

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The City of Edinburgh Council to build a new Kirkliston High School on the Kirkliston Leisure Centre site.**

November 2023

## 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 The City of Edinburgh Council's proposal to build a new Kirkliston High School on the Kirkliston Leisure Centre site. 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 public meeting held on 10 October 2023 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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal including staff and pupil questionnaires; and
- visits to the site of Queensferry High School and Kirkliston Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The public consultation period ran from 11 September to 31 October 2023. The council published the proposal paper on its website. Paper and electronic copies of the proposal paper were made available to a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties. A well-attended public meeting with approximately 200 members of the public was held in Kirkliston Primary School on 10 October 2023. A number of concerns regarding the proposal were raised by attendees at the meeting.

2.3 Edinburgh City Council received 752 responses to their online questionnaire. Almost half of respondents, 49% said they do not support the proposal, with 43% agreeing and 7% undecided. A significant number of objections, including some from people who support or are undecided about the proposal, relate to the location of the new school. Respondents raised a variety of concerns including that the proposed site is too small, the potential loss of green space or leisure centre facilities, and that it could result in increased traffic congestion. A number of respondents suggested that the council should explore alternative locations, such as greenbelt land. A significant minority commented that Kirkliston is big enough to sustain its own secondary school rather than continue to be aligned with Queensferry High School. However, a significant minority of respondents are also concerned that having only one associated primary will limit the benefits for young people of mixing with a wider group of peers.

2.4 The council also carried out a separate online consultation with children and young people from Kirkliston Primary School and Queensferry High School. Almost half of children and young people, 44% support the proposal, 40% do not support the proposal, and 16% are unsure. In their responses, children and young people highlighted three key things that they liked about the proposal, namely; it would stop Queensferry High School becoming overcrowded; it would be closer to home, and; have improved sports facilities. Children and young people highlighted some things that they are worried about. Mostly, that the new school would be linked with only one primary school. A few were also unhappy about the loss of the current leisure centre facilities, the impact on traffic congestion, and the potential limitations of being in a smaller school. The two schools also carried out some additional consultation with pupils. The issues raised were broadly similar to the online survey. Children in P4-7 Kirkliston Primary School were mostly against the proposal, with 27 saying yes and 171 saying no. An internal staff survey, in this school, showed the majority were against the proposal.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council have set out a number of educational benefits in the proposal. HM Inspectors agree that the proposed solution has the potential to help to address the current capacity issues at Queensferry High School. HM Inspectors also agree that a new school can offer modern facilities for learning. The proposed site would provide a school geographically closer to the community it serves. However, HM Inspectors consider that further detail is required to demonstrate fully how many of the educational benefits laid out in the proposal will be realised. In addition, a number of risks have been identified that might diminish the educational experience of young people, particularly as there will only be one associated primary school.

3.2 A majority of stakeholders who spoke to HM Inspectors, including staff, are unclear how many of the educational benefits the council has laid out in the proposal will be achieved. They raise a number of concerns. There is currently insufficient detail on how the use of new technology, to capitalise on remote learning and shared resources, will be delivered and be an improvement on current arrangements. Stakeholders are concerned that the proposed location provides a limited area for recreation and outdoor learning. They also have concerns about the room available for subjects which require specialist equipment. In its final report, the council needs to more fully demonstrate how the educational benefits in the proposal will be achieved to address the concerns raised.

3.3 The proposal outlines how the new school will offer a wide curriculum in partnership with neighbouring schools, including Queensferry High School. Senior leaders and staff in the nearby school that HM Inspectors spoke to have yet to be fully engaged in exploring how this will work. Neighbouring schools are close to or at capacity which may limit how fully this plan can be implemented. HM Inspectors consider that it is important for the council to ensure that senior leaders and staff are fully involved in planning ways to ensure a wide curriculum can be realised.

Well-developed partnership working in place from the outset will help to mitigate against these concerns.

3.4 Stakeholders raised a few other concerns. Parents and carers are concerned about air quality standards at the new site given its proximity to a major road network. The council is proposing to populate the new school gradually over time. In the first year with only the new S1, adding a new year group every year for the next five years. Most respondents are worried that potentially smaller staff numbers, in the first few years, may result in fewer lunchtime and after school clubs; insufficient specialised support for young people with particular needs; difficulty in providing supported study after school; and a limited level of subject expertise readily available in the school. Many stakeholders also said that almost all of the benefits of a new build would also be available should the council reconsider the option to extend Queensferry High School.

## 4. Summary

Overall, HM Inspectors do not believe that the council has explained sufficiently how all of the educational benefits, outlined in the proposal, can be fully realised on the chosen site. There are a number of issues, particularly in the short term, which may diminish the learner experience. The proposal does not provide sufficient detail on how partnership working, the use of technology and access to resources will provide the educational benefits set out. The potential limitations of the proposed site and likely staffing levels may present challenges in providing the quality of education that the council aspires to. In finalising the proposal, the council needs to say how identified concerns will be addressed and explain more clearly how all of the educational benefits will be realised. If approved, the council should ensure that there is appropriate planning and consultation on its implementation with Queensferry High School staff and senior managers.

**HM Inspectors  
November 2023**