

# **Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010**

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to relocate the existing Milltimber School to a new building within an identified site within the Oldfold Farm development with effect from August 2021.**

June 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 Aberdeen City Council's proposal to relocate the existing Milltimber School to a new building within an identified site within the Oldfold Farm development with effect from August 2021. 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 school; 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 Milltimber School and the identified site at Oldfold Farm, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The formal consultation ran from 22 April 2019 until 7 June 2019. The council posted the consultation document on its website. A copy of the proposal document was provided to key stakeholders including: Milltimber School parents, members of the Parent Council, pupils and staff. Copies of the proposal document were also made available at public libraries, Cults Academy, Marischal College and Milltimber Nursery. A public meeting was held on 29 May 2019. Discussion focused on construction of the new school, disposal of the existing site and further opportunities for consultation relating to safe access routes to the new school. The council received

23 responses to an online survey. Of these submissions 22 were supportive of the proposal. Almost all were of the view that Milltimber School was no longer fit for purpose and a replacement school to meet the increasing roll was long overdue. The one respondent who did not support the proposal did so on the basis that their local school should be replaced before Milltimber School.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The existing Milltimber School has a capacity of 270 pupils and is operating almost at capacity. The current roll is 266 (2019) and is forecast to rise to 342 by 2023. The current nursery has 40 part-time places. To meet early learning and childcare (ELC) entitlement by 2020 approximately 60 full-time early years' places will be required. The existing school building does not have the capacity or space to meet the envisaged increase in roll or early years places. Access to and through the current site, located in a residential street, is less than ideal. There is a significant build-up of traffic at the start and end of each day. This is having a negative impact on residents. The existing school is built on a slope. As a result there are several changes in floor level, linked by stairs. This creates challenges for children and staff with mobility difficulties. The existing school building has previously been extended. The building is not suitable for further extension. The school is rated 'B' (satisfactory) for its overall condition. The roof is rated 'C' (poor).

3.2 The council has set out a strong case for relocating Milltimber School to a new build site within the Oldfold Farm development. Based on a capacity of 434 the new school will be able to accommodate the forecast increase in the pupil roll. The current occupancy level of 266 (98%) is forecast to rise to 311 (115%) by 2021. The existing school site lacks the capacity to be expanded further without detriment to children's learning. Pupils at the new school will benefit from a purpose-built school for primary and pre-school stages. This will result in a much improved environment for the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and improved outcomes for learners. In terms of value for money, current maintenance costs will be reduced. Effective teacher staffing levels will be maintained. Children will benefit from increased social interaction with a larger number of children and staff. ELC facilities will be increased and improved. The existing outdoor learning space at Milltimber School is limited. The proposed new site will provide enhanced outdoor play spaces and physical education facilities. This will improve health, fitness and wellbeing and provide better opportunities for outdoor learning and social interaction.

3.3 All children who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. Children were of the view the existing school was in a poor state of repair and needed replacing. They recognised the benefits the new school would bring. These included an improved learning environment through increased space and improved heating and lighting and disability access. Security would be improved as would access to outside learning and play areas. Currently, P1 and P2 classes are located in a separate building and are not able to easily engage with the rest of the school. The children felt the new school would bring the whole school together.

3.4 All parents and staff who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They agreed the current site was not fit for purpose and in urgent need of replacement. Vehicle access into and around the school remains an ongoing problem. There is public access into the school grounds via a right of way. Mobility within the school is limited due to the changes in floor level requiring access via stairs. There are no disabled toilet facilities. Parents and staff recognised a number of clear benefits a new school would bring for children and staff alike. A more positive learning environment would be created. Heating and lighting would be improved as would access to IT. The proposed school would accommodate the projected increase in roll and allow the school to fully deliver its ELC entitlement. Opportunities for children to access and engage in outdoor learning would be improved. The proposed location was seen as a popular choice offering increased space and the potential to develop partnership working. Traffic access into and around the school would be improved. Both parents and staff were keen to ensure the proposal be

progressed without further delay. Should the proposal go ahead staff were keen to be involved in finalising the design and layout of the new school.

#### **4. Summary**

The council's proposal is of clear educational benefit. All children, parents, carers and school staff who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. The council's proposal, should it proceed should see children benefit from a well-located site and well-designed building. Pupils at the new school will benefit from a purpose-built school for primary and pre-school stages. This will result in a much improved environment for the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and improved outcomes for learners. Vehicle and pedestrian access to and from the school will be improved as will the safety and security of the children. The new school will be fully disability compliant. In terms of value for money, current maintenance costs will be reduced. Effective teacher staffing levels will be maintained. ELC facilities will be increased and improved. ELC entitlement targets will be achieved. The proposed new site will provide enhanced outdoor play spaces and physical education facilities. In taking forward the proposal, the council would benefit from involving school staff in the final design and layout of the new school.

**HM Inspectors  
June 2019**