

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Falkirk Council to relocate the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service from the Laurieston Campus, Bog Road, Falkirk to the Dawson Centre Campus, David's Loan, Falkirk.

January 2025

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His 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 a proposal by Falkirk Council to relocate the Inclusion and Wellbeing Service (IWBS) from the Laurieston Campus, Bog Road, Falkirk to the Dawson Centre Campus, David's Loan, Falkirk. 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' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's 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 consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act.

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 meeting held on 27 November 2024 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 the Laurieston Campus, Bog Road, Falkirk and the Dawson Centre Campus, David's Loan, Falkirk, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation ran from 11 November until 23 December 2024. The council held a public meeting in Langlees Primary School on 27 November 2024 in connection with the proposal. The council published the proposal on its website and copies were made available to a range of key consultees. Notices and articles pertaining to the proposal were placed in local print media, social media and displayed in relevant council buildings.

2.3 In total, there were 17 online responses to the consultation. Nine were supportive, five were unsupportive and three were neutral. The main concerns raised were about the impact on the services currently housed in the Dawson Centre, and about the potential increase in traffic and parking. A total of 28 people attended the public meeting. Views were represented by local residents, current Dawson Centre users, staff and families from IWBS. Local residents voiced concerns around the change of use of the Centre and its impact on local residents using the Centre. The council surveyed children and young people who use the service. They received 23 responses. Children, young people, staff and parents of the IWBS were generally supportive of the move out of the current building. Following the public meeting, senior leaders from the school and selected staff undertook a site visit to the proposed new campus to discuss options for fencing and security around the proposed school site.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council outline several educational benefits that it believes will be realised if the proposal is implemented. The proposed site provides extensive outdoor grounds and a floodlit multi-use games area to enable opportunities for outdoor learning, gardening and sports qualifications. The proposed new classrooms will be brighter and more modern than the existing provision, with an improved digital infrastructure. This should provide a more motivating and engaging learning environment and opportunities to improve the curriculum. The primary school area will be situated separately and will have an extensive outdoor play area to accommodate play and other activities to promote health and wellbeing. Falkirk Council envisage that the new campus will cater for children and young people whose distress arises from neurodiversity and sensory needs. The proposed new site will also cater for children and young people with additional social, educational and behavioural needs. The relocation of the IWBS should provide a more appropriate community-based setting, which better meets the needs of this group. It should provide more opportunities and increased suitable space for time outdoors. This will support children and young people who would benefit from time outdoors to self-regulate.

3.2 The current site of the IWBS is set across a number of disparate buildings, many of which require substantial upgrading and are rated poorly for their suitability as school accommodation. There are accessibility issues, and it is situated within an industrial area. The current IWBS campus has limited facilities for outdoor learning, sports and access to the community.

3.3 The proposed site is situated within a community, rather than a business/industrial location. This will improve children and young people's access to amenities, transport and provide a more inclusive environment for learning.

3.4 HM Inspectors agree that the proposed move to refurbished premises should provide a more suitable learning environment for children and young people attending IWBS. It should improve the working environment and accessibility for staff. It will also be more energy and cost efficient.

3.5 Teaching and support staff who met with HM Inspectors are generally positive about the proposal. They believe the current school building is in poor condition overall. The location and structure of the existing premises results in limitations in accessing facilities and does not present a pleasant, inclusive learning environment. The road to enter the current school building is in very poor repair, making accessibility in the winter particularly difficult. There is a lack of appropriate outdoor space and little access to public transport or community amenities. Staff are keen to be more included in the design and decision-making process for the proposed move. They are keen to keep existing positive elements of service and curriculum delivery if the proposal proceeds. For example, they currently make good use of a teaching kitchen, gym and family centre. They see the potential benefits of increased partnership working with the adjacent school at the proposed

premises. Refurbished premises should provide a more appropriate and positive setting for children and young people to feel more valued as learners. However, staff consider that the open aspect of the outdoor spaces in the proposed building are potentially too overlooked by the community. They are hopeful that the refurbishment would ensure adequate levels of privacy for children and young people who may use the outside space when feeling distressed or upset. They understand the benefits and recognise the challenges of providing their service within the heart of a community.

3.6 Children and young people who met with HM Inspectors are positive about the proposal, recognising the problems with their current accommodation. Parents who engaged with the proposal were also supportive of a move, although expressed some concerns about the proximity of the outside spaces to the adjacent school, for similar reasons as stated above. The current school has a dedicated parent's area, used as a drop-in and meeting space. They stressed the value and supportive nature of this provision and are keen to ensure that this space is provided in the proposed new premises.

3.7 During the consultation period consultees identified an omission in the proposal relating to proposed parking at the Dawson Centre. Consultees from the community also raised concerns about how they would access the services currently situated at the Dawson Centre. The council will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to address these omissions. The council noted at the public meeting that the Dawson Centre will close on 1 April 2025, if the proposal is not implemented. The relocation of IWBS will maintain the building for 'dual education and community purposes'. In its consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address these points.

4. Summary

It is HM Inspectors view that Falkirk Council's proposal to relocate IWBS from its current premises at the Laurieston Campus to refurbished accommodation in the Dawson Centre building is of clear educational benefit. The council outlines the benefits for children and young people well. The move to refurbished premises will allow staff to better meet the range of pupil's needs in a more suitable and inclusive environment. Key stakeholders welcome the proposal. They feel that the relocation to a refurbished building will provide a much-improved environment for learning. In taking forward the proposal the council should continue to consult with staff and stakeholders at IWBS. In its consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address the omission in the proposal relating to proposed parking at the Dawson Centre. The council should continue to work with the community to outline in more detail how the refurbishment might fulfil its dual education and community role.

HM Inspectors
January 2025