

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by East Renfrewshire Council to create a new denominational primary school and pre-five provision in Newton Mearns; and the relocation of Calderwood Lodge Primary School and Nursery Class as part of a faith schools' joint campus.

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 East Renfrewshire Council's proposal to create a new denominational primary school and pre-five provision in Newton Mearns and relocate Calderwood Lodge Primary School and Nursery Class to Waterfoot Road, Newton Mearns from Session 2017-18 and beyond, as part of a faith schools' joint campus. 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 both schools; 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 Wednesday 29 October at Mearns Primary School 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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal;
- visits to the site of St Cadoc's Primary School and Calderwood Lodge Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees;
- meetings with representatives of the Catholic Church and the local Rabbi; and
- visits to both of the proposed sites.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 East 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 period lasted from Wednesday 1 October to Friday 21 November. A public meeting to explain and further discuss the proposal with stakeholders was held in Mearns Primary School on Wednesday 29 October. Responses were received from the Parent Councils of St Cadoc's Primary School, St Ninian's High School and Calderwood Lodge Primary School. All of the Parent Councils were in favour of the proposal with only a few reservations mentioned. Responses were also received from the Catholic Church through the Diocese of Paisley and the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council. Both groups were in favour of the proposal with only a few concerns raised. Overall, there were in the region of 150 written responses to the consultation proposal with over half being in favour of the proposal. Around 40% of responses were not in favour of the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The council has set out in its proposal a number of educational benefits for children, should the proposal go ahead. These, in the main, relate to the easing of pressure on the current indoor and outdoor facilities at St Cadoc's Primary School and meeting the increasing demand for catchment places in denominational primary education. The proposal indicates that the new building will provide accommodation which is more modern and flexible, thus better meeting the needs of Curriculum for Excellence. A purpose-built school will provide an attractive and motivating environment for learning and children will benefit from more modern facilities, including better access to digital technology. The increase in pre-five places will help to meet increasing demand and allow significantly more children to continue their educational experience within the same establishment. If the site at Waterfoot Road is deemed to be suitable, more children will be within walking/cycling distance of the new campus which has the potential to encourage and support health promoting behaviours. The new campus will also be more energy efficient ensuring better use

of existing resources and lower running costs. By relocating Calderwood Lodge School to the joint campus, closer to its associated secondary school, the existing Jewish community has the potential to be strengthened and further supported. Links with existing sports and after school clubs will be encouraged, children's understanding of each other's faith will be enhanced and there will be greater opportunities for staff to share in and benefit from joint career-long professional learning. A new build school will also help to address the current shortcomings with the existing accommodation and make the school more accessible for those with limited mobility.

3.2 Almost all parents and children, who met with HM Inspectors, were in favour of the proposal. They appreciated the planned investment and the opportunity to have a new school in their community which will provide enhanced facilities and opportunities for all young people. They were pleased about the additional pre-school provision of places which are much needed. They were happy that the current overcrowding at St Cadoc's Primary School was being addressed. All staff, who met with HM Inspectors were in favour of the proposal for similar reasons but also because of the opportunities the joint campus presented for staff to share expertise and good practice and to collaborate in joint training and professional learning. They considered that the joint campus would provide improved opportunities for children and young people to develop their social skills and further support their health and wellbeing. A few parents were concerned about security at the planned joint campus and about the potential loss of identity and ethos of each establishment which they cherished. A few parents thought that there would be an increase in traffic congestion and that there would be a need for safer cycle routes and a greater presence of crossing patrols should the proposal go ahead. A few parents sought further clarity about the situation regarding families zoned to the new school, for future P1 children after the opening of the new school, where siblings currently attended St Cadoc's Primary School. The council require to make it clear what procedures it will put in place to support parents and children in such circumstances.

3.3 The Diocese of Paisley welcomes the proposal and the opportunity the joint campus offers both schools to strengthen their service to the communities they serve. It was keen for parents to be reassured that the present St Cadoc's Primary School building would be upgraded following the building of the new school and for reassurances that children baptised into the Roman Catholic Church gain placements at all schools affected by the proposal should they become oversubscribed in the future. The Glasgow Jewish Representative Council also welcomed the proposal and looked forward to future and further dialogue about the nature and design of the new school and the campus facilities. It was pleased about the assurances given about the protection of each school's identity, ethos and respect for each other's faith and the fact that each school would have its own classroom wings, entrance, headteacher, parent council and nursery. It was keen to reassure parents that there would be strict adherence to kosher regulations in both the dining hall and kitchen areas.

3.4 During the consultation period some consultees identified potential alleged inaccuracies in the proposal around the projected pupil numbers in future years at

St Cadoc's Primary School, the new build school and St Ninian's High School. The council will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to investigate these alleged inaccuracies further and provide more detail to reassure parents about how it arrived at its view of the projected future rolls in all of these establishments.

4. Summary

The proposal to build a new faith schools' joint campus and provide education in a new purpose-built facility provides a number of significant educational benefits for all children, staff and the communities they serve. The proposal has the overall support of stakeholders including the majority of the community, all parent councils, both faith communities and staff and children. A significant minority of the community raised a few concerns about the proposal. In taking forward the proposal the council needs to ensure it addresses the concerns raised in relation to potential traffic congestion and the need for improved road safety arrangements for children walking or cycling to the new school campus. It will also need to clarify further the details of the shared facilities, including campus security and dining arrangements. In doing so, the council should continue to consult and communicate effectively with staff, children, parents and the wider community in engaging them fully in the future planning and design stages of the proposal. The council also needs to address the alleged inaccuracies in the proposal.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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