

Consultation proposal by Aberdeenshire Council

Report by HM Inspectors, Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to build a second primary school in Kintore

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the 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 a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

Introduction

1.1 Aberdeenshire Council proposes to build a second primary school in Kintore and review the zoning for the town.

1.2 The report from HM Inspectors is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.3 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the 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 representations made directly to HM Inspectors on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- visits to Kintore School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 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
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Aberdeenshire Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

2.2 Parents, children and staff are all extremely supportive of a second primary school in Kintore. They are all very aware of the increase in roll over the years and subsequent overcrowding at the current Kintore School, which is resulting in many limitations and challenges.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 The capacity of the existing Kintore School is 415 and the roll as at December 2012 was 596. At the time of the inspector's visit to the school in September 2013, the roll was 622. The prediction by Aberdeenshire Council is that the roll is forecast to rise to 688 by 2017, some 260 over the intended capacity. The council have stated that although the current Kintore School can function on a day to day basis, core facilities are stretched beyond capacity. This was confirmed by the inspector's visit to the school in September 2013.

3.2 On completion of the new school, the combined primary provision in Kintore would be for 955 pupils, which the council predict should be sufficient for the foreseeable future.

3.3 The council has stated that considerable community engagement has taken place to date focusing upon the best location for the new school, the requirements for community and leisure facilities, and a statutory planning consultation meeting. At a public meeting several queries were raised from parents and community members regarding access to the site of the new school, crossing facilities, speed limit on the road and noise issues. The council stated that all issues will be addressed; the area of space around the school will be sufficient so as not to disrupt surrounding businesses; there will be appropriate signage and crossing patrollers at the new school as required, and parents will be kept updated through future stakeholder meetings.

3.4 The council has stated that the new school will provide more space per pupil, will be fully accessible and equipped with modern information and communications technology (ICT) solutions to ensure that the best learning opportunity is afforded to every pupil. It will also realise more space for pupils at the existing Kintore School.

3.5 The council has stated that a new school will also allow the existing Kintore School to deliver the curriculum in the way originally intended.

3.6 Children of the school understand the need for a second primary school in Kintore. They have been involved in consultation through their classes in school and in discussion with the headteacher. Children stated that their school is now too crowded, citing examples such as - playground space has been lost to relocatable classrooms; another class has had to be moved on its own to the community wing at the other end of the school; they have lost several rooms including their ICT room; they can't have whole school assemblies with parents anymore; and they now have to have split playtimes and lunchtimes as there is not enough room in the playground or dining hall for everyone together. Although children are anxious about some people splitting up from their friends when the new school is opened, they see the definite need for the new school.

3.7 The council have stated that children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper would benefit from an increased capacity for nursery places, the overall number of places in Kintore would increase from 120 at the existing school to 220 when including the new school.

3.8 The headteacher, management team, teaching and support staff of children at Kintore School whom the inspector met, all stated examples where the current school has to overcome challenges and limitations given the overcrowding at the current school, resulting in impact on learners. All can see the need for, and benefits of the new school.

3.9 Parents stated that they could see the need for a second school given the negative impact of overcrowding at the current school. Parents had queries related to the impact on their children during the interim period prior to the new school opening; implications of the zoning; how the transition would work; and concerns regarding community facilities overall in Kintore, particularly given the potential of further major house-building.

3.10 The council have stated that the catchment area for both the existing and new school in Kintore will need to be reviewed. The travelling times for pupils would therefore vary from the travelling time to the current Kintore School, although this could be either an increase or a decrease depending on where they live, and exactly where the boundary line has been drawn. There may be a change in school transport provision for some families living more than two miles away from their zoned School.

3.11 The council have stated that once the new school zones have been determined, appropriate consultation will be taken with all families.

3.12 The council have stated that the new school will have an All Weather Sports pitch and will also have a community room – both of these complementing the existing facilities available at Kintore School.

3.13 The council have stated that consultation will take place with individual members of staff and with trade unions representing these staff as appropriate.

4. Summary

4.1 Aberdeenshire Council has set out clear reasons for the need for a second primary school in Kintore, which is supported by parents, children and staff. Stakeholders are all very aware of the increase in roll over the years and subsequent overcrowding at the current Kintore School, which is resulting in many limitations and challenges impacting on learners. The council have stated that although the current Kintore School can function on a day to day basis, core facilities are stretched beyond capacity. Having a second primary school would allow the existing Kintore School to deliver the curriculum in the way originally intended. This was confirmed by the inspector's visit to the school in September 2013. There is a clear need for a second primary school in the area.

4.2 Appropriate consultation needs to be taken with all families regarding the implications of the new school zones following the review of the catchment area for both the existing and new school in Kintore.

4.3 The council now needs to keep parents, children and staff fully informed and involved at all stages, particularly regarding the implications of re-zoning of the area and plans for transition to a new school.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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