal to establish nursery provision in St John the Baptist Primary School has strong educational benefits. There is the potential for children who attend the nursery and who go on to attend the school to have smoother progression in their learning. Stakeholders have a number of reasonable concerns which the council has started to discuss with the headteacher. In particular, the council needs to set out how it will address the concerns about the loss of the school garden and the possible increase in traffic.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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