

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Lanarkshire Council to create a We Aspire College for North Lanarkshire (Pentland School).**

April 2021

## 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 create a We Aspire College for North Lanarkshire (Pentland School). 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.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people 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:

- attendance at the virtual public meeting held on 11 March 2021 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
- virtual visits to the site of Pentland School, St Ambrose High School and Buchanan High 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 The consultation process ran from 17 February 2021 until 31 March 2021. Taking account of public health concerns, the council held a virtual public meeting on 11 March 2021 which was attended by 55 people, 15 of which represented Pentland School. More than a few stakeholders expressed the view that the proposal papers linked to the consultations did not provide sufficient detail in a number of respects. Further information was shared at the public meeting by officers from North Lanarkshire Council. They also committed to answering stakeholders' questions which required follow up through the publication of a frequently asked questions section of the council's website. Following on from the public meeting, and taking account of the expressed views of parents and staff, the council organised a further virtual session for these groups to provide further

clarification and detail. Held on 26 March 2021, 11 staff and 13 parents attended these additional sessions. Forty-two stakeholders responded to the online survey or submitted emails, representing 21 parents, 18 staff and three interested parties. Of those who responded, 13 are in favour of the proposal, 22 are against and seven are undecided. Eleven children responded to the pupil questionnaire, with three in favour of the proposal and eight against. HM Inspectors agree with stakeholders with respect to the lack of sufficient detail in the original proposal papers. Inspectors welcome the further approaches by the council to provide exemplification and detail which is helpful to stakeholders.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors acknowledge that the council's plans are ambitious for children and young people and that their evidence shows that aspects of existing provision require improvement. However, HM Inspectors agree with stakeholders' views that the original proposal paper was too general in how it outlined the educational benefits for children and young people. The further exemplification now set out by the council provides a stronger case for change. This has led staff to feel more positive about the potential educational benefits of the proposal.

3.2 The proposal has the potential to contribute to overall efficiency saving sought by North Lanarkshire Council. It forms part of the budget-setting process for 2010-2023 which has been approved by the council.

3.3 The proposal to create We Aspire College, including the relocation of Pentland School to Townhead Community Centre, has a number of potential educational benefits should it go ahead. These include empowering senior leaders to organise staff and facilities across an integrated cluster to best meet the needs of children and young people. The introduction of an executive headteacher will provide greater strategic oversight of social, emotional and behavioural needs (SEBN) provision and strengthen integrated planning. This will provide increased opportunities for staff to work more collaboratively, including with secondary SEBN and mainstream colleagues. Opportunities to share expertise and engage in professional learning across the sector will increase. The move to a modern campus will enhance opportunities for physical education, outdoor learning and the development of vocational skills. This will support staff to increase the range of learning opportunities provided to ensure children receive their full entitlement to education. The proposed development of an outreach service will strengthen pathways to mainstream education and provide professional learning opportunities for colleagues in mainstream schools.

3.4 The headteacher of Fallside School and Portland School took responsibility for Pentland School on a temporary basis during session 2020-2021, modelling the executive headteacher role proposed in the consultation paper. Staff who met with HM Inspectors identified the significant benefit this has had on school improvement in the current session. The ability to deploy staff more flexibly is seen as beneficial. Collaborative working between the primary and secondary sector is encouraged and professional expertise is being shared. This is supporting curriculum development, in areas such as literacy, and enhancing opportunities to engage in moderation activities. Relationships across the extended staff team have been developed. Transition planning between primary and secondary is stronger and staff feel less isolated. As a result of these experiences, staff feel positive about this aspect of the proposal.

3.5 The children who met with HM Inspectors identified improved access to sports facilities, increased opportunities for outdoor learning and the opportunity to make new friends as potential benefits of moving Pentland School to the Townhead Community Centre. Some are already familiar with the proposed relocation due to their attendance at football events at Buchanan High

School. The children expressed concerns about potential changes to transport arrangements and moving to a busier campus.

3.6 All stakeholders acknowledge the limitations the existing Pentland School building places on the effectiveness of service delivery. While they recognise the need to improve the educational environment, stakeholders have concerns about the proposed relocation to Townhead Community Centre. These relate to the appropriateness of moving a SEBN provision to such a large, busy campus. They feel that this has the potential to be too overwhelming for some children. They question the appropriateness of positioning a primary provision adjacent to two secondary schools. Direct access to a car park and busy road were also raised as significant safety concerns. While staff and parents understand that these health and safety concerns will be addressed by the council through risk assessment procedures, they would feel more reassured if they were involved in this process.

3.7 Parents raised concerns about this potential relocation of Pentland School and creation of We Aspire College as being a further change in their child's educational experience. Staff rightly recognise the importance of ensuring that parents and children are fully involved in robust transition planning should the proposal go forward.

3.8 Potential benefits to the relocation to Townhead Community Centre were also identified by stakeholders. The Skills Academy is in close proximity to Townhead Community Centre. Staff identify the potential of using this to support the development of vocational skills for children in upper primary, enhancing curriculum opportunities. In discussion with HM Inspectors, the headteachers of St Ambrose High School and Buchanan High School identified a range of facilities on the school campus that could be made accessible to Pentland pupils. These include a wide range of facilities that would significantly enhance existing opportunities for physical education and outdoor learning. They recognise the increased opportunity for collaborative working and professional learning and see the potential for their pupils to provide positive role models to Pentland pupils.

3.9 The staff who met with HM Inspectors identified the internal configuration of the proposed new facility, the sufficiency and range of accommodation provided and the quality of soundproofing as being critical to the success of this proposed relocation site. HM Inspectors support the views of stakeholders that the experience and expertise of staff should be used to inform the design and configuration of the new facility should the proposal go ahead.

## 4. Summary

North Lanarkshire Council's proposal to create We Aspire College has potential educational benefits for Pentland School. The council's proposal, if it goes forward, would see children benefit from an improved environment if the reconfiguration of Townhead Community Centre is undertaken appropriately. There would be improved access to high quality physical education facilities, outdoor learning opportunities and vocational skill training. The temporary move during session 2020-2021 to include Pentland School in the shared headship model included in the proposal has proven successful. This has the potential to strengthen leadership, empower practitioners, strengthen transition practices, support collaborative working and enhance professional learning opportunities. The proposed development of outreach services has the potential to provide clearer pathways to mainstream education.

In taking forward the proposal, the council should continue to engage with all stakeholders to address their concerns. In particular, the council should address the reasonable and legitimate concerns raised by stakeholders about the appropriateness and suitability of Townhead Community Centre as the new location for Pentland School.

In finalising the consultation report, North Lanarkshire Council should include sufficient detail and offer stakeholders further reassurance with regards to the educational benefits of this proposal as they relate to Pentland School.

**HM Inspectors**  
**April 2021**