

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Ayrshire Council to establish a new non-denominational primary school with early learning and childcare provision and catchment area for the Montgomerie Park and Knadgerhill areas of Irvine East and, to amend the catchment area for Annick Primary School.

March 2021

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 North Ayrshire Council's proposal to establish a new non-denominational primary school with early learning and childcare provision and catchment area for the Montgomerie Park and Knadgerhill areas of Irvine East and, to amend the catchment area for Annick Primary School. 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 and young people of the settings; 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 virtual public meetings held on 26 January 2021 and 28 January 2021 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
- virtual visits to the sites of Annick Primary School, Lawthorn Primary School and Irvine Royal Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation ran from 11 January to 2 March 2021. Parents and staff from Annick and Lawthorn Primary Schools welcome the early involvement in the consultation process of their Parent Councils by North Ayrshire Council. Public meetings were held on 26 and 28 January 2021. In total, 26 people responded to the online consultation, including one email. Of the 26 respondents, 22 were in favour of the proposal and four were not. North Ayrshire Council also conducted an informal consultation with children at Lawthorn and Annick Primary Schools. Of the 66 responses received 51 were in favour of the proposal and 15 were not in favour. Young people

at Irvine Royal Academy were invited to complete an online response form. One response was received from a pupil at Irvine Royal Academy and this is included in the total of 26 respondents. Reasons for supporting the proposal included relieving pressure on capacity and resources at Annick and Lawthorn Primary Schools, including reducing class sizes and making social and learning spaces more readily available. Those in favour also welcomed the sense of identity a new school could bring to the community. The main reason for opposing the proposal related to traffic management around the Montgomerie Park area.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 New housing developments within the Irvine East area have resulted in an increase in the local population. This has resulted in accommodation pressures at local schools, particularly Annick Primary School. The proposal seeks to ensure that there are sufficient school places for the Irvine East area to meet projected demand and to address capacity issues. This will provide catchment schools for catchment children with all schools having viable and sustainable rolls.

3.2 North Ayrshire Council has set out a comprehensive case for the proposal to establish a new non-denominational primary school and implement catchment changes to address school capacity and accommodation pressures in Irvine East. The proposal recognises pressures as a result of planned housing developments in the Irvine East area. Children attending the new school in Montgomerie Park will benefit from a modern, state of the art learning environment. The new school will promote creative and engaging teaching approaches and offer facilities that will encourage further health and wellbeing and outdoor learning. North Ayrshire Council also recognise the potential for community use and plan to involve community members at the planning stage through a stakeholder reference group. This has the potential to provide opportunities for local groups, supporting the growth of community identity, therefore bringing benefits to the community beyond the school.

3.3 All parents, staff and children from Lawthorn Primary School, Annick Primary School and Irvine Royal Academy who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposals. They were of the view that the existing primary schools do not have the capacity to accommodate the increasing numbers of children that the Montgomerie Park housing developments will generate over time. The proposal is therefore viewed as sensible and inevitable. Staff and parents at both primary schools recognise the potential impact that losing children and families to the new school may have on their existing positive ethos. The local authority should continue to work with parents of young people at Irvine Royal Academy who expressed concerns about resourcing, should the school roll increase.

3.4 The new primary school includes provision of early learning and childcare, for eligible children, from age two years. This has the potential to provide continuity in progression and learning for children to the end of primary school. The school will be part of the Irvine Royal Academy cluster of schools. The headteacher of Irvine Royal Academy is very keen to establish strong transition arrangements and programmes with the new school to ensure continuity in learning and successful outcomes for all.

3.5 Parents, children and staff who spoke with HM Inspectors indicated that providing a school in the Montgomerie Park area could potentially reduce car use. A school within their local community will allow children to walk, cycle or scoot to school which has potential health and environmental benefits. The proposed site offers easy access to Eglinton Park, which will readily support outdoor learning, also contributing to health and wellbeing.

4. Summary

North Ayrshire Council's proposal to establish a new non-denominational primary school and implement catchment changes is well considered and has clear educational benefits. The proposal addresses school accommodation pressures as a result of new and planned housing in the Irvine East Area. Children attending the new school in Montgomerie Park will benefit from a modern, state of the art learning environment, which facilitates outdoor learning and encourages health and wellbeing. In taking forward the proposal, the council should ensure the stakeholder reference group is fully involved, along with school staff, in planning facilities that have the optimum benefit for all. This will support community identity and secure links between the school, local residents and groups as the area grows and develops.

HM Inspectors
March 2021