

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by South Ayrshire Council to establish a new Maybole Community Campus which involves the proposed closure and amalgamation of Cairn Primary School and Gardenrose Primary School and associated early years provision and the proposed relocation of St Cuthbert's Primary School.**

**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 establish a new Maybole Community Campus which involves the proposed closure and amalgamation of Cairn Primary School and Gardenrose Primary School and associated early years provision and the proposed relocation of St Cuthbert's Primary School. A new Carrick Academy will be built on the site of the existing school as part of the planned 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 and young people of the schools and early years provision involved; 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 20 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
- visits to the sites of Cairn Primary School, Gardenrose Primary School, St Cuthbert's Primary School and Carrick Academy, 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*. The consultation process ran from 19 February until 20 April 2018. The proposal document was placed on the council's website. Copies were made available to numerous consultees, including Parent Councils, parents of those schools affected and those whose children could attend the affected schools within two years of publication of the proposal document. The document was also made available to stakeholders, including, children, young people, teaching and support staff, trade union representatives and the local Community Council Stakeholders were invited to respond to the proposal in writing or by email.

2.2 Public meetings were held at each of the primary schools involved. A total of 44 people attended these meetings. Those who attended had mixed views about the proposal. Overall, those who attended wanted more information about several aspects of the proposal. This included more detail about campus facilities, including any to be shared, early years provision, safe arrangements for vehicular access, class sizes and arrangements for managing the co-location of educational provision for children and young people from age two to 18. Stakeholders also wanted more specific detail about how the proposal would ensure that the individual identity of St Cuthbert's Primary School, based on Roman Catholic values, would be maintained. The Diocese of Galloway indicated that the Catholic Church would be willing to explore an arrangement to relocate St Cuthbert's Primary School to the proposed new campus which retained the provision in Maybole of a Catholic school community with its distinctive educational approach. The Diocese had concerns about the potential for cluster links to Queen Margaret Academy being weakened. The Diocese stated that their support for the proposal would depend on these details being resolved to their satisfaction. The views of 135 children's were also gathered. Most were positive about the proposal and wanted more involvement in the design of the campus. There were 87 responses from other stakeholders, including parent and carers, staff and other interested individuals, including local residents. Overall, the majority were positive about the proposal.

### **3. Educational Aspects of Proposal**

3.1 The proposal has clear educational benefits and the potential for children, young people and the community to access modern educational and community facilities. Designs for the new shared community campus have still to be developed. However, the proposal makes reference to the new Ayr Academy and Tarbolton Community Campus as projects which represent creativity and flexibility in design and which have received national recognition. As part of a larger school population, children and young people would have increased opportunities to make more friends as well as maintaining friendships from their current school. Children may also benefit from opportunities through wider social integration that the campus would offer. With a new Carrick Academy to be built on the site of the existing school, as part of the new campus, the proposal has the potential to promote inclusion further. In ensuring that children, young people and others with mobility difficulties can access all areas of the curriculum, the facilities through the new campus have the potential to be fully accessible to those who have any additional support needs. The new non-denominational school would have an increased early years, teaching and senior management staffing structure. This has the potential to increase the opportunities for staff to share good practice and develop their professional learning across the campus.

3.2 The proposal has the potential to improve the quality of children and young people's learning outdoors, through, for example, outdoor classroom facilities, allotments for growing and social areas where children and young people could play and enjoy time with friends. In addition, purpose-built outdoor facilities would support and increase children and young people's health and wellbeing opportunities through being involved in a wider range of sporting activities. There are plans for the provision of two all weather-pitches, one for football and one for rugby. The proposal also has the potential to enhance children and young people's skills in digital technology as a result of improved information communications technology infrastructure.

3.3 The proposal for the new early years centre has the potential to increase places for children and help the council deliver 1140 hours per child. The new centre would offer extended provision, possibly over 52 weeks, rather than current term time provision. There is also the potential for families to benefit from accessing training and parenting opportunities. There is also the further potential to enhance all schools' relationships with parents prior to children starting P1.

3.4 Working in collaboration with other projects, the proposal notes that suitable arrangements will be made to improving the main walking route for children. Although a Maybole bypass is being developed, the current road to the school is very busy with a significant amount of heavy traffic, including lorries which at times can end up on the pavement at narrower parts when equally large vehicles are coming in the opposite direction. It would be important for the council to risk assess the route to assure themselves of children's safety.

3.5 Overall, most staff who spoke with HM Inspectors during visits are positive about the proposal. They see clear advantages for children and young people's learning through modern state of the art facilities, including for outdoor learning. All

staff want more information on staffing, shared facilities, traffic control and senior management arrangements. Children who met with HM Inspectors have mixed views about the proposal. Despite this, almost all are excited about the possibility of having a new school with new facilities and resources for their education. Others have concerns over the arrangements for children and young people aged from two to 18 learning on one campus. Those parents from almost all of the schools who met with HM Inspectors have mixed views. Those who were positive wanted their children to have their education in new purpose-built facilities with high quality resources. All parents raised reasonable concerns regarding safe routes to school along a busy road and traffic management at the new campus. Others are worried about the possibility of a 'truck stop' being established opposite the school entrance which they are concerned adds to the already high level of traffic on the road. All parents are keen that if the proposal goes ahead that there should be opportunities for children and young people to integrate with each other, for example, through any shared facilities such as dining halls and playground. Stakeholders valued seeing images and a blueprint of what a new campus might look like. Representatives from one Parent Council enjoyed visiting other schools in South Ayrshire to see what could be offered. All stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors want much more involvement and a 'voice' in the future design of the campus. Children are keen to be involved in naming the potential new school and in designing a new uniform.

3.6 Church representatives want to ensure that any relocation to a proposed new campus retains the ethos and values of St Cuthbert's Primary School and the school's distinctive educational approach.

## **4 Summary**

South Ayrshire's Council's proposal to establish a new Maybole Community Campus which involves the proposed closure and amalgamation of Cairn Primary School and Gardenrose Primary School and associated early years provision and the proposed relocation of St Cuthbert's Primary School has clear educational benefit. This proposal will help ensure that future learners have access to modern accommodation, facilities and resources which meet their learning needs. The new campus has the potential to help teachers and other practitioners work together and develop new teaching methods which support Curriculum for Excellence. The proposal also supports continuity and progression in children's learning from age two to 18 in a new state of the art community campus. In moving forward with the proposal, it will be important for the council to continue to involve stakeholders in the design of the new campus and clarify those aspects noted earlier in this report where stakeholders require more information, and in particular the staffing and management arrangements.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
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