

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Fife Council to relocate Madras College from the existing school sites of South Street and Kilrymont Road, St Andrews to a new single site at Langlands, adjacent to the University of St Andrews.

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 Fife Council's proposal to relocate Madras College from the existing school sites of South Street and Kilrymont Road, St Andrews to a new single site at Langlands, adjacent to the University of St Andrews. 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: Madras College, Balmerino, Canongate, Guardbridge, Kingsbarns, Largoward, Lawhead, Leuchars, Newport, Strathkinness, Tayport, Wormit and Greyfriars RC Primary 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 meetings held on 28 March and 26 April 2017 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; and
- visits to the site of Madras College, Balmerino, Canongate, Guardbridge, Kingsbarns, Largoward, Lawhead, Leuchars, Newport, Strathkinness, Tayport, Wormit and Greyfriars RC Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Fife Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 13 March until 12 May 2017. The proposal paper was posted on Twitter, Facebook and the council's website. An advertisement was placed in the Fife Herald, St Andrews Citizen and the East Fife Mail week commencing 13 March 2017. Copies of the proposal were made available in paper format to parents at school and local community councils and the elected representatives in areas affected by the proposal. Well attended public meetings were held on 28 March and 20 April 2017. Overall, those in attendance were supportive of the proposal. The council received 321 responses to an online survey and one written response. Of these submissions 316 were supportive of the proposal. Six respondents were not in favour of the proposal. Whilst the majority of respondents were supportive of the proposal, there was a clear underlying message in responses that the process had been too lengthy and that the council should proceed without further delay.

2.3 The council took appropriate steps to consult with children and young people. Children and young people were, overall, supportive of the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The council has set out a strong case for the relocation of Madras College for the existing school sites of South Street and Kilrymont Road, St Andrews to a new single site at Langlands, adjacent to the University of St Andrews. In arriving at its proposal, the council has given good consideration to identifying a site that best meets the needs of young people, reducing travel, improving safety and maximising opportunities through co-location with the University. The proposed single site campus will provide modern, fit for purpose accommodation and facilities, bringing all young people into one site. School and community users will enjoy the benefits of modern, purpose built facilities. Access to improved information technology, science, sport and physical education facilities will encourage young people to achieve. The existing split site accommodation is no longer fit for purpose. A new single site school with modern resources will improve learning and teaching by removing unnecessary staff travel and encourage more cross-curricular working and interdisciplinary learning. A single site will provide greater opportunities for older young people to act as role models take on increased leadership roles and assist

younger pupils. A clear benefit is the removal of a significant number of 20 minute 'travels' between sites which currently results in split classes and part period cover until teachers arrive from the other site. The proposed site offers scope to build on existing links with the University. This has the potential to be equally beneficial to all parties.

3.2 All children and young people who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They were of the view the existing sites were in a poor state of repair and needed replacing. They recognised the benefits a new build school would bring. They looked forward to an improved learning environment and access to technology, with better science and physical education facilities. A single site would remove the need for teachers to travel between the existing split sites. This would minimise disruption, reduce lateness and improve learning and teaching. They valued the idea of a single school identity with opportunities for joint working across year groups. The proposed location was popular due to its proximity to Station Park sports fields and the University. Reduced time spent on buses and increased opportunities for walking or cycling to school were welcomed.

3.3 All parents, carers and Parent Council representatives who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They agreed the current sites were not fit for purpose and in urgent need of replacement. They recognised a number of clear benefits a new build, single site school would bring for both young people and teaching and support staff alike. Improved facilities would help further improve attainment. A single site would ensure resources were effectively deployed reducing duplication. A whole school identity would be developed. The current requirement for teachers to travel between sites would be removed, reducing disruption to teaching and learning. The proposed location outside the town and beside the University was seen as a popular choice which would benefit young people. Travel to and from school would be improved with reduced journey times for the 60% of young people travelling from the Taybridgehead area. Buses would no longer have to go into town reducing congestion around South Street. Drop off by parents would be confined to one site. Young people would be better placed to take up extra-curricular activities in a single location. Parents and carers were enthusiastic about the opportunities to develop creative links with the University. This would benefit both young people and staff alike. Whilst parents and carers were supportive of the proposal, they expressed concerns about the time spent in recent years discussing plans for a new school without a positive result. They talked about 'consultation fatigue' and were keen to ensure that the development be progressed without further delay.

All senior management, teaching and support staff who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They believe that a single site would improve the start of the school day offering continuity and more meaningful engagement by staff with young people. Removing the need for travel between sites would ensure teachers' time is used more effectively to improve learning and teaching. The single site would offer more efficient use of resources, reduce duplication across two sites and reduce travel costs. An improved school identity and ethos, together with more collegiate/team working were seen as clear benefits if the proposal was to go ahead. The single site would offer increased opportunities for senior young people to take on leadership and mentoring roles across the whole school. The proposed location

was seen to offer very good opportunities for the school to build on existing strong links with the University. This would be mutually beneficial. The location would also reduce the time young people spent travelling on buses, remove congestion in South Street and address staff parking problems.

3.4 Representatives of the Catholic Church who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They believe a single site, modern, purpose built school with up to date resources and technology would be beneficial to both young people and staff alike. The proposed location was seen to serve the catchment well in that it removes the need for a high number of young people from the Taybridgehead area to travel into St Andrews. The co-location alongside the University was seen to offer scope for imaginative partnership working to be developed.

4. Summary

The council's proposal is of clear educational benefit. The majority of stakeholders who submitted responses were supportive of the proposal. All children, young people, parents, carers and school staff who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. The council's proposal, if it proceeds, would see young people benefit from a well-located, well-resourced single site. The single site would offer more effective use of resources, reduce duplication across two sites and reduce travel costs. An improved school identity and ethos, more collegiate and team working would be developed. Learning and teaching will be improved, with teachers time spent teaching rather than travelling. Opportunities for senior young people to take on leadership and mentoring roles across the whole school will be improved. The proposed location offers very good opportunities for the school to build mutually beneficial links with the University.

In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to set out how it will address the concerns raised during the consultation. In particular, the council and other key partners should consider how they address the notion of 'consultation fatigue' expressed by stakeholders, the time spent on consultation without a result and their lack of confidence in the council to progress this proposal at the earliest opportunity.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
May 2017**