

# Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HM Inspectors of Education addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Perth and Kinross Council to:

- establish a new primary school on the site of Bertha Park, Perth;
- establish a catchment area for the new school and amend the catchment areas of Luncarty Primary School, Pitcairn Primary School, Ruthvenfield Primary School and Tulloch Primary School;
- establish the transfer arrangements for affected primary pupils to attend secondary school; and
- establish interim admission arrangements for Ruthvenfield Primary School until the new primary opens in August 2026.

August 2022

## 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 Perth and Kinross Council's proposal to establish a new primary school on the site of Bertha Park, Perth. 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 2010 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 of the proposed school's catchment area; any other users; children likely to become pupils when the school opens; 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:

- consideration of the records of the public meetings held on 31 May 2022 and 13 June 2022 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 site of Luncarty Primary School, Pitcairn Primary School, Ruthvenfield Primary School and Tulloch Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

2.1 Perth and Kinross Council undertook the consultation on its proposals with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The statutory consultation ran from 16 May 2022 to 29 June 2022. Copies of the consultation proposal were made available to statutory consultees. The council distributed 848 letters to consultees, including parents of the impacted schools, with a link to the proposal paper and details of how to obtain a paper copy. The proposal paper was also published on the council website.

2.3 Public meetings were held at Bertha Park High School on 31 May 2022 and 13 June 2022. Eleven stakeholders took part in these public meetings. They sought further information about the changes to the catchment areas, the size of the new primary school, and the transition

arrangements until the new school would be built. In order to seek further the views of stakeholders, the council arranged consultation sessions with children from Luncarty Primary School, Pitcairn Primary School, Ruthvenfield Primary School and Tulloch Primary School. Most children who participated in the consultation sessions agreed with the proposals. The council received ten responses to an online questionnaire relating to the public consultation, in addition to one email response from a stakeholder. Eighty two percent of these online responses were in favour of the proposal and 18% were against.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Perth and Kinross Council are seeking to address a substantial increase in housebuilding in the Perth West region of the council area. The council estimate housebuilding will result in an additional 678 primary aged children who will need to be accommodated in schools near to where they live. The existing catchment schools will not be able to accommodate these projected pupil numbers. Perth and Kinross Council propose to create a new primary school at the Bertha Park site and adapt existing catchment areas. This will ensure all children can be educated in their local community.

3.2 The council has set out clearly a number of important educational benefits in its proposal paper. A new school has the potential to provide a high-quality learning environment. Stakeholders who spoke with HM Inspectors welcome the council's commitment to designing a school which will allow spaces to be used flexibly. They are enthusiastic about the creation of different learning environments which could be used to encourage children to learn in different ways, such as through play-based, interdisciplinary and outdoor learning. Children are positive about the potential for the new school to offer a greater range of clubs and activities within their community. The new school is planned to include a nursery and Intensive Support Provision for children with complex additional needs. Staff recognise the significant benefits these services will provide to children and families across the area.

3.3 Perth and Kinross Council recognise the potential adverse impact of a change of school to a child's wellbeing. Parents and children appreciate the council, as part of the proposal, allowing children to remain at their existing school should they wish. Staff and children recognise that selecting a school could be difficult and that they and their families may need help to do this. A few senior leaders also identify that children changing schools in P7 may need enhanced primary to secondary transition support.

3.4 The council intend to establish a User Reference Group to contribute local information to support the design and development of the new school. This intended group would include staff from local schools, parents and members of the community. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should consider how best to recruit for this group whilst the new catchment area is not yet established. They should also reflect on how children will be able to contribute their ideas for the development of the plans for the new school.

3.5 Most of the parents who met with HM Inspectors want further information about the impact on their child's current school if a new school is built. Parents from Pitcairn Primary School and Ruthvenfield Primary School also seek clarity on the transition arrangements until the new school opens. They want to know if these schools will experience a short term increase to their school roll as additional families move into the area and if so, how the council plan to support this. Perth and Kinross Council have taken important steps to address the genuine concerns of parents about the school roll at Ruthvenfield Primary School. They have suggested an amendment to the school's admission arrangements until the new school opens. This recognises the significant number of placing requests received by the school and the prioritisation of children moving into the new housing sites. A few parents of Ruthvenfield Primary School remain anxious about whether

younger siblings will be offered a place at the school. The council should continue to listen to these families and seek to address their concerns. Parents from Ruthvenfield Primary School are also worried that the proposals will lead to the school's catchment area being reduced. They are legitimately concerned that a reduction in the school roll may lead to the school being considered for closure again in the future. They seek further reassurance from the council about how it intends to support the school to progress and thrive moving forward.

3.6 A few parents reported to HM Inspectors that they did not find the consultation and supporting documents accessible or easy to understand. The council should seek to address this to ensure all stakeholders can fully engage in the process.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the council's proposal to build a new school at the Bertha Park site has clear educational benefits. A new school has the potential to provide a high-quality learning environment. The purpose-build design has the potential to offer flexible learning and social spaces. Stakeholders recognise the value of the new school to the local community, as well as the benefits of an additional nursery and Intensive Support Provision. Should the proposal be successful, Perth and Kinross Council should seek to support families through the transition to newly-defined catchment areas. Parents value the option for their child to stay at their existing school should they wish. Stakeholders recognise this may not be an easy decision and children and families may need support through this process. The council should consider how to develop an appropriate User Reference Group and ensure the views of children are considered by this group. Most of the parents who met with HM Inspectors would value further information around the transition period and impact of the new school on existing provisions. Parents from Ruthvenfield Primary School also remain legitimately concerned about the long term future of their school. Moving forward, it is important that the council continues to listen to these concerns. The council should continue to consult and communicate effectively with all stakeholders to engage them fully in the future planning and design stages of the proposal.

**HM Inspectors  
August 2022**