

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

**Report by HM Inspectors of Education addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Clackmannanshire Council to Statutory Consultation on the proposal to relocate Clackmannanshire Primary and Secondary Support Services to The Orchard, Tullibody.**

**This report relates to the Primary School Support Service relocation.**

April 2022

## 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 Clackmannanshire Council's proposal to relocate Clackmannanshire Primary and Secondary Support Services to The Orchard, Tullibody. 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people 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 2 March 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 located in The Orchard, Tullibody and Park Primary School in Alloa, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 As a temporary arrangement, the Primary Schools Support Service was relocated to the building previously used as St Bernadette's Primary School. In the council [Report to Special Meeting of Clackmannanshire Council](#), dated 10 July 2020, an appropriate rationale to relocate the Primary School Support Service was noted. The report stated there was a need for classroom space for two P1 classes within Park Primary School. This was a result of the delay in the

extension to Park Primary Nursery. Therefore, the Primary School Support Service would be temporarily moved to create space pending the extension and expansion of the nursery.

2.3 The consultation period opened on 1 February 2022 and closed 1 April 2022. The consultation proposal was made available to members of the public through the council website and social media channels.

2.4 It is the view of HM Inspectors that the council did not pay full regard to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) for the Primary School Support Service. As part of the school consultation process proposing a permanent relocation, children attending the Primary School Support Service have not been consulted. Therefore, they have not meaningfully participated in the school consultation.

2.5 A public meeting was held virtually in response to ongoing public health advice on 2 March 2022. The meeting was attended by two local authority representatives, one councillor, one community councillor and one member of the public. The local authority officer advised attendees that the process was to formalise and make permanent the temporary relocation of two special schools. The new location being the building previously used for St Bernadette's Primary School. Reference was made to a merger of the two school support services by the local authority officer. The merger of the two special schools is not in scope and would require a further school consultation process to be followed.

2.6 In total, 39 responses from consultees were received during the consultation period. From the responses, it is not clear whether they relate to consultees for the primary service or secondary service. Twenty-five responses agreed with the proposal to permanently relocate the school support services to The Orchard site. A majority of responses were against changing the name of the service to 'The Orchard'. Consultees felt this would lead to confusion because 'The Orchard' name is also used by other local buildings and services. Local residents commented that the increased parking has caused concerns and recommend that the council improve onsite parking. A higher number of comments were positive. These positive comments related to improved spaces for learning, potential improved community experiences and improved access to resources.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council outlined several potential educational benefits in its consultation report. The council should now define more clearly the educational benefits for primary aged children before making a final decision. HM Inspectors can provide a view on potential education benefits beyond that offered from the council.

3.2 The education benefits statement conveys that co-location of the two schools, and the outreach support service, will offer a seamless transition for all young people. It is not clear how this will be realised. It should not be presumed that all children attending the Primary School Support Service will go on to attend Clackmannanshire Secondary School Support Service. Any transition to a new school will depend upon a clear assessment of the individual learner's needs. As the support service provides support across the local authority, transition remains a multifaceted process and often includes planned time spent within the child's catchment school. However, where children in the primary service do progress to Clackmannanshire Secondary School Support Service, there is potential to reduce anxiety at key points of transition. These children will remain in a familiar setting and will continue existing relationships with well-known staff members. This is a potential educational benefit.

3.3 The education benefits statement asserts that the permanent co-location will promote a very positive ethos for young people and staff and enhancing learning experiences. The [school summarised inspection findings, March 2020](#), identified that a very positive ethos was already a feature of the two support services before co-location. Therefore, if the move is made permanent, there is potential for the positive ethos to be maintained or enhanced. It is recognised by HM Inspectors that co-location will support better the headteacher and their leadership team to meet physically. This reduces the need to use technology or travel between sites. Additionally, there will be the potential to improve collegiate activity between secondary, primary and outreach staff located in The Orchard site. Of note, there is no staffroom located in the proposed permanent location. This would not be conducive to promoting positive ethos for staff over time.

3.4 The council identifies that the retention of the support service at the temporary location increases capacity to support outreach pupils. The educational benefit of removing children and young people from their mainstream school for short periods across the school week is unclear. This way of working has the potential to cause children and young people unnecessary withdrawal from class or disruption to the learning day. For example, having to spend time traveling to and from their school and class. Equally, it is not clear what the educational benefit is for children and young people attending the two special schools.

3.5 In the view of HM Inspectors, the council does need to consider improving transport-related transitions across the school day. There is very limited parking in the school grounds, no clear pick up or drop off zones and increased traffic outside of the school. Children are frequently transported by staff in their own vehicles or through taxi collection. Therefore, there is a potential increased risk to children arriving at or leaving the school. The council should consider approaches to ensuring that children or young people do not have to walk between parked vehicles to access their transport. This will increase the safety for all children as they arrive and depart the school building.

3.6 When located in Park Primary School, the primary service had little flexibility over breaktimes, lunchtimes and accessing outdoor spaces within the school grounds. A permanent relocation to The Orchard site provides staff with the possibility to design better the school day to meet the additional support needs of the children. Additionally, there is an opportunity for staff to use the new school grounds creatively to improve engagement across a range of curriculum areas. This is a potential key strength and important educational benefit for children.

3.7 HM Inspectors noted the welcome refurbishments within the proposed permanent location. This includes the new and improved design of internal spaces. Early indications demonstrate that internal refurbishments are having all positive benefit towards improving learning experiences. However, the temporary relocation to the building previously used for St Bernadette's Primary School has resulted in a loss of some key resources. For example, there is a loss of a teaching kitchen and high-quality Information and Communications Technology (ICT) equipment to support fully learning and teaching. Although overall, the dining and sports hall provides both schools with a very useful space. However, the false ceiling using suspended ceiling tiles is of concern. Many tiles are damaged with some at risk of falling. This may be exacerbated further when children undertake physical education. If the proposal is to move forward, the ceiling should be made safe if this space is to be used as a high-quality physical education space.

## 4. Summary

As a matter of urgency, the council must fully engage children in the school consultation process for the Primary School Support Service. This must be undertaken before submission of the final report to the Clackmannanshire Council. Children's views on the permanent relocation of the school must be accounted for before any final decisions are made.

In its final report, the council should make clear how it will improve the transport-related transitions for children. This should include arrangements to ensure that safe pick up and collection zones are clearly identified. The council should respond to the legitimate community concerns surrounding the significant increase to traffic congestion and parking concerns.

Should the proposal go ahead, the council should work with children, young people and staff to plan improvements to the school grounds. The council should ensure that children and young people have access to the same standard of resources previously provided. For example, a teaching kitchen and high-quality ICT equipment. The ceiling in the dining and games hall requires urgent attention to ensure it is fit for purpose. This will safeguard children from falling ceiling tiles and make sure they can use the space safely for a range of sporting activities.

In its final report, the council should define more clearly the educational benefits for primary aged children. HM Inspectors believe there are several educational benefits for children should the relocation of the Primary School Support Service be made permanent. These include access to improve outdoor learning spaces and the increased flexibility of indoor teaching areas. These have the potential to enhance children's overall learning experience.

**HM Inspectors**  
**April 2022**