

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Ayrshire Council to relocate Glenburn Primary School and St Ninian's Primary School to a new shared campus to be built on the existing site of one of these schools and to amalgamate Glenburn early years centre and St Ninian's early years centre to create a new standalone early years centre as part of the new campus.

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 South Ayrshire Council's proposal to relocate Glenburn Primary School and St Ninian's Primary School to a new shared campus to be built on the existing site of one of these schools and to amalgamate Glenburn early years centre and St Ninian's early years centre to create a new standalone early years centre as part of the new 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 of Glenburn Primary School and early years centre, St Ninian's Primary School and early years centre; any other users; children likely to enrol at these educational settings 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 14 March 2018 in connection with the council's proposal;
- 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; and
- visits to the site of Glenburn Primary School and early years centre and St Ninian's Primary School and early years centre, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 South Ayrshire 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 South Ayrshire Council formally consulted stakeholders between 19 February and 20 April 2018. Public meetings were held at St Ninian's Primary School on 13 March 2018 and at Glenburn Primary School on 14 March 2018. The consultation was advertised in the local newspaper and copies of the proposal document were made available through the council website and distributed to stakeholders by the headteachers in each primary school. Meetings were held with staff and pupils at Glenburn Primary School and with children at St Ninian's Primary School. Staff at St Ninian's Primary School indicated that they would prefer to give their views through the online survey only. A letter informing parents of the consultation was issued to parents of children attending each of the two schools and early learning and childcare settings. All stakeholders were offered the opportunity to share their views through an online survey. The Diocese of Galloway was provided with a copy of the proposal.

2.3 Fifty-five parents/carers completed the council's online survey. Twenty-five people attended the public meeting at St Ninian's Primary School and thirty-two people attended the meeting at Glenburn Primary School. A few people attended both meetings. Almost half of the parents/carers who completed the online survey were against the proposal to bring Glenburn Primary School classes and St Ninian's Primary School classes onto a shared campus. Although most provided comments saying they agreed with the educational benefits of moving the schools into new modern buildings they did not feel that the children would benefit from a shared campus arrangement. They expressed a range of concerns about the impact of sharing learning resources, loss of outdoor space and the safety of arrangements for drop-off and parking which they felt would be caused by the increased number of children and families using the campus. Similar views were expressed by many of those who attended the public meetings. At the public meetings, a few people also

raised questions about the financial implications of the proposal and arrangements for the longer term upkeep of the campus. These questions were also submitted in writing as part of the online survey and to Education Scotland directly.

2.4 The majority of parents who expressed a preference when completing the online survey were in favour of amalgamating Glenburn and St Ninian's early years centres to create a single standalone early learning and childcare centre. Although there are some concerns about transition arrangements going forward, overall parents and staff agree with this aspect of the proposal.

2.5 Staff in Glenburn Primary School and early years centre and in St Ninian's Primary School and early years centre overall agree with the proposal to bring the schools together on a new shared campus. They also think the idea of a new standalone early years provision is a positive proposal. They had questions about the nature of the shared arrangements and the scope for children to play and learn together. They also expressed their view that it would be more challenging to maintain the existing positive transition for children moving from early years to P1. However, they are very open to working together to ensure the campus is a positive learning environment for all children. They want to be very much involved in the planning and design of the campus and decisions about how it will operate on a day to day basis.

2.6 Children in both schools expressed their view that a shared campus arrangement would enable them to spend more time with friends and family in their community who currently attend a different school. They were excited about the prospect of gaining new modern learning facilities and had ideas about design features and aspects they would like to see included. They described important symbols and items such as icons, trophies, school uniforms and school badges which they felt it would be important to take with them to maintain their school's unique identity within the campus. In both schools, children spoke about the importance of their values and working together to develop shared values so that all children feel safe and respected by their peers. They expressed a few concerns about the potential for increased bullying within the larger school community but felt confident their teachers would support them to resolve any such difficult situations. Only a few children said that a shared campus was not a good idea and that they preferred to have their own school without sharing. Those children were concerned about the loss of outdoor space for play and learning and worried about being with children who might not treat them with respect.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 There are a number of potential educational benefits to this proposal. The current school buildings are no longer fit for purpose. Children would potentially benefit from a modern learning environment designed and purpose-built to support modern approaches to learning and teaching from the early years through to P7. South Ayrshire Council would be committing to new indoor and outdoor learning spaces, new resources and an improved digital infrastructure which would potentially enhance children's learning. Improved dining facilities could support social skills and health and wellbeing and allow all children to benefit from a wide range of fresh food cooked on the premises. Children could have modern toilet and changing facilities

which maintain their dignity. A shared campus arrangement could provide opportunities to strengthen the sense of community within this area of Prestwick through increased opportunities for children to mix with family and friends who attend the other school. It can also support increased partnership and collaboration between staff and partners to build on the good practice which currently exists in both schools. The current buildings have very limited accessibility which make it difficult for those with limited mobility to get around. There is potential for this to be addressed within a new building and therefore increase opportunities for inclusion.

3.2 Almost all parents who have expressed their views either through the online survey or directly to HM Inspectors agree that their children will benefit greatly from moving into new schools and early years buildings and most parents have not raised any objections to the proposal to achieve this through the development of a shared campus. During the consultation a significant minority of parents raised objections to the proposal to rebuild the two schools and the new early years centre on a shared campus. Whilst they acknowledge the benefits of gaining a new learning environment, they are not convinced that the shared campus arrangement will benefit their children. To address these concerns, the council will need to engage parents fully in further discussions about the site and layout of the proposed campus and the arrangements for sharing resources if the proposal is taken forward.

3.3 Staff in both schools and early years centres who met with HM Inspectors, overall, agree with the proposal. They have some concerns about the day to day practicalities of running a shared campus and questions about the layout of the campus. They are also concerned that parking and drop-off arrangements should be adequate and safe. They would wish to maximise opportunities for joint play and learning between the two schools and the early years centre and are clear about the benefits of ensuring an inclusive environment for all children. A few staff have concerns about potential changes to their contract of employment and they would like an opportunity to discuss this aspect further with the council. Almost all of the children also agreed that the shared campus would be a good thing for their community. Staff and children have lots of ideas about how the campus could be designed to ensure it works well for them. If the council decides to go forward with this proposal it will be important for the council to ensure both school communities are fully engaged in planning and decision making at all stages.

3.4 The Bishop of Galloway provided a written response on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland. His response reiterates the Church's aspiration of Catholic education being provided within distinctive, discrete school buildings, located at the heart of the communities they serve. However, the Diocese acknowledges that a shared campus arrangement may be acceptable to the Church as the only viable context for providing Catholic education in the local area. The Church is willing therefore to explore further with South Ayrshire Council a shared campus arrangement which retains the distinctive educational approach, shaped by the values and traditions of Catholic Christianity. The Church wishes more information on the layout and nature of the shared arrangements before giving full approval to the proposal. To gain approval from the Church, South Ayrshire Council will need to ensure that all practical measures are taken to ensure the Catholic ethos of St Ninian's Primary School is not weakened by the move to a shared campus.

3.5 During the consultation period a few consultees identified alleged inaccuracies or omissions in the proposal and highlighted these to the council. These include financial aspects, references to traffic congestion and current use of the school buildings. The council will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to investigate these alleged inaccuracies or omissions. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies and omissions notified to it.

4. Summary

4.1 As outlined in section three of this report HM Inspectors agree that there are a number of potential educational benefits which could be realised by moving Glenburn Primary School and St Ninian's Primary School into a new purpose-built shared campus facility along with a new standalone early years centre. Almost all staff, children and parents recognise those benefits and broadly support the proposal. A minority of parents have objected to the proposal. The Roman Catholic Church has requested further detail about the layout and arrangements for sharing resources before it can give approval. If the council decides to take this proposal further it will need to ensure ongoing consultation with all stakeholders with regard to the planning, design and development of the shared campus. Staff, parents and children all have some concerns and questions about the operational aspects of a shared campus and what it will mean for them. All stakeholders need ongoing opportunities to share their views and ideas and to have their questions answered. Strong positive approaches to managing the change involving and communicating with all stakeholders will be important to ensure a successful transition to the new campus and to avoid further confusion and contention as the project moves forward.

4.2 In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address the alleged inaccuracies and omissions notified to it.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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