

Consultation proposal by East Renfrewshire Council

Report by Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to establish a new family centre within the Busby/Clarkston area.

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the 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 it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

1. Introduction

1.1 East Renfrewshire Council proposes to establish a new family centre within the Busby/Clarkston area.

1.2 The report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.3 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:

- attendance at the meeting with Parent Council Chairs held on 7 May 2014 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;
- discussion by telephone with the headteacher of St Joseph's Primary School; and
- visits to Busby Primary School, Carolside Primary School, Eaglesham Primary School and Netherlee Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the neighbouring primary schools and nursery classes; 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
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 East Renfrewshire Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

2.2 Ninety-four written submissions were received by the council on its proposal to establish a new family centre in the Busby/Clarkston area. Approximately 75% were in favour of the proposal and 25% were against it. Those parents and carers in favour of the proposal felt that the new centre would give them more options for pre-school care and education. The majority of them pointed out the difficulties they were having in accessing their preferred nursery classes for all of their children as a result of neighbouring nursery classes being full. Those against the proposal, and who lived in the Newford Grove area, indicated that there would be increased traffic congestion, a loss of 'green space' and the loss of an open area where children could play.

2.3 All headteachers, senior managers, teaching staff, children and parents and carers of children attending Busby Primary School, Carolside Primary School, Eaglesham Primary School and Netherlee Primary School, who were met, agreed with the council's proposal.

2.4 Headteachers, senior managers, teaching staff and parents indicated that the demand for pre-school places was very high and that all of the available places were taken in the authority's nursery classes. They said that a consequence of this high occupancy rate was that not all parents had their first choice of nursery for their children, particularly for the ante-pre-school year. As a result, a number of families had difficulties in taking their children to nursery if one child attended one nursery and a second child attended another nursery or one child attended their designated primary school and another child attended the nursery class in another school. In addition, consultees pointed out that very few 'wraparound places', the facility to have a child in both the morning and afternoon sessions, were available in these nursery classes; and that there was very limited education authority provision for pre-school education and care outwith the school year.

2.5 Parents and children in each school visited were concerned about travel arrangements and traffic management if the proposal goes ahead and the family centre is built on the proposed site adjacent to Williamwood High School. They pointed out that Eaglesham Road was already very busy at the beginning and end of the school day as a result of Williamwood High School's traffic and the proposed siting of the family centre would add to this congestion and may increase the risk of accidents.

2.6 Parents and teaching staff said that they would like to know more details on the new family centre. They wanted to know the criteria which the education authority would use to prioritise places in the centre; the open times of the centre; and the age range catered for by the centre.

2.7 Children in Busby Primary School were concerned about the loss of the play park which is situated in the proposed site of the family centre and accessed from Cartside Road.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 The proposal to establish a new family centre within the Busby/Clarkston area has a number of clear educational benefits. The extra 60/60 places in the proposed family centre would ease the pressure on the existing nursery classes and address the demand of parents and carers who have complained about the lack of specific places for their children. Currently, the occupancy of each nursery class is: Busby Primary School, 94%; Carolside Primary School, 100%; Netherlee Primary School, 99% and Eaglesham Primary School, 100%.

3.2 The proposed family centre would assist the council to meet to some extent the demand for wraparound sessions and holiday provision. This aspect of the new centre will be beneficial for the more vulnerable children in the Busby and Clarkson area. It will also assist the council to implement the Scottish Government's increased entitlement for 600 hours of early learning each year for three and four year olds.

3.3 The additional number of education authority nursery places in East Renfrewshire resulting from this proposal going ahead may help parents to have their children placed in the same nursery class for both the pre-school year and the ante-pre-school year. This will reduce the number of transitions the child will make before starting primary education.

3.4 Given the location of the proposed site and its proximity to Williamwood High School, there are likely to be traffic congestion issues at the beginning and end of nursery sessions unless this is carefully managed. The council has not addressed the traffic management for the proposed site and it needs to do this in its final report.

3.5 The council has provided little information on the nature and scope of the family centre and needs to provide more information for parents and carers in its final report, particularly with regard to its admission policy.

3.6 The potential loss of the play park as a result of it being within the proposed family centre site was not mentioned in the council's proposal and this needs to be addressed in the final report.

4. Summary

4.1 HM Inspectors acknowledge that the council's proposal to establish a new family centre in the Busby/Clarkson area has a number of educational benefits. It will address the issue that the education authority's early years' capacity in this area does not meet the demands of parents and carers. Parents currently find it difficult to have continuity of provision from the ante-pre-school year to the pre-school year. Furthermore, parents have limited access to wraparound care and education and holiday provision in this part of East Renfrewshire.

4.2 The council needs to provide more information in its final report on how it will manage the road traffic and minimise congestion and the risk of accidents at the proposed site of the new family centre. It needs to provide more information on the family centre, in particular on its admission arrangements; and it needs to address the potential loss of the play park which is located on the proposed site for the new family centre.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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