

Consultation proposal by Glasgow City Council

Report by HM Inspectors, Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to relocate St Oswald's Secondary School into spare capacity within St Margaret Mary's Secondary School.

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 relocate St Oswald's Secondary School into spare capacity within St Margaret Mary's Secondary School. Young people who attend St Oswald's Secondary School have a broad range of additional support needs including those with autism spectrum disorder.
- 1.2 The report from HM Inspectors 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 public meetings held on 18 June 2013 and 19 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 St Oswald's Secondary School, St Margaret Mary's Secondary School, St Bartholomew's Primary School and John Paul II Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 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
- 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 two public meetings and invitations to submit written submissions, including an online submissions form. A few parents reported that the online system was difficult to use and occasionally crashed. An independent consultant was employed by the council to undertake a consultation with parents, pupils and staff of the school affected by the proposal. Staff of both schools did not feel that they were able to accurately present their views at meetings chaired by the consultant. The public meetings were well attended. While providing opportunities for parents and members of the community to express their views, a few parents later stated that they felt intimidated by the way in which the meetings were chaired and had been reticent to speak. Parents of P6 and P7 pupils in John Paul II Primary School had not been informed of the consultation and felt that their children had not been included in the process as well as they should have been.

2.2 The council received a large number of responses to its consultation. Many of these responses were anonymous copies of two generic submissions. The responses came from a wide range of groups and individuals. Almost all of the responses did not support the council's proposal. In the submissions and in the meetings with HM Inspectors of Education, parents and staff had concerns about the lack of a purpose-built denominational school for young people with additional support needs on the south side of Glasgow. Many written responses had concerns as to whether the St Margaret Mary's Secondary School building was suitable to accommodate children with a broad range of additional support needs including those with autism spectrum disorder. The major concerns were the safety of young people in the event of a fire; whether the dining facilities were adequate to cope with the specific requirements of some of the young people in St Oswald's Secondary School; the lack of outdoor space for the sole use by young people from St Oswald's Secondary School; the quality of public transport to St. Margaret Mary's Secondary School; and the safe drop-off and pick-up of young people who use taxis to get to school. The respondents who were local residents around St Oswald's Secondary School wrote in favour of maintaining the school on the current site as they held the view that it had become a very important part of the community.

2.3 Staff in both schools saw that the proposal had the potential to improve learning experiences for young people by offering modern accommodation and access to modern specialist teaching areas. Young people would have the opportunity to interact and socialise with a larger group of peers. Staff could work on curriculum development and improve pedagogy to the benefit of both schools. Young people from St. Oswald's Secondary School could have easy access to mainstream subject classes if this was appropriate to their needs.

2.4 Staff in St. Margaret Mary's Secondary School were in favour of inclusive education but were worried that a number of adaptations to the St Margaret Mary's Secondary School campus would need to be made to accommodate effectively the pupils from St Oswald's Secondary School who have a broad range of additional support needs, particularly those with autism spectrum disorder. The main concern was the pressure which would be placed on facilities for physical education which staff felt were already unsuitable. Other areas of concern included the lack of adapted equipment for home economics and technical. Staff felt that insufficient consideration had been given to the amount of time young people from St. Oswald's Secondary School would be moving around the proposed joint campus. In order to provide effective support to young people in emergencies, staff felt that they would need to be trained and have suitable information about individuals from St. Oswald's Secondary School. Time would be required to do this effectively. There were also concerns about the effects of increased traffic in and around the school campus. Staff from St. Oswald's Secondary School were concerned about the loss of the school's identity. For example, it would be more difficult to hold whole-school assemblies or have a staff room for St Oswald's Secondary School staff. A major concern was the perceived lack of quiet rooms throughout the new campus should the need arise as young people from St Oswald's with autism spectrum disorder moved from one area to another. Staff from both schools felt that the council had not given sufficient consideration to developing a draft plan as to how the proposal could operate in practice. They perceived there to be a lack of clear information. The resulting uncertainty had led to anxiety amongst staff and pupils.

2.5 Parents accepted the need for alternative accommodation to the current St Oswald's Secondary School building and that the proposal offered the potential for improved accommodation and access to a wider range of modern specialist facilities. Overall, however they were strongly opposed to the council's proposed solution. Parents from both schools felt that the council had not presented a clear plan of how the joint campus could operate and that the lack of clarity had led to some children becoming unnecessarily anxious. If the proposal is to go ahead, parents thought it was vital that they were involved in developing a clear transition plan for existing young people and those who may attend from August 2014.

2.6 Young people in St Oswald's Secondary School recognised that the current accommodation was cramped and that there was not sufficient space to offer a full curriculum. They saw benefits to moving to St Margaret Mary's Secondary School in offering subjects such as technical and business education. They expressed a number of concerns about the size of St Margaret Mary's Secondary School and in particular the potential noise in corridors at period changes which could be upsetting to some young people, particularly those with autism spectrum disorder. They were also concerned that some learners would find it difficult to move around the school

independently. The change could also mean that some young people who travelled to school independently would no longer be able to do so. Their main concern was about the potential bullying which a number of young people from St Oswald's Secondary School with specific additional support needs had experienced in the past in a mainstream environment.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 Glasgow City Council has set out in its proposal a range of educational benefits for young people who currently attend St. Oswald's Secondary School and will attend St Margaret Mary's Secondary School if the proposal goes ahead. In particular, it highlights how young people in St Oswald's Secondary School would have improved learning experiences in a modern learning environment at St Margaret Mary's Secondary School. Increased access to specialist teaching facilities would improve opportunities for certification in a wider range of subjects. As appropriate to their individual learning needs, young people would be able to learn alongside their mainstream peers in selected subjects.

3.2 The council has outlined that the current St Oswald's Secondary School accommodation is no longer suitable in the medium to long term to provide a modern curriculum. The proposal would provide access to facilities such as computer suites and library facilities which young people currently do not have. The current St Oswald's Secondary School accommodation is a two-storey building with the majority of rooms on one floor. There are specialist teaching areas for home economics, physical education, art and music. A small IT suite is used by a number of subjects. The outdoor space is used a great deal by young people and is a pleasant learning environment. However, the building is generally in poor condition and has insufficient space for specialist teaching in the areas identified by the council. The accommodation at St Margaret Mary's Secondary School is much more suited to the delivery of a modern curriculum and increased social interaction. It would provide a more appropriate environment for learning for young people from St Oswald's Secondary School. However, the council needs to assess carefully any alterations that may be needed to the current St Margaret Mary's Secondary School accommodation to ensure they address the specific needs of young people currently accommodated in St Oswald's Secondary School, this includes outside space.

3.3 The increased contact with their peers could benefit pupils from both St Oswald's Secondary School and St Margaret Mary's Secondary School and improve how their social needs are met. The close proximity of the schools has the potential to offer increased learning opportunities as well as improved social interaction. The pleasant social spaces in the joint campus could provide opportunities for interaction between young people from both schools and develop a range of skills for life, learning and work. This aspect of the proposal will have to be handled sensitively to ensure all young people, particularly those with more complex additional support needs feel comfortable and are valued by their peers. If handled well, this aspect of the proposal has the potential to develop positive relationships across the campus and improved social and emotional outcomes for young people.

3.4 The council has outlined how the proposal will improve the coherence of the curriculum for young people in St. Oswald's Secondary School. Increased curricular

opportunities will be available for all young people on the campus and it is important the council considers how the curriculum for young people from St Margaret Mary's Secondary School may also be affected because of the proposal. This includes how the transition programmes for both schools may need to be adapted before August 2014.

3.5 The opportunities outlined by the council for a campus approach to inclusive education would benefit young people from both schools. A fresh impetus for both schools to revisit their visions, values and aims may enable both schools to continue to develop their expectations for all young people on the campus. There is the potential to do this while maintaining the distinct ethos and values of each school.

3.6 The council outlines a number of benefits for staff should the proposal go ahead. These include the co-location of management teams breaking down isolated leadership; and providing single teacher departments with increased opportunities for professional learning with subject colleagues. These are clear benefits of the proposal. Teams from both schools will be able to learn together and develop some aspects of the curriculum together. The opportunities for working together on pedagogy, sharing skills and developing new skills which will naturally arise from the co-location will benefit staff and young people.

4. Summary

4.1 The council has outlined clearly the educational benefits of the proposal. The educational benefits statement has demonstrated how the proposal will significantly improve aspects of the learning environment for young people in St Oswald's Secondary School. The move to St Margaret Mary's Secondary School will provide accommodation which is more suited to delivering a curriculum for the 21st century. It is clear that the proposal has the potential to provide increased learning opportunities for all young people on the proposed campus and increased professional learning opportunities for staff. The proposal will offer the potential to better meet the social and emotional needs of young people from both schools. With more opportunities for partnership working, the learning needs of young people in both schools may be met more effectively. Overall, the council has demonstrated how the proposal has the potential to improve the education of young people in both schools.

4.2 The council has consulted with a wide range of stakeholders. In taking forward the proposal, it needs to address a number of issues. It needs to consider whether action should be taken regarding the error in the consultation document concerning St Oswald's Secondary School learning community. It also needs to assure stakeholders that it has consulted with all key groups which may be affected by the proposal.

4.3 As the council moves forward with the proposal, it needs to outline as soon as possible how it will continue to inform and engage with all stakeholders. In order to alleviate growing anxiety amongst young people in both schools, it needs to be proactive in working with young people, parents and staff to develop quickly a clear plan to show all stakeholders how the two schools will operate on the one campus. This may need to include such things as assessments of the safety of all young

people; the daily routines of the two schools and any alterations required to the campus to ensure young people from both schools continue to learn in a suitable environment. The council also needs to outline how it will support the development of the ethos of both schools to ensure that all young people continue to feel safe and cared for wherever they are on the campus. Children, young people, parents and staff would welcome continuing engagement about the proposed campus and the council needs to outline how it will continue to engage with all stakeholders.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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