

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Inverclyde Council to relocate Kelly Street Children's Centre to new accommodation on the site of the former Greenock Academy.

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 Inverclyde Council's proposal to relocate Kelly Street Children's Centre to new accommodation to be constructed on the site of the former Greenock Academy situated off Madeira Street in the West End of Greenock. 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 the centre; any other users; and children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper;
- 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 2 June 2016 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 St Mary's Primary School and Kelly Street Children's Centre, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Inverclyde 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 The consultation period ran from 23 May 2016 until 23 August 2016. Notification of the consultation arrangements were placed in the press and on the council's website. A public meeting was held in St Mary's Primary School on 2 June 2016. Less than ten parents and members of the public attended and offered support to the proposal. The council received 57 written responses to the proposal. Almost all were in favour of relocating Kelly Street Children's Centre to a new building on the site of the former Greenock Academy. The views of children were sought very well through discussion groups, visits to other new provision in Inverclyde and to the proposed site.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Inverclyde Council has set out very clear educational benefits for the children and families of Kelly Street Children's Centre. The current building has significant constraints and has been rated a C for condition and suitability. Outdoor learning areas for children are limited in size. The council rightly state that a new building has the potential to provide children with a modern learning environment which is accessible to all, will better meet children's needs and support the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence. Staff currently work across two sites, at Kelly Street and within St Mary's Primary School. Facilities for them are limited. A new building will bring staff together and has the potential to provide a dedicated staff environment which will enhance their professionalism. The planned inclusion of a room for parents has the potential to enrich parental engagement further. Early learning and childcare provision for children two to three years of age is limited within the Kelly Street catchment area. Inclusion within the new building will enable Inverclyde Council to expand their provision for children two to three years in the local area. Parking/drop off arrangements around the present site are very challenging and these will be eased within the designs for the new building and surrounds.

3.2 Almost all stakeholders who responded to the consultation and those who spoke with HM Inspectors were overwhelmingly in favour of the proposal. They recognise the constraints of the two sites and the C rating given to the Kelly Street building for condition and suitability. They welcome the proposed new building which has the potential to provide their children with spacious play areas and a better outdoor learning environment. Stakeholders appreciate the inclusion of provision for children aged two to three years and a dedicated environment for parents. Stakeholders also commended Inverclyde Council on the location for the new building and the potential for much improved parking arrangements.

3.3 Staff and children who spoke with HM Inspectors very much welcome the proposed new building. In particular, children look forward to improved outdoor

learning environments directly accessible from the playrooms. Staff work very hard to minimise the constraints of their current building and split site. They agree with the educational benefits outlined in the proposal by Inverclyde Council. Staff at St Mary's Primary School and Kelly Street Children's Centre feel strongly that children's learning experiences have the potential to be enhanced in a new building and that there will be no negative impact on the quality of transition arrangements with schools in the catchment area.

3.4 The Kelly Street building is currently used by the Boys Brigade outwith nursery operating hours. Inverclyde Council are engaging with them to find suitable alternative accommodation.

4. Summary

Inverclyde Council have set out a very clear statement of educational benefit for the children, families and staff of Kelly Street Children's Centre. Given the condition, suitability and constraints of the current building the proposal will address all of these. The plans for the new building have the potential to offer children a bespoke, high quality learning environment indoors and outdoors which will enhance their learning experiences further. The proposal offers staff a much enhanced professional environment where they can work and meet together as a team. Inverclyde Council have engaged stakeholders well through the consultation period. Staff, children and families would like to continue to be consulted as the plans for the new building are developed and finalised.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
September 2016**