

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Renfrewshire Council to build a new primary school in Dargavel Village and review the catchment areas for the proposed new school and Dargavel Primary School.

April 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 by Renfrewshire Council to build a new primary school in Dargavel Village and review the catchment areas for the proposed new school and for Dargavel 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' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's 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 consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children 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 public meetings held on 19 February and 5 March 2024 in connection with the council's proposals;
- attendance at a public information session on 29 February 2024;
- 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
- visits to the sites of Dargavel Primary School and Bishopton Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The statutory consultation period for this proposal ran from 29 January until 26 March 2024. The council published the proposal paper on its website. Paper and electronic copies of the proposal paper were made available to stakeholders and interested parties. Written responses

were accepted by letter or email. Public meetings took place on 19 February and 5 March 2024. There were 43 public attendees in total across the two meetings. The council also held several open information sessions and informal drop-in sessions for the public between the 14 and 29 February 2024. In total, around 100 people attended one or more of these sessions. There were 817 responses to the council's questionnaire on the proposal. The majority of the respondents to the questionnaire were parents/carers of school aged children, or those that had a child attending nursery in Renfrewshire. Most respondents (88%) strongly agreed or agreed that the new primary school should be built in Dargavel Village. There is no clear consensus on the proposed site at Craigton Drive. Less than half of respondents (39%) agreed with the chosen site, while slightly more (41%) disagreed. The remaining respondents (20%) neither agreed or disagreed with the proposed site. With regards to the proposed catchment area, a minority (44%) are in favour, the same percentage (44%) neither agree nor disagree, and 12% disagree.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors consider that the council has set out reasonable educational benefits for this proposal. The council estimates the completion of the Dargavel Village development by 2033. Dargavel Primary School, which opened in October 2021, was built for a pupil roll of 400. It is currently well over capacity with just over 600 children currently attending. The council's projected figures indicate a peak in demand for around 1,130 non-denominational primary places in academic year 2033-34 in the Dargavel area. The proposed school would have capacity for 800 pupils. The main educational benefit of this proposal is that it addresses current and future capacity issues at Dargavel Primary School and Bishopton Primary School. It will enable the council to continue to provide sufficient places for children in the catchment areas covered by the proposal. The council state that the proposed catchment areas within the proposal will distribute the pressure arising from new housing development evenly across primary schools in Dargavel. The council have stated that a sibling guarantee will be put in place associated with the catchment changes.

3.2 Almost all respondents to the questionnaire, attendees at the public meetings, and stakeholders that HM Inspectors spoke to at Dargavel and Bishopton Primary Schools agree that there is a need for a new primary school. A significant minority of survey respondents and the majority of stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors do not believe that the proposed site for the new school is appropriate. Many of the stakeholders that HM Inspectors spoke to think there should be more time to consider alternative sites for the new school. However, there is currently no consensus on an alternative site.

3.3 Stakeholders raised significant concerns, both in comments on the survey and when speaking to HM Inspectors, about the volume of traffic that would result from two large primary schools being in close proximity. Stakeholders are worried that the road infrastructure is not in place to support the expected increased traffic at peak drop-off and pick-up times at the schools. Parents and children of Dargavel Primary School, that HM Inspectors spoke to, do not consider existing traffic management arrangements provide sufficient safety for children getting to the school. They believe these safety issues may increase should the proposed site be chosen. For example, children and parents say the footpath for walking and cycling to school is not sufficiently wide enough for the current Dargavel Primary School population. Therefore, they do not consider it could accommodate increased use by a second, much larger school community. If the proposal is accepted, the council will need to work with the Dargavel community to address their concerns as a priority. The council will need to ensure the suitability of the proposed site in respect of the road infrastructure and adequate safe routes, including for active travel such as walking or cycling.

3.4 The majority of parents that HM Inspectors spoke to are not confident that the council's timescale for the construction of the new school is realistic. Stakeholders across both Dargavel

and Bishopton Primary Schools do not want to see delays to a new school being ready for children by August 2027. They worry that there will be a detrimental impact on Dargavel and Bishopton Primary Schools if the new school is not ready in time. A number of parents that HM Inspectors spoke to in both school communities say that they feel constrained into opting for the council's proposed site, so that their child may be assured a place at a local school. Whether the proposal is agreed or not, it will be important for the council to identify and share with stakeholders, appropriate contingency plans for all scenarios.

3.5 Children, parents and staff feel strongly that the design of the new school, and the provision of outdoor facilities for sport and physical activity, must be better than the build specification for Dargavel Primary School. The council acknowledge this and are currently making remedial adaptations to Dargavel Primary School, for example to improve soundproofing in teaching spaces. Residents in Dargavel Village, who live adjacent to the proposed school site, are concerned that the intended community use of the new school's sports facilities will impact on the volume of traffic and natural habitat of the area. It will be important for the council, if the proposal is agreed, to continue to consult with stakeholders about the design of the new school, the facilities to be included and in considerations about the community use of the site.

3.6 A majority of stakeholders who met HM Inspectors at Bishopton Primary School stated that they wish to see further investment in their school. They appreciate that the council's resources are limited, but they feel it is important to ensure that there is equity between all primary schools in the area. Staff and children at Bishopton Primary School have experience in welcoming and settling large numbers of new children to the school. However, they do not wish to return to Bishopton Primary School accommodating up to 700 children, as was the case when the opening of Dargavel Primary School was delayed. The majority of parents are concerned that any delay to the new school will negatively impact on the numbers of children attending Bishopton Primary School. HM Inspectors agree that it is important that all schools provide a safe and suitable learning environment for all pupils.

3.7 Almost all parents and staff who met with HM Inspectors raised significant concerns about the future capacity of Park Mains High School. This is due to the continuing expansion of Dargavel Village and other housebuilding in towns within the catchment area for the secondary school. Parents who met with HM Inspectors are worried that the council may have underestimated the projected school roll for Park Mains High School. Parents who met with HM Inspectors would like to see consideration of a 3-18 campus, instead of primary provision only. They feel that Bishopton and Dargavel should have more early learning and childcare provision. They also feel strongly that the community should have its own secondary school. The council's projected figures are that around 1,000 young people who live in Bishopton and Dargavel will require to be transported to and from Park Mains High School each day. Parents that met with HM Inspectors do not feel that this is financially nor environmentally sound. Although outwith the scope of this consultation, it would be helpful for the council to continue to work with parents to address their concerns about secondary provision.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has the potential to provide educational benefits. A new primary school should address the need for increased non-denominational primary places in Dargavel Village. Almost all stakeholders agree that there is a need for a new school. However, a significant number of stakeholders have concerns about the proposed location for the new school. They are concerned about children having access to adequate safe walking and cycling routes. They are also very worried about the potential impact of significantly increased traffic on an already congested road. Should the proposal be approved, it will be essential that the council ensure there are improved, adequate safe active routes to school. They also need to develop

robust and viable plans to efficiently manage the significant increase in traffic that is expected. Stakeholders are also concerned about the council's timescale for the project. If the proposal is agreed, HM Inspectors recommend the council should ensure that there are clear contingency plans in place, should there be slippage in the projected timescales for the construction and opening of the new school for August 2027. If the proposal is agreed, HM Inspectors recommend strongly that the council continue to work with stakeholders to help mitigate their valid concerns and involve them, as appropriate, in the development of the new school.

HM Inspectors
April 2024