

Consultation proposal by Glasgow City Council

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal to close Garscadden Primary School and Yoker Primary School (including Thirlstane day Nursery) and build a new non-denominational primary school as part of campus on the St Brendan's site. To close Kelso Nursery School and Thirlstane Nursery and build a new extended day, 52 weeks a year and Early Years establishment as part of the campus of the St Brendan's site.

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.

Introduction

1.1 Glasgow City Council proposes to close Garscadden Primary School, Yoker Primary School (including Thirlstane Day Nursery) and Kelso Nursery School and replace them with a new school on the St Brendan's Primary School site and build a new extended day, 52 weeks a year early years establishment on the St Brendan's Primary School site.

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

- Attendance at the public meeting on 6 June 2013 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 sites of Garscadden Primary School, Yoker Primary School, St Brendan's Primary School, Kelso Nursery School and Thirlstane Day Nursery including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.3 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools and centre; 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 Glasgow City Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. The consultation included an invitation for written submissions, three public meetings, discussion with the parent council, pupil council and staff meetings. The council also sought the views of children and young people affected by the proposal at each of the two primary schools.

2.2 The majority of parents of children from Garscadden Primary School and Yoker Primary School who responded, had some concerns about the proposal. These concerns were expressed at public meetings, in the responses received by the council as part of the consultation process and in discussion with HM Inspectors. Parents welcomed new premises and were positive about the benefits it would bring for their children. However, they were unclear about the reasons for the location of the new school. They were concerned that the plot was not big enough for a large school campus and they fear that there would be limited outdoor space for children to learn and play. Parents were uneasy about their children's safety if they shared premises with Glasgow Life as it would be used by the general public. They also had a range of other concerns including the large number of children on the new campus, road safety and congestion, walking distances for families with young children, in particular for those currently attending Yoker Primary School. A few parents wanted more information on the practicalities of a shared denominational and non-denominational site. Stakeholders from all schools expressed concerns about safety on the roads leading to the school which already suffers from congestion at peak times. In addition, those with children at St Brendan's Primary School expressed concerns regarding their children's safety if the council build the new school on the adjacent land while children were located in the current building.

2.3 Parents of children at Kelso Nursery School and Thirlstane Day Nursery were primarily concerned about the practical issues surrounding the volume of traffic, road congestion and parking. In addition, they highlighted the practicalities of parents with pre-school children from Yoker Primary School and Thirlstane Nursery area travelling to the new site causing them increased journey time. Parents with children in both in pre-school and primary provision would be required to have multiple longer journeys. They were largely in favour of the proposal to have 52 week provision for under 5's

2.4 Overall, staff from each of the schools and nurseries were in favour of the proposal. Most of the teaching staff, support staff and early year's staff were positive about the benefits a new campus would bring including upgraded facilities, a more integrated community and the benefits for transition arrangements. There were a few concerns expressed about the layout, and repairs needed to maintain and improve their current accommodation. Staff across all centres were keen that the council should ensure that the new facility should provide access to the outdoors, as most of the schools and early years centres have invested heavily in developing learning outdoors. They also expressed the view that, if a decision to proceed was taken, they would like to contribute to the consultation on the design and layout of the new-build. A few staff raised concerns about the uncertainty regarding their jobs due to duplication of resources. The janitor in Garscadden Primary School was uncertain about how the proposal would affect his accommodation arrangements as he lives in a house on the site to be closed.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 The council has rated one building as category D (very poor showing major elemental defects requiring full replacement) with the other schools and nurseries coming under a category C (poor – showing major elemental defects that could be repaired). The roll for Yoker Primary School is small with the projected roll over the next few years remaining steady moving from 123 pupils to 133 over three years. Both St Brendan's and Garscadden Primary Schools are 182 and 200 respectively rising to 204 and 217 over three years. However, the council will need to provide more details about projected future rolls for pre-school places to ensure new provision meets demands in the area.

3.2 Glasgow City Council has set out in its proposal a number of educational benefits for children and young people, should the proposal go ahead. These, in the main, relate to the proposed new design of the new building and improved accommodation and facilities. 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 environment for learning and children will benefit from more modern facilities, including better information and communications technology. The council considers that children would benefit from the breadth of the curriculum being extended thus allowing a full coverage of all curriculum areas, including science, art and drama that are constrained by older buildings. Children attending the proposed new school would benefit from continuing their secondary school education within the same learning community as their current primary school. Transition from the proposed early years centre to the new primary school would be enhanced through regular liaison between the two establishments being on the same campus. The extended day and 52 week provision for nursery education would support parents and carers in the community.

3.3 The council acknowledges that there are important issues to be addressed regarding safe routes to school, increased traffic and congestion and parking issues. The council recognises that a significant number of children from the Yoker Primary School area will have to undertake a longer journey to school under the proposal. As per the council's transport policy, a bus will be provided for pupils travelling 1.2 miles or more. In taking forward the proposal, the council will need to provide

more detail on these plans and work closely with appropriate stakeholders in addressing their concerns. The council proposes to monitor the quality of education provided by the new provision through their current quality assurance and improvement arrangements to ensure that there was no detriment to the quality of education being delivered.

3.4 Children not yet attending primary school but due to start in Primary 1 in August 2015 will begin their education in the existing accommodation and if the proposal goes ahead will move to the new school in session 2016. The proposed completion date for the new campus is not until 2016 therefore there will be no impact on children in the next two years.

3.5 Other users in the community will benefit from the facilities on offer on the new campus. The accommodation will house Glasgow Life which will enhance parental and community partnership.

4. Summary

4.1 HM Inspectors consider that the proposal, to close Garscadden Primary School, Yoker Primary School including Thirlstane Day Nursery and build a new non-denominational primary school as part of the campus on the St Brendan's Primary School site; close Kelso Nursery School and build a new, extended day, 52 weeks a year early years establishment as part of the campus on the St Brendan's Primary School site, has the potential to bring educational benefit through the provision of a purpose-built new school that will provide a high-quality and improved learning environment for children. However, during the consultation stakeholders raised a number of justifiable concerns in taking forward and finalising the proposal, the council needs to work closely with stakeholders in addressing these concerns. These included concerns about the school site being able to provide appropriate playground, parking and outdoor space for children given the size of the site. Issues around travel and traffic management, in particular, safe access and parking facilities were a big concern to stakeholders. A significant number of stakeholders did not feel that the council had consulted effectively with them or given sufficient consideration to the viability of alternatives to the site currently proposed for the new school. Parents need reassured about how the safety of their children will be a priority if they were to share premises with Glasgow Life.

4.2 The proposal addresses the deterioration and resultant costs of bringing the current premises up to standard. In this way it will help the council to ensure that it meets its duties to secure best value through the efficient and effective use of its resources.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
September 2013**