

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Lanarkshire Council to relocate Gartcosh Primary School to a new build campus facility.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (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 North Lanarkshire Council's proposal to relocate Gartcosh Primary School to a new build campus facility. 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 Gartcosh Primary School; 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 5 March 2018 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

- visit to Gartcosh Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 North Lanarkshire 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 North Lanarkshire Council proposes to relocate Gartcosh Primary School to a new build campus facility within the existing school catchment area. The council undertook the consultation between 21 February and 18 April 2018. Statutory consultees were notified of the consultation and copies of the consultation document were published on the council's website. A public meeting held on 5 March 2018 was attended by approximately 58 people. Nine people completed and returned a consultation form of which eight were in favour of the proposal. In addition, 20 individual responses were sent to North Lanarkshire Council. Concerns expressed by respondents included a lack of specific detail in the consultation document about the proposed new school building and questions over the suitability of the proposed site and its precise location.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 There are clear potential educational benefits to the council's proposal. The existing school building is of a considerable age and design and is not of sufficient size to accommodate the forecast increases in the school roll. A new school building could enable children to benefit from sufficient and accessible learning space designed to modern standards. This has the potential to improve learning experiences for children. The council has identified a large area of land for the proposed site of the new school but it is not clear from the council's proposal document specifically where within this area the new school building will be located. The council's proposal document lacks specific and detailed information on the size and design of the new building.

3.2 The council proposes to include an integrated Language and Communication Support Centre within the new school building. This has the potential to improve inclusion and enable a greater range of learning needs to be met within a mainstream setting.

3.3 The council's proposal paper makes reference to its review for an expansion of early years and childcare provision. Gartcosh Primary School does not currently include early learning and childcare provision. The council's proposal paper states that this will remain under review. It is therefore not yet clear if the new building will include early years and childcare provision. The council will need to clarify this in its final report.

3.4 The council's proposal paper includes a number of general statements on the potential for purpose designed space and facilities within the new building to enhance children's experience of the curriculum, including better space for active learning, interdisciplinary learning and outdoor learning and better access to modern

technology. Whilst the improved design of learning spaces has the potential to improve learning experiences and outcomes for children, the council's proposal document lacks sufficiently specific detail. There is, for example, no specific detail on the council's plans for improved space for physical education at the new site. The council will have to provide more specific details in its final report.

3.5 All children, parents and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors supported the proposal to build a new school within the existing catchment area. They recognised the need for a new building to accommodate the forecast increases in the school roll. They welcomed the opportunities this could provide for substantially improved modern accommodation and facilities.

3.6 Parents were concerned about the lack of specific detail in the council's proposal paper and had a number of questions including the need to know the specific location of the proposed new building, the council's plans for traffic management, road safety and safe walking routes. A number of stakeholders had sought reassurances from the council on the suitability and safety of the site and information on what alternative sites the council had explored. Parents felt it had been difficult to provide informed views on the proposal due to the lack of sufficiently specific detail. They felt they should have further opportunities to engage with North Lanarkshire Council on matters of specific detail. The council will need to consider these points in its final paper.

3.7 Staff and children hoped that they would have opportunities to be involved in the design options for the proposed new building. Staff hoped to have the opportunity to influence specific desirable design features for children with additional support needs. In its final report, the council will need to consider how stakeholders can contribute their views to help to shape plans for the proposed new school building.

4. Summary

- There are clear potential educational benefits in North Lanarkshire Council's proposal to build a new school building within the existing catchment area of Gartcosh Primary School. The existing school building is too small to cope with projected roll increases and a new school could provide much improved space and facilities.
- There was a lack of detail in the council's proposal document including the specific location of the proposed new building, information on safe walking routes and road safety and details of building design. The council will need to provide more specific detail where possible in its final paper. For those matters of detail which are not yet determined, the council will need to provide reassurance to stakeholders by outlining its process and timescale for engaging with parents, staff and children on detailed plans.