

# **Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Lanarkshire Council to provide a new joint campus facility for Lawmuir Primary School and Sacred Heart Primary School and to incorporate early years and childcare provision.**

## **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 provide a new joint campus facility for Lawmuir Primary School and Sacred Heart Primary School and to incorporate early years and childcare provision. 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 schools; 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:

- 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 Lawmuir Primary School and Sacred Heart Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 North Lanarkshire 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 statutory consultation took place between 8 November 2017 and 20 December 2017. Public meetings were held on 27 and 28 November 2017, attended by 22 people in Lawmuir Primary School and 47 in Sacred Heart Primary School. The council provided a written consultation response form and also encouraged responses by email. Twenty-four responses were received. The council judged that one of these responses was in favour and eight were against the proposal with the remaining 15 expressing mixed views. The majority of children from Lawmuir and Sacred Heart Primary Schools, who responded to a survey led by council officers, supported the proposal.

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

3.1 The council believes that there will be significant educational benefit to pupils from this proposal. It considers that the provision of a new joint school campus will make the most modern of standards and resources available to pupils to support the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence. It believes that the new building will be a significant, more efficient improvement on the current establishments. It also believes that the new building will provide excellent facilities for use outwith school hours that could be used to help meet the learning, leisure and social needs of the community. The current school buildings are over 60 years old. They are not ideally suited to modern approaches to learning and teaching and have accessibility issues.

3.2 The council considers that the inclusion of early years and childcare provision in the new build proposal will provide a fully up-to-date setting for early years provision in the Orbiston area. However, no detail is given in the proposal regarding timescales. No detail is given regarding the provision for, or management of, the existing nursery.

3.3 Overall, children in both schools are positive about coming together in a shared campus but have justifiable concerns about the lack of detail provided in the council's proposal and the uncertainty that this brings. In particular, they are worried about how a decant of Sacred Heart Primary School to the grounds of Lawmuir Primary School could work during the construction of a new school building and about how sharing of facilities would be organised.

3.4 Overall, parents of children in both schools have justifiable concerns about the lack of detail provided in the council's proposal and the uncertainty that this brings. They feel that they are being asked to support a proposal without being given sufficient information. Whilst they are generally supportive of a new building, they need reassurance that there will be superior facilities in the new school which will improve their children's educational experiences. Parents of children in Sacred

Heart Primary School have concerns about how a decant of Sacred Heart Primary School would work during the construction of a new school building, and how the school's distinctive ethos could be maintained.

3.5 Staff from Lawmuir Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors are generally in favour of a new, shared campus which they feel will be good for the community. They are concerned that there are many areas of uncertainty, including the future of nursery provision and of services delivered by the YMCA. Staff from Sacred Heart Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors are in favour of a new shared campus but have concerns about the lack of clarity in the proposal. They need reassurance that there will be superior facilities in the new school which will improve children's educational experiences. Overall, staff in both schools are in favour of a new, shared campus, but have justifiable concerns about the lack of detail provided in the council's proposal.

3.6 The Diocese of Motherwell have stated that their preference is for separate standalone denominational schools and believe the proposal would have an adverse effect on the ethos and identity of Sacred Heart Primary School.

3.7 During the consultation period, parents and other consultees identified omissions from the proposal, including lack of reference to plans for the existing YMCA building and for Orbiston Nursery, arrangements for drop-off and parking, and details of which school facilities will be shared between the schools. There is no indication of when the building work is expected to commence or be completed.

3.8 Due to the limited information provided in the consultation paper, the council has not been able to demonstrate that it has assessed clearly the short or longer term effects on children in the relevant schools. The educational benefits statement currently lacks sufficient detail to allow stakeholders to make an informed choice or HM Inspectors to provide a professional view on the merits of the proposal.

#### **4. Summary**

The current Lawmuir Primary School and Sacred Heart Primary School buildings are over 60 years old. They are not ideally suited to modern approaches to learning and teaching and have accessibility issues. Stakeholders, including children, parents and staff of both schools, are generally in favour of a new joint campus. The community is particularly keen to know details for decanting Sacred Heart Primary School whilst the new campus is built, plans for nursery provision and the services provided to vulnerable children and families by the local YMCA. There may be potential educational benefits for learners from a modern, purpose designed learning environment with appropriate facilities, including accessibility. However, there is insufficient accurate and high quality information to allow HM Inspectors to comment

on the educational benefits of the proposal. In these circumstances, having been notified of material omissions, North Lanarkshire Council should consider its options in how it proceeds with this proposal.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
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