

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Stirling Council to establish a non-denominational primary school and associated catchment area at South Stirling Gateway housing development.

March 2024

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His 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 a proposal from Stirling Council to establish a non-denominational primary school and associated catchment area at South Stirling Gateway housing 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 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 public meeting held on 6 February 2024 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 Bannockburn Primary School, Bannockburn High School and St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary school.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Stirling Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#). This consultation was carried out alongside a similar proposal for a new school at Durieshill. Although there was a separate survey for each proposal, the public meeting and engagement with children was completed jointly.

2.2 The consultation period ran from 10 January 2024 to 1 March 2024. The proposal document was sent to key stakeholders, including parents of pupils at any affected school, staff, trade unions, the community council and community planning partnership. The document was also made available in hard copy at Bannockburn Library and through Stirling Council's social media channels. An online survey received 37 responses. A public meeting was held on 6 February 2024 with 23 attendees. As part of the consultation, a group of six children from Bannockburn Primary

School worked with staff to contribute their views. At the time of the consultation, the site of the new school was still to be confirmed.

2.3 The online survey did not ask directly if respondents agreed with the proposal. Support is clear in seven out of 27 comments. Other comments refer to the impact on the environment, provision for nursery and additional support needs (ASN), travel routes and investment in other schools. One third of respondents are concerned about the future capacity of Bannockburn Primary School. Attendees at the public meeting asked similar questions to those responding to the survey. They also asked about the location of the school, how it will be financed and about the impact on secondary school provision. Children, responding to the consultation, agree with the proposal. In a new school, they would like to see a range of spaces for science, creative learning and play.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Overall, HM Inspectors agree with the educational benefits of the proposal. The current catchment area for the South Stirling Gateway development is Bannockburn Primary School. It does not have the capacity to meet future demand. The proposed new school will allow for active travel and supports the development of a new community. A modern and accessible new building has the potential to create a positive learning environment for all children, including those with ASN. Plans for the new school are not yet finalised. However, the commitment to include outdoor play and learning spaces, general purpose rooms and break out areas should create a positive environment to deliver Curriculum for Excellence. The council plans to give parents a choice about whether to move children within the new catchment area, to the new school. This should help to minimise disruption to learning if children choose to stay at their existing primary school.

3.2 Almost all stakeholders, who met with HM Inspectors understand the need for a new primary school in the area. All stakeholders agree that it is important that schools are located in safe areas, preferably within walking and wheeling distance of home. Staff and parents raised specific issues about the lack of early learning and childcare (ELC) provision in the area. They are concerned that the new school will increase demand for ELC provision that cannot be met.

3.3 Staff who met with HM Inspectors raised concerns about the future capacity of Bannockburn Primary School if the new school is not built within the proposed timescale. Staff at Bannockburn Primary School do not think there is enough space, at present. For example, they think that there are not enough toilets for children. They would like to see further investment in Bannockburn Primary School to ensure an equitable learning experience for all children in the area. They are concerned that their school roll would drop if families make placing requests for the newly built school. Staff at St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School agree that the new housing may result in an increased roll from families choosing to send their child to the school. They are concerned that if a new school is not built, this would result in further capacity issues. Staff at Bannockburn High School, welcome the opportunity to increase the roll at the school.

3.4 Parents agree there is a need for a new school if all the planned housing is built. They are concerned that the existing primary schools will be less valued in the community, when the new one, with brand new facilities, is opened. They would like to see investment in the existing primary schools. After-school care places and access to childminding is currently an issue for parents, with few services available locally. Parents are concerned that the new housing will increase the demand and waiting lists for these services.

3.5 Children and young people are ready to welcome new people in to their existing schools. However, they do not want to see class sizes become too large. They feel this would impact on how well their teachers know and support them. Children and young people agree that schools

should be located close to people's homes. This allows for less car and bus travel, which is better for the environment. They would like to see a bright and welcoming new school with good outdoor and indoor space to support a wide range of learning opportunities.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has the potential to bring clear educational benefits for the children and wider community in the area. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should continue to work with all stakeholders to agree the specification and design of the new school. Parents and staff have identified a lack of ELC and after-school provision. In taking this proposal forward, the council should engage further with stakeholders to discuss these issues.

HM Inspectors
March 2024