

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by North Lanarkshire Council to create a We Aspire College for North Lanarkshire (Fallside School).

April 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 Lanarkshire Council's proposal to create a We Aspire College for North Lanarkshire (Fallside 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 schools; 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 meeting held on 11 March 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 site of Fallside School and Coltness High School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation process ran from 17 February 2021 until 31 March 2021. Taking account of public health concerns, the council held a virtual public meeting on 11 March 2021 which was attended by over 60 people. More than a few stakeholders expressed the view that the proposal papers linked to the consultations did not provide sufficient detail in a number of respects. Further information was shared at the public meeting by officers from North Lanarkshire Council. They also committed to answering stakeholders' questions which required follow up through the publication of a frequently asked questions section of the council's website. Following on from the public meeting, and taking account of the expressed views of parents and staff, the council organised further online sessions for these groups to provide further clarification and detail.

HM Inspectors agree with stakeholders with respect to the lack of sufficient detail in the original proposal papers. Inspectors welcome the further approaches by the council to provide exemplification and detail which is helpful to stakeholders.

2.3 The council received 32 responses to the consultation from Fallside School stakeholders. Of these, four supported the proposal, 23 (72%) did not support it and five were undecided. There were also 19 responses to a separate pupil consultation, 14 from Fallside School and five from Coltness High School. Three of the Fallside School pupils supported the proposal, but the remaining 16 pupils (84%) did not support it.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors acknowledge that the council's plans are ambitious for children and young people and that their evidence shows that aspects of existing provision require improvement. However, HM Inspectors agree with stakeholders' views that the original proposal paper was too general in how it outlined the educational benefits for children and young people. The further exemplification now set out by the council provides a better case for change. The proposal has a number of potential educational benefits. For example, the council believes that the proposal will enhance the empowerment of practitioners and local ownership of resources to meet needs, with improved access to high quality facilities and wider teaching styles and approaches, including active learning, interdisciplinary learning and outdoor learning. HM Inspectors agree that this is a potential educational benefit, dependent upon how the learning spaces are configured and the curriculum flexibility which is possible.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree that there is a potential educational benefit of local specialist establishments working well together. There may be further benefit for staff being located within a secondary school allowing easier access to colleagues who are subject specialists.

3.3 HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has the potential to strengthen practice in planning to meet the needs of learners and clearer pathways to mainstream for those who can access such provision.

3.4 While senior leaders at Fallside School can see potential benefits, the majority feel that they do not yet have the clarity and detail to enable them to make an informed judgement of the proposal. Teachers and support staff who spoke to HM Inspectors do not feel that they have been sufficiently involved yet in the development of the We Aspire College proposal to make an informed decision. They acknowledge that there are potential benefits, but have reasonable concerns that there is not enough detail in the proposal, and that there is a possibility that the new location could be more cramped and less flexible than their current accommodation.

3.5 Parents and carers of pupils at Fallside School who spoke to HM Inspectors are concerned that the advantages of the current school accommodation could be lost in the proposed move to a new location in Coltness High School. They have reasonable concerns about the proposal and that there is a need for further information about the accommodation, curriculum, staffing, resources and transitional arrangements for their children as part of the proposal.

3.6 Young people who currently attend Fallside School who spoke to HM Inspectors feel safe there. They enjoy their accommodation and curriculum, particularly the local outdoor activities. They know relatively little about the proposal, but have reasonable concerns that they would rather not move to Coltness High School as some of them do not cope well with loud, busy or crowded spaces, which make them feel anxious. They are also concerned about their reception in the new establishment and how they would be regarded by staff and pupils. It will be important to work with young people to address these concerns.

3.7 At Coltness High School, senior leaders who spoke to HM Inspectors are positive about the proposal, although most of the discussions about it have been between the headteacher and the local authority. Overall, they can see potential benefits including an improved curriculum offer, along with potential mainstream links, for We Aspire College pupils and an opportunity for departmental links to enhance professional learning for staff in both establishments. However, they would appreciate more specific information regarding what is envisaged regarding the relocation. Staff at Coltness High School are also generally positive, but feel that they are not well enough informed yet about the proposal to make a judgement about it. Parents who spoke to HM Inspectors felt unable to comment on any benefits or barriers due to their limited information about the proposal.

4. Summary

This proposal has a number of potential educational benefits. This could expand and enhance facilities for young people and improve joint planning and strengthen partnership working for staff. In order to achieve these benefits the council should develop, share and discuss greater detail about the proposed new accommodation, the curriculum offer, staffing, resources and transitional arrangements for young people. These should be carefully planned so that young people who benefit from specialist support feel welcomed in the new location.

Of the stakeholders who responded the majority do not support the proposal. None of these groups feel that they have been involved sufficiently well yet in the development of the proposal. They have reasonable concerns that there is not enough detail given in the proposal to be able to support it. If the council decides to proceed, it should ensure that it works closely with all stakeholders. They should be fully involved in the development of a more detailed proposal before the council prepares and publishes its final consultation report.

HM Inspectors
April 2021