

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The City of Edinburgh Council to relocate St Catherine's Roman Catholic Primary School to a new site on Captains Road.

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 relocate St Catherine's Roman Catholic (RC) Primary School to a new site on Captains Road. 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 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 12 October 2023 in connection with the council's proposal;
- 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 information on all schools affected; and
- visits to the site of St Catherine's RC Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The council undertook the consultation between 11 September to 31 October 2023. The council published the proposal on its website. Paper and electronic copies of the proposal paper were made available. Completion of an online questionnaire and written responses on the proposal were also accepted by letter or email. The council held a public meeting at St Catherine's RC Primary School, which was attended by approximately 20 members of the community.

2.3 Almost all of those who attended the public meeting were supportive of the proposal. However, they also highlighted a few concerns. There were 18 responses to the online survey and four written responses. Thirteen respondents were supportive of the proposal and eight were not. St Catherine's RC Primary School pupils and staff discussed the proposal and had a range of comments, which were mostly supportive. Overall, of those respondents who were supportive of the proposal, they recognised the poor condition of the current school building and the need for a new school. They noted the benefits of having increased capacity in the nursery and the primary school, access to improved information technology infrastructure and more accessible indoor space. They also welcomed opportunities to engage in the design process, including commenting on the use of the outdoor space such as inclusion of sports pitches for wider community use. Stakeholder concerns include the proposed location of the new school, which is next to a busy road. They also have concerns about access to the council services, that are currently located in the South East Locality Office, which is on the footprint of the proposed new school. The potential loss of access to outdoor sports pitches by the community or neighbouring schools. These services may be affected during the build period if the proposed location is approved.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council's proposal is to replace St Catherine's RC Primary School and build a new denominational primary school on Captain's Road. Investigations in the summer of 2018 considered how best to upgrade St Catherine's RC Primary School. It concluded that the building needed to be replaced rather than upgraded. The existing building has seven classrooms. The proposed new school will have 11 classrooms to accommodate children from new housing developments. The proposed new school will also have capacity for extension to 14 classes. The nursery places will increase from 20 to 64. The council is also considering including a community hub in the design. This has potential to provide additional opportunities to co-locate services, make efficient use of public space, including reducing the carbon footprint. The proposed timeline for the new school is August 2027. Children attending the nursery and primary school will transfer to the new school on its completion.

3.2 The council's proposal sets out a number of educational benefits for those affected. These include, improved facilities which will enhance the learning and teaching environment. Better access to information computing technology (ICT). Flexible indoor and outdoor learning and play facilities, which will provide opportunities for the delivery of an enhanced sports curriculum in line with national guidance. The expansion of the nursery facility and primary school will help to address current and future demand for places. The council recognises the challenges of maintaining the village school feeling of St Catherine's into a new building. They are engaging with stakeholders to help maintain this.

3.3 All children, parents and wider stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They recognise the benefits of increased capacity in the nursery and the school, with further opportunities to expand in the future. Children and parents recognise that the new school could offer improved sports and ICT facilities, opportunities for increased after school activities and better outdoor facilities for learning and play. Parents also recognise the benefits of including a community hub, which may provide local access to public services. However, they have concerns about maintaining the school identity and ethos, should the proposed school roll numbers increase as projected. They are also concerned about safe routes to school, as the proposed location is on a very busy road. They noted that if the entrance to the school is located in the safest place with good signage, that this may help to tackle both of these concerns.

3.4 The headteacher and staff in the school all support the proposal. They recognise that a new school will bring education benefits. This includes an improved environment to support and enhance learning and teaching for all children, more flexible space to support better the delivery of

the wider curriculum, and enhanced ICT facilities. Staff welcome the opportunity for a purposely designed and integral early learning and childcare facility that could accommodate an increased number of children. Staff noted the benefits of any potential increase to the staffing complement, should the roll numbers increase. They recognise the need to ensure that the strong ethos and identity of the school is maintained. Staff noted that, should a community hub be included in the design, that it could strengthen opportunities for parental involvement. Staff also recognise the council's commitment to reducing impact on the environment. However, they had concerns regarding the lack of sufficient carparking spaces at the new school and around the vicinity.

3.5 Representatives of the Diocese of Edinburgh Roman Catholic Church and their primary school and religious education advisors are supportive of the proposal. They believe that a new school building will provide enhanced modern facilities for the delivery of education. They expressed to HM Inspectors that the school should be a stand-alone facility, which would help to maintain St Catherine's strong Roman Catholic identity.

4. Summary

The City of Edinburgh Council has set out a strong case to replace St Catherine's RC Primary School with a new denominational primary school on Captain's Road. All children, parents, staff and representatives of the Diocese who met with HM Inspectors support the proposal. The council's proposal, should it proceed, will result in a much improved environment for the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and potentially improved outcomes for learners. As a result, HM Inspectors agree with the educational benefits set out in this proposal and the council's approach to engaging with stakeholders to tackle challenges and concerns. The council should continue to engage stakeholders during the design phase to help ensure that the new school meets, where possible, their aspirations.

**HM Inspectors
November 2023**