

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

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

This report relates to the Clackmannanshire Secondary 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 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 the previous site of the school located at Bedford Place 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 Clackmannanshire Secondary Schools Support Service was relocated to the building previously used as St Bernadette's Primary School. The previous school building, located in Bedford Place, Alloa, has been deemed unsafe due to significant structural issues.

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 Clackmannanshire Secondary School Support Service. As part of the school consultation process proposing a permanent relocation, young people attending the Clackmannanshire Secondary 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 In its proposal, the council states that the co-location of primary, secondary and outreach supports a seamless transition for all young people. It is the view of HM Inspectors that the co-location will not provide this for all young people as some will return to a mainstream school. However, there will be children who progress from the Primary to the Secondary Schools Support Service. This co-location has the potential to strengthen transition arrangements for them. It will continue to build on established relationships.

3.2 The education benefit statement states that the permanent co-location will promote a very positive ethos for young people and staff and will enhance learning experiences. The school summarised inspection findings in 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.

3.3 There is a well-maintained sensory garden within The Orchard. This area is currently used well for young people who require space to self-regulate. The proposed permanent location affords a wide range of opportunities for increasing outdoor learning in a safe, contained

environment. There is potential for these areas to support young people's broader achievements, including developing their skills for learning, life and work when outdoors. This contrasts with Bedford Place, which has no adjoining outdoor space.

3.4 Since the temporary relocation, the school has established new links with many local community groups and third sector organisations. These links provide opportunities to prepare for life after school, including the world of work. Should the proposal go ahead, there is potential to broaden the curriculum and increase learning activities within the community. A move away from the temporary location has the potential to negatively impact on the newly established partnerships.

3.5 The previous school location in Bedford Place is in a poor state of repair. The building was assessed as unsafe and resulted in the immediate temporary relocation of the service. The council estimates that the cost to refurbish and make the building safe will be around £3.5 million. The local authority has already refurbished the proposed permanent premises, taking account of the needs of the school community. A few staff note a decrease in space in the temporary accommodation compared to their previous accommodation at Bedford Place. For example, the new building does not have a kitchen space for teaching home economics. 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.

3.6 Parents, young people and local organisations hold favourable views on the move to the new premises. They feel it provides a better learning environment than the previous premises. Young people are settled and enjoying the experience of school in a more modern school building that better meets the needs of the curriculum. HM Inspectors noted that there is no staffroom within the school. This may have an impact on the ethos of staff when they need a space away from the classroom setting.

4. Summary

As a matter of urgency, the council must fully engage young people in the school consultation process for the Secondary School Support Service. This must be undertaken before submission of the final report to the council. Young people's views on the relocation of the school must be accounted for before any final decisions are made on a potential permanent relocation.

HM Inspectors view positively the proposal to relocate Clackmannanshire Secondary School Support Service to the proposed permanent location. The school building located at Bedford Place is no longer safe due to structural issues. The overall cost of renovation is unlikely to deliver best value for the council. This proposal supports the council in meeting statutory obligation for best value. Young people have settled well into the proposed permanent school building. The council has refurbished the proposed permanent school building well to suit the needs of the young people. Outdoor spaces, local partnerships and links with the local community add value to the experiences provided for young people.

In its final report, the council should make clear how it will improve the transport-related transitions for young people. 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.

HM Inspectors

April 2022