

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Fife Council to relocate St Columba's RC High School, from the existing school site of Woodmill Road, Dunfermline, and to relocate Woodmill High School from the existing school site of Shields Road, Dunfermline, to a new single site south of Calaiswood Crescent, adjacent to Roe Deer Place, Dunfermline (former Shepherd Offshore site), a site which will also encompass a new Fife College campus.**

June 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 Fife Council's proposal to relocate Woodmill High School from the existing school site of Shields Road, Dunfermline, to a single site south of Calaiswood Crescent, adjacent to Roe Deer Place, Dunfermline (former Shepherd Offshore site), a site which will also encompass St Columba's RC High School and a new Fife College Campus. 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.

The council's proposal paper covers the relocation of two schools – Woodmill High School and St Columba's RC High School, to a shared site along with a new Fife College. In discharging our statutory duties HM Inspectors are reporting separately on the proposals to relocate each secondary school. This report covers the proposed relocation of Woodmill High School.

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;
- 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 three virtual public meetings held on 26 April 2021, 5 May 2021 and 17 May 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;
- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal; and
- consideration of further information on all schools affected.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation was due to run from 13 April 2021 to 28 May 2021. On 15 April 2021, the council was notified of an error relating to the map at Appendix 1.9 of the proposal. The council reviewed the proposal paper, and other errors and an omission came to light. The council determined that the errors and omission did not relate to material considerations relevant to the proposal. As such, it decided to proceed issuing a Notice of Corrections to all statutory consultees advising of the errors/omission and correcting them. It also decided to extend the consultation period to 2 June 2021 to allow additional time to respond to the proposal.

2.3 Advertisements were placed in the local press and through social media platforms, including the schools' websites, and copies of the proposal document were made available through the council's website. Three virtual public meetings were held which were attended by over 90 people. These meetings were held virtually on the 26 April 2021, 5 May 2021, and 17 May 2021. A further nine public, virtual drop-in sessions were held between 20 April 2021 and 25 May 2021. The schools also used their home school communication facility to parents and carers to advertise these consultation opportunities.

2.4 Stakeholders who responded to the consultation and who engaged with HM Inspectors were generally positive about the council's proposal and the potential improved opportunities for young people's learning in a more suitable learning environment. A few stakeholders highlighted concerns that the council should consider as plans for the new campus evolve. For example, facilities for community use, lack of plans for a swimming pool and safeguarding in relation to the movement of heavy goods vehicles near to the campus.

2.5 Fifty-six parents and carers completed the council's online survey. A majority (71%) of the parents and carers who completed the online survey were in favour of the proposal to relocate Woodmill High School onto a shared campus with St Columba's RC High School. A minority (29%) did not agree with the proposal. They expressed a range of concerns about the impact of this proposal. These include concerns around the safeguarding of school pupils in relation to being in the same proximity as older college students; the potential sharing of spaces with the college. Another concern was the security of the campus, especially for more vulnerable school pupils. A few respondents were concerned over the size of the campus; how the campus would operate; and any potential impact on pupil behaviour and wellbeing as a result of the two schools being situated on one campus.

### 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Woodmill High School provides non-denominational education for young people who live in the eastern part of Dunfermline. Many of the building components are either at the end of, or past, their economic lifespan. The condition of Woodmill High School is assessed as condition 'C' (poor) and 'B' (satisfactory) for suitability. Inclusion and accessibility are impaired due to use of modular accommodation, teaching spaces are not flexible or futureproof. The proposed relocation to the new site would also enhance the arrangements for the senior phase of both Woodmill High School and St Columba's RC High School.

3.2 Following a fire at Woodmill High School in August 2019, extensive damage to the building resulted in the loss of the Department of Additional Support (DAS), which accommodated up to 80 young people. The school also lost another wing of the building over three floors, resulting in the considerable loss of classroom space. Young people have returned to the school and modular accommodation has been provided to replace classroom space lost to the fire. This is not an ideal, long-term solution.

3.3 As a result of the fire, the S6 cohort from Woodmill High School was accommodated in St Columba's RC High School for almost the full academic year. This enabled consortia arrangements to work more effectively for young people in the senior school. This has improved, collaborative

learning and curricular choices for the young people. HM Inspectors believe the proposed changes to relocate the two schools to one learning campus will be of educational benefit. It would allow more young people to access an increased range of learning opportunities and wider curriculum choices, drawing on overall staff expertise across the two schools on one campus site. Consideration should also be given to ways in which the new campus could result in collaborative opportunities for learning across the broad general education.

3.4 The relocation to a single site will allow the DAS, currently located at Woodmill High School, to be fully integrated into the learning campus to provide a joint additional support facility accessed by both the young people of Woodmill High School and those of St Columba's RC High School. HM Inspectors believe that the provision of an integrated approach to learning support on a new single campus should be fully reflective of the individual needs of all learners in each school. Importantly, this resource should capitalise on the expertise of learning support and staff more widely in each school, and their knowledge of the individual young people from each school.

3.5 The majority of parents who expressed their views through the online survey, and almost all parents who spoke directly to HM Inspectors agree that their children will benefit greatly from moving into a new school. Most parents have not raised any objections to the proposal. During the consultation, a minority of parents raised objections to the proposal to rebuild the two schools on a shared campus. Whilst they acknowledge the benefits of gaining a new learning environment, they are not convinced that the shared campus arrangement will benefit their children, especially in terms of safeguarding. To address these concerns, the council will need to engage parents fully in further discussions about the security of the site, layout of the proposed campus and the arrangements for shared resources.

3.6 Staff in Woodmill High School were positive about the potential benefits of the move to the new school. They are confident it will provide modern facilities which will support their aspirations for young people and the curriculum they can offer. They are keen to develop further on their approaches to school ethos, identity and wellbeing through the creation of healthy school spaces. They highlight particularly the potential benefits of new sports facilities, partnership working and greater learning and socialising spaces for young people. A few staff raised concerns regarding the use of shared spaces, such as the assembly hall, and how this may be a challenge at particular times of the year. Senior leaders agree there is a need to have robust, jointly planned and agreed arrangements in place across both schools. This would help ensure the safety of young people and staff at peak times of arriving and leaving the site, and during breaks and lunchtimes.

3.7 Senior leaders in Woodmill High School and primary cluster headteachers who met with HM Inspectors, overall, agree with the proposal. They all confirmed that the consultation with them as headteachers and depute headteachers has been regular and open. They feel valued and believe they have an authentic voice in the consultation process. Shared school improvement planning and state of the art facilities offer enhanced opportunities for progression and coherence from early years through to post-16 provision. The proposal has the potential to develop further partnership working opportunities across all sectors. For example, the use of flexible learning spaces to support the delivery of bespoke learning programmes to meet the needs of all learners. If the council decides to go forward with this proposal, it will be important to ensure all partners are fully engaged in the planning and decision making at all stages.

3.8 Children and young people from Woodmill High School, Duloch Primary School and Carnegie Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors were all positive about the potential benefits of a new school building. They highlight new facilities, curriculum opportunities and better outdoor space as features of particular interest. A few young people raised concerns about two schools sharing one building but were hopeful this would reduce potential tensions rather than

increase them. Local authority and school staff should ensure that appropriate planning and support is provided to prevent tensions arising on the campus.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors believe Fife Council's proposal to relocate Woodmill High School from its existing site, to the campus which will also encompass St Columba's RC School and a new Fife College building, is of educational benefit. The relocation of the school will provide more suitable accommodation and significantly updated facilities for young people and staff. This should promote enhanced opportunities for collaboration across the proposed campus to design more bespoke and wider curricular opportunities to improve outcomes for all young people. In taking forward the proposal, the council should continue to involve stakeholders in the design of the campus and gather their views. Overall, HM Inspectors believe that a new, modern campus for both schools will offer more suitable accommodation for staff and young people. The campus will house a range of modern facilities that promote learning and wellbeing for the school and wider community, in the 21st century.

**HM Inspectors**  
**June 2021**