

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Moray Council to establish a new primary school for south-east Elgin, initially in temporary accommodation based at East End Primary School.

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 The Moray Council's proposal:

- to establish a new primary school, with nursery provision, to serve an agreed catchment area for a delineated geographical zone in south-east Elgin;
- to establish the new school initially at a temporary site at East End Primary School Annexe until the new school building is complete. The temporary accommodation will initially accommodate children at P1 and will accommodate those at P1-P3 in future years;
- the implementation date for establishing the new school at its temporary site will be 15 August 2016. The nursery provision will commence once the new school building opens; and
- the new school will relocate to its permanent site on the completion of the new school building. The target date for this is August 2018.

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 attending East End Primary School and New Elgin 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 6 January 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;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected, including media articles and The Moray Council's documentation regarding safety around schools; and
- visits to the sites of East End Primary School and New Elgin Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 The Moray 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 The consultation ran from 14 December 2015 to 4 February 2016. The council held two public meetings on 6 January 2016 at Elgin Town Hall. It sought views from a range of stakeholders, held meetings with parents and staff in East End and New Elgin Primary Schools and sought the views of pupils. Of 365 people who responded to an online/paper survey, almost all agreed with the building of a new school, and an overall majority agreed with its temporary location at East End Primary School Annexe. Of 23 additional written responses received, three supported the proposal for the new school. Of 190 East End Primary School pupils who responded to the survey questions, a majority supported the building of the new school but opposed its temporary location in the school's annexe. Many respondents to the survey expressed concerns related to traffic management around East End Primary School and sought clarification about practical issues regarding use of accommodation if the new temporary school was located in the annexe of East End Primary School.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Overall, the proposal has a number of potential educational benefits for current and future learners. It will lead to improvements in the quality of learning environments, particularly for children who are zoned to attend the new school and those who attend New Elgin Primary School, which is currently operating above capacity. The proposal will also assist the council in aiming to achieve best value by addressing capacity issues across its school estate in the Elgin area.

3.2 The aspect of the proposal relating to the establishment of a new school in south-east Elgin has potential educational benefits. These relate to the easing of

over-capacity issues across Elgin's schools and the creation of additional capacity for nursery and primary school aged children. The proposed new school has the potential to support the full delivery of Curriculum for Excellence in purpose-built accommodation which is accessible and inclusive to all learners, includes flexible learning spaces with potential to enhance learners' experiences. The proposal for the new school also has potential benefits for the community in terms of access to accessible learning and leisure facilities.

3.3 The aspect of the proposal to establish the new school initially at a temporary site at East End Primary School Annexe has potential educational benefits for children attending the new school. These include children, parents and staff in the new school being able to be fully involved in the planning, development, designing, vision and identity of the new school from the outset. Although children would move buildings when the proposed new school is built, by being part of the 'new school' from the outset, children should experience less disruption to their learning. Staff, parents and children of New Elgin Primary School who met with HM Inspectors are supportive of the establishment of the new school at the temporary site at East End Primary School Annexe. Given that New Elgin Primary School is currently operating over capacity, this aspect of the proposal has the potential to enhance children's learning opportunities.

3.4 Stakeholders at East End Primary School who met with HM Inspectors have concerns about the proposal. In the longer term these concerns are reasonable, given that the East End Primary School roll is forecast to rise. Stakeholders recognise that the refurbishment of the Annexe building will benefit children at East End Primary School once the new school is opened. However, concerns included the fact that the target date for completion of the new school's building may not be met, and the negative impact that this may have on East End Primary School. Stakeholders are anxious that children attending East End Primary School will have reduced access to areas of the school, including the gym hall, canteen and playground. The council has acknowledged that aspects of how the Annexe accommodation would be used could be reviewed with the senior management team of East End Primary School. In taking forward its proposal, the council will need to work closely with stakeholders from East End Primary School to clarify how it will address their concerns. In doing this it needs to explain clearly how children attending the temporary new school will experience a broad range of learning experiences with older and younger children within a 'shared campus' environment.

3.5 Stakeholders and other members of the local community have existing, legitimate concerns over traffic and the safety of children around East End Primary School. They believe that additional traffic resulting from children attending the temporary new school will make matters worse. Traffic congestion was observed during the HM Inspector's visit to the school. The council should respond to stakeholders' concerns regarding traffic management, reviewing school travel plans, communicating with stakeholders and the wider community around East End Primary School, as appropriate.

3.6 With the proposed opening of the temporary school in August 2016, the timescale for the refurbishment of the Annexe, appointment of staff and transition for new P1 children may prove challenging. Various transition programmes have already

started for children due to begin P1 in New Elgin and East End Primary Schools. As a matter of urgency, the council needs to share its plans to support children's transition into P1 at the temporary accommodation in August 2016 and for the continuity of their learning.

4. Summary

The proposal has a number of potential educational benefits for learners, leading to improvements in the quality of learning environments, particularly for children who are zoned to attend the new school and those attending New Elgin Primary School. A new school building has potential educational benefits for learners, including supporting the full delivery of Curriculum for Excellence in purpose-built accommodation which is accessible and inclusive to all learners. The proposal also has potential benefits to the community. The aspect of the proposal to establish the new school initially at a temporary site at East End Primary School Annexe has potential educational benefits for children attending the new school. The proposal will also assist the council to achieve best value by addressing capacity issues across its school estate in the Elgin area. In finalising its proposal, the council will need to show how it has taken account of any issues and reasonable concerns raised by stakeholders during the consultation or in discussion with HM Inspectors.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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