Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The City of Edinburgh Council to relocate Newcraighall Primary School to a new building in the new Brunstane development.

November 2019

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 The City of Edinburgh Council's proposal to relocate Newcraighall Primary School to a new building in the new Brunstane development. 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 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 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 10 September 2019 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 of Newcraighall Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 The City of Edinburgh Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

2.2 The main proposal within the consultation is to relocate Newcraighall Primary School to a new building in the New Brunstane development.

2.3 The formal consultation ran from 26 August 2019 to 7 October 2019. Copies of the proposal were made available electronically on the council website. An online response form was set up on the consultation website. Paper copies were made available at Newcraighall Primary School and

© Crown Copyright

in Craigmillar Library. A public meeting was held at Newcraighall Primary School on 10 September 2019. Twenty-five members of the public attended the public meeting. A pupil consultation event took place at Newcraighall Primary School.

2.4 The council received 23 responses via the online consultation. Of these, 13 were in support of the proposal. Ten did not support the proposal. Concerns raised related to the need for sufficient pedestrian crossing and an increasing school roll and potential negative impact on children, in adapting to growing class sizes and overall school numbers.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council has set out a strong case for relocating Newcraighall Primary School to a new school building in the New Brunstane development area. The council identified Newcraighall Primary School in the 2018 school roll projections as a school facing potential accommodation pressures from August 2020 onwards. Short term pressures are evident from its existing and growing catchment population. Longer term pressures from the development of New Brunstane housing site, could potentially double the numbers of pupils in the school by 2030. Historically, the school roll has remained effectively static. However, in 2017 the school roll increased by 26% compared to the roll average of the previous 15 years and in 2018 it increased by 45% compared to that same average. Based on an increased capacity, the new school will be able to accommodate the forecast increase in the pupil roll. The council have highlighted no educational disbenefits and HM Inspectors endorse this view.

3.2 In the long term, providing a single school to accommodate the pupils in the area will reduce the costs associated with running and maintaining two smaller buildings and would avoid the need for a catchment area change. The council has indicated that a new double stream (14 class) Newcraighall Primary School would be built on the identified site. The new school would be built with an expansion strategy, allowing up to a further eight classroom spaces to be built at a future stage should they be required.

3.3 All staff and pupils from Newcraighall Primary School would relocate to the new school building. A larger staff team, with a wider range of skills, has potential to offer increased professional learning opportunities and achievement opportunities for the pupils. A larger pupil roll means increased exposure to varied social and cultural experiences, as well as scope for increased participation through a wider range of consultative groups.

3.4 There are no proposed changes to the Roman Catholic Primary or Roman Catholic Secondary School catchment areas and there are no implications for the provision of Gaelic Medium Education. There would be no change to existing secondary transfer arrangements. Primary and secondary catchment areas would be unchanged by these proposals. However, it should be noted that only a few children transitioned to the local catchment secondary school, Castlebrae High School in 2016-17 and 2017-18, with numbers increasing slightly in 2018/19. Others opted for placing requests to alternative schools such as Portobello High School and Holyrood High School. The proposed site for the new school will be closer to Portobello High School. The council should continue to monitor placing requests.

3.5 All of Newcraighall Primary School's existing primary classes and nursery classes would be co-located on a single site within a purpose built facility. The nursery provision will increase from 20 places to 80 places. This will help to address demand and meet childcare entitlement to 1140 hours per year by 2020. Children attending the new school would benefit from a modern, purpose designed learning environment with appropriate facilities. For example, access to indoor and outdoor learning and play facilities, which are flexible with access to state of the art information computing technology. Purpose-built physical education facilities would assist in

© Crown Copyright

improved learning and better health outcomes for children. The playing area would present an opportunity for the school to deliver an enhanced sports curriculum. The availability of a gym hall and playing fields could also advantage the local community. Almost all parents and a few pupils raised concerns regarding the lack of community facilities in the local area for out of school activities. As plans progress, it is important that the community and wider stakeholders are engaged in discussions regarding the design and future use of indoor and outdoor space.

3.6 The council estimates a timescale for opening the proposed new school in August 2022. In taking forward the proposal, it is important that the council continues to work with key stakeholders including the Parent Council sharing details of the plans and associated timescales. A few parents raised concerns regarding the emotional support needs of children and young people during their transition from a small school to a larger school. It will be important that the council engages with parents and pupils regarding any additional transition requirements.

3.7 All children who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. They recognised that the existing school was too small, that space was limited and that many areas had to serve dual purposes. The existing school has a limited outdoor play area and annexes used for additional classes. Children were positive about a larger school with more space indoors where classes could be together and increased outdoor space where young people could learn, play and feel safe.

3.8 All parents and staff agreed that the current school environment is not conducive to meeting the needs of leaners. They recognise the advantages that a new school can bring. A larger, improved teaching environment and increased outdoor space to accommodate projected increase in roll numbers. Increased opportunities for play based and outdoor learning, more storage space for equipment and facilities including those for children with additional needs. Staff recognised increased professional learning opportunities through, for example, working with stage partners as the roll grows. Parents raised concerns regarding the proposed location of the school and safer routes to school. As plans progress, the council will need to address safe routes to school.

4. Summary

The council's proposal provides a strong case for a new primary school and clearly outlines the associated educational benefits. Almost all children, parents and school staff who met with HM Inspectors were supportive of the proposal. The council's proposal, should it proceed, should see increasing numbers of children and young people in the area benefit from well-designed building equipped to meet the needs of 21st century learners. This will result in a much improved environment for the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and potentially improved outcomes for learners. Teacher staffing levels will be maintained. Early learning and childcare facilities will be increased and improved. The proposed new site will provide enhanced outdoor play spaces and physical education facilities with the potential for wider community use. In taking forward the proposal, the council would benefit from involving the wider community, school staff, parents and pupils in the final design and layout of the new school. This includes sharing details of its plans and timescales for transition to the new school. It should address stakeholders' legitimate concerns regarding additional support for transition, road safety and safe walking routes to the proposed new school.

HM Inspectors
November 2019

© Crown Copyright