

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Lanarkshire Council to build a new St Kevin's Primary School at a different location and close St Kevin's Primary School Nursery Class and establish a Bargeddie Primary School Nursery Class.

April 2019

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](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of North Lanarkshire Council's proposal to build a new St Kevin's Primary School at a different location and close St Kevin's Primary School Nursery Class and establish a Bargeddie Primary School Nursery Class. 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 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 statutory 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 and nursery class; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children 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 site of St Kevin's Primary School and Nursery Class and Bargeddie Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 North Lanarkshire Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 North Lanarkshire Council's consultation process ran from 21 November 2018 until 15 January 2019. The council held a public meeting at St Kevin's and Bargeddie Joint Campus on 11 December 2018 where 34 people attended. Stakeholders sought clarification on a number of issues with the overriding concern expressed over safe walking routes to the proposed new school. Forty-four stakeholders responded to the council's consultation on the proposal to change the location of St Kevin's Primary School with 30 agreeing to the proposal, four disagreeing and four people being unsure. However, of the 44 respondents, only six were parents of children

attending St Kevin's Primary School. All of the parents were in favour of the proposal. The majority of respondents supported the proposed location. With regard to closing the nursery class at St Kevin's Primary School and establishing a nursery class at Bargeddie Primary School, 32 people responded. Stakeholders, including the two parents who responded, were fairly evenly split on whether they agreed or disagreed, with a smaller number unsure.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The proposal by North Lanarkshire Council has clear educational benefits. It will provide better learning opportunities for the children of St Kevin's Primary School and Bargeddie Primary School. Currently, the use of shared spaces within the joint campus is under pressure with the numbers of children attending. The roll in both schools is likely to grow over time making the situation more difficult. The new school will allow both St Kevin's Primary School and Bargeddie Primary School to use space more flexibly. Presently, staff find it difficult to find areas to work quietly with small groups or individual children. In this, as well as other regards, the proposal will bring benefits to all children including those with additional barriers to learning. The new school will be built to facilitate greater opportunities for active and outdoor learning whilst also making best use of technology to enhance digital learning.

3.2 Currently, almost all children at the nursery attend either St Kevin's Primary School or Bargeddie Primary School. The change of management from St Kevin's Primary School to Bargeddie Primary School will allow early learning and childcare to continue at the same location without interruption to children or families.

3.3 Children in both schools are positive about the proposal and the improvements it will bring with greater access to, for example, sports facilities, gym hall, library and dining hall. They can describe how they think learning will improve. However, they are very keen not to lose any of the benefits which have built up over the years in the joint campus. Children value the joint sports teams, watching performances together and the shared fun day which they see as a real community event.

3.4 Staff, including the headteachers, see the advantages for both children and staff in the proposal. More flexible learning areas and a reduction in noise will encourage greater independence and improved concentration for children. They welcome potential improvements in areas for purposeful play and greater opportunities to respond to children's ideas and interests. Staff also wish to continue to work closely with their counterparts should the two schools be working on different sites. Staff from the nursery class are confident that new line management arrangements will be planned well. They continue to work with both schools in reviewing and improving the transition arrangements for children moving from nursery to P1.

3.5 Parents agree that conditions for learning and teaching will improve if the proposal goes ahead. Their overriding concern, however, is the safety of children walking to school given the volume of traffic on the main roads.

3.6 The Diocese of Motherwell is fully in favour of the proposal. It believes this will bring benefits for the children, families and wider community. It considers the very strong links which exist between school and parish continuing despite the greater distance from the proposed new site for St Kevin's Primary School to the church.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors consider there to be clear educational benefits in the council's proposals to build a new St Kevin's Primary School. There are currently pressures on space within both schools which limits flexible approaches to teaching and learning. These pressures will continue to grow as the rolls within the two schools increase. Opportunities which will allow more independent learning will be improved. The considerable strengths in bringing the local community together in the joint campus is something that all parties want to maintain despite the two schools operating at a distance in the future. Parents have raised legitimate concerns over safe walking routes to the new site. Should the council approve the proposal, there will be a need to work with parents and the local community to find a solution to these concerns. Early learning and childcare should not be diminished through the council's plans for a change in line management arrangements.

HM Inspectors
April 2019