

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 (Portland 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 (Portland 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 sites of Portland, St Ambrose High and Buchanan High Schools, 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 over 60 people. 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 additional online sessions for these groups to provide further clarification and detail.

HM Inspectors agree with stakeholders with respect to the lack of sufficient detail in the original proposal papers. HM 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. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has a number of potential educational benefits. The current facilities at Portland High School are aging with a lack of outdoor space and greenery. Relocation to the Skills Academy site has the potential to provide wider opportunities for vocational learning and a broader curriculum. The improved facilities and experiences have the potential to support the increased engagement and independence of young people. Closer links with other schools on the campus will provide easier access to specialist teaching areas and games and sports facilities. Staff could also benefit from greater collaborative learning and sharing of practice. Revised management and leadership structures have the potential to improve consistency of practice and pathways for staff progression.

3.2 The council received 27 responses to its online questionnaire. The majority of these were from staff. The response results were 52% against, 7% in favour and 41% undecided about the proposal. Young people who met with HM Inspectors were positive about the prospect of access to a wider range of curricular opportunities. They want to find out more about what will be available and how they can access these new possibilities. They are keen that transitions are managed well and that Portland School maintains its identity. Most school leaders saw considerable benefits for young people. They view improved and enhanced outdoor space as a positive aspect of the new location. Access to increased vocational facilities is welcomed as is the potential for staff to build bespoke curricular packages for young people. Senior school leaders also recognise that staff would benefit from improved opportunities for professional learning and moderation. A majority of staff have concerns about aspects of the proposal and have indicated that they would like to be involved in the design and planning of the learning and teaching spaces, as currently they are unclear how these will work for young people and staff. They hope to continue with daily mentoring meetings for young people that are currently in place within a nurturing environment. They accept that wider, curricular opportunities can be offered, making use of increased vocational options in other schools and improved access to outdoor space. Local partnerships are a positive aspect of current provision and staff are keen to maintain and develop these further. Stakeholders welcome the extended transition period and view the revised timescale as sufficient time to provide the support that will be needed should the proposal go ahead.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has a number of potential educational benefits. The curriculum for young people could be widened within improved facilities at the Skills Academy and this could encourage greater engagement from young people. A stronger focus on vocation learning to broaden skills should help young people to transition better into mainstream classes, a college placement or work. Improved collegiate working across the cluster could allow for better professional learning for staff. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should continue to work

closely with stakeholders. The revised timeframe needs to be used carefully to bring young people, staff and parents more closely involved as planning for the relocation continues.

HM Inspectors
April 2021