

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by West Lothian Council to establish Connolly School Campus as a new primary school for Additional Support Needs (ASN) located at Connolly House, Blackburn from August 2015 under the management of the Principal of the West Lothian Behaviour Support Service.

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 West Lothian Council's proposal to establish Connolly School Campus as a new primary school for ASN located at Connolly House, Blackburn from August 2015. 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 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 meetings held on 4 and 6 November 2014 in connection with the council's proposal;

- 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 representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal;
- visits to the sites of Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School, the proposed Connolly School Campus and Ogilvie School Campus including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- discussion with the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 West Lothian 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 formal consultation on the proposal under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* ran from 16 October 2014 to 18 December 2014. Details of the formal consultation were notified directly to parents and known interested parties, in the local press and on the council's website. As part of its arrangements for consulting on all four proposals the council held public meetings on 4, 6 and 12 November 2014. The council took appropriate steps to consult with children about the proposal. The consultation paper included a section outlining arrangements for gathering stakeholders' views, including details of a dedicated electronic mailbox. The council received fewer than ten written responses related to this proposal.

2.3 Prior to running the formal consultation under the Act, the council consulted with a range of stakeholders, including individual parents, over its vision and specific plans to improve education for children with additional support needs. This proposal is one of four which have resulted from a review of the council's provision for children with additional support needs.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 West Lothian Council's proposal to develop Connolly School Campus as provision for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs has a number of potential educational benefits for children who may attend the provision in future. The development will allow the council to make appropriate use of vacant space adjacent to Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School and has the potential to provide high-quality learning experiences by delivering Curriculum for Excellence and individualised and family support within modern, and well-equipped provision. Children attending Connolly School Campus will have access to gym and dining facilities within Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School.

3.2 There will be opportunities for children to carry out educational activities within the community of Blackburn and, as most children attending the proposed Connolly School Campus will remain on the roll of their mainstream primary schools, opportunities for part-time or full-time re-integration will be available. However, the council needs to consider how it can ensure that there are opportunities for the children of Connolly School Campus and Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School to benefit from shared experiences.

3.3 The provision will be under the management of the Principal of the West Lothian Behaviour Support Service. This will help to ensure that training and development will meet the specific needs of the staff group and that children will benefit from appropriate expertise and experience.

3.4 HM Inspectors met with school staff, representative groups of pupils and a very small number of parents and members of the local community. Most of those who met with HM Inspectors were positive about the proposal. The staff of Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School would welcome opportunities, should they arise, to work collaboratively with Connolly School Campus staff. They were positive about the potential for the two groups of children to share, as appropriate, some aspects of their school experiences.

3.5 The Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh was in agreement with the proposal. It would be supportive of Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School taking opportunities, should they arise, to work collaboratively with staff and children from Connolly School Campus.

4. Summary

The proposal to develop Connolly School Campus as provision for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs has the potential to deliver a number of educational benefits. It will facilitate high-quality learning experiences by delivering Curriculum for Excellence and family support within modern provision. It will also help the council to make efficient and effective use of its resources by addressing capacity issues within its school estate. In finalising its proposal, the council will need to state clearly how it will ensure that the two groups of staff and children have opportunities to work together where appropriate, in keeping with good practice elsewhere when two or more schools occupy a single building.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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