

# **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 St Columba's RC High School from the existing school site of Woodmill Road, Dunfermline, and 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 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 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 – St Columba's RC High School and Woodmill 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 St Columba's RC 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;
- consideration of further information on all schools affected; and
- discussion with relevant consultees, including the Archdiocese of St Andrew's and Edinburgh.

## 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 council undertook the consultation between 13 April 2021 and 2 June 2021. Advertisements were placed in the local press and through social media platforms, including the schools' websites. Copies of the proposal document were also made available through the council's website. Three virtual public meetings were held which were attended by a total of 90 people approximately. These virtual meetings were held on the 26 April, 5 May and 17 May 2021. A further nine public, virtual drop-in sessions were held between 20 April and 25 May 2021. The schools also used their home-school communication facility to parents and carers to advertise these consultation opportunities.

2.3 The initial consultation period was due to run from 13 April 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 omissions were identified. The council determined that the errors and omissions did not pertain to material considerations relevant to the council's decision relating to the implementation of the proposal. The council decided to proceed in accordance with section 5 (1) (b) of the Act, to issue a Notice of Corrections to HM Inspectors and all statutory consultees, advising of the errors and omissions and correcting them. The council also decided to extend the consultation period to 2nd June 2021 to allow additional time for consultees to respond to the proposal.

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 council leaders should consider as plans for the new campus evolve. The main concerns are highlighted in this report.

2.5 Fifty-six parents completed the council's online survey. A majority (71%) of the parents who completed the online survey were in favour of the proposal to relocate St Columba's RC High School and Woodmill High School to a shared campus. 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, potential sharing of spaces with the college and concerns regarding security of the two proposed relocated schools, especially for more vulnerable school pupils. In addition, a small number of respondents were concerned over the size of the campus. In particular, how the campus would operate supervision for the safety of young people 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 The context of the proposed relocation of St Columba's RC High School and Woodmill High School to one shared campus is a key driver to this proposal. St Columba's RC High School and Woodmill High School buildings have a condition rating of 'C' and a suitability rating of 'B'. A 'B' rating indicates '...performing adequately but showing minor deterioration,' and a 'C' rating indicates '...Showing major defects and/or not operating adequately'. At Woodmill High School, inclusion and accessibility are impaired due to use of temporary modular accommodation; teaching spaces are not flexible or futureproof. The proposed relocation to the new site would also allow greater potential for more flexible and innovative senior phase arrangement to the benefit of both schools.

3.1.2 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. The S6 cohort from Woodmill High School was accommodated in St Columba's RC High School for almost the full academic year. This allowed existing consortia arrangements to work more effectively for young people in the senior school as a result. This has enabled improved, more collaborative, learning and curricular choices for the young people. HM Inspectors believe the proposed changes to relocate two schools to one learning campus will be of educational benefit. This could allow greater potential for young people from both schools to access a wider range of learning opportunities and wider curriculum choices, drawing on overall staff expertise across the two schools on one campus site. This will require regular, close collaborative working and planning by staff from both schools and the college.

3.2 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 DAS facility. This facility will be accessed by both pupils of St Columba's RC High School and Woodmill 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 from each school, and their knowledge of the individual young people in each school.

3.3 Currently, senior phase consortia arrangements allow young people to study some senior phase courses across both St Columba's RC High School and Woodmill High School. HM Inspectors believe the new proposed campus has clear potential to improve further this approach to enable increased opportunities for a wider curricular offer for young people, without the need for young people to travel between schools. Consideration should also be given to ways in which the new campus could result in improved collaborative opportunities across both schools for learning across the broad general education.

3.4 Overall, HM Inspectors believe that a new, shared modern campus for both schools will offer more comfortable and suitable accommodation for staff and young people that will house a range of modern facilities. This will help to promote more flexible and innovative approaches to learning and wellbeing for the schools and wider community, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

3.5 The majority of parents who have 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 to new relocated schools. Most parents have not raised any objections to the proposal of the development of a shared campus. 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 enhance learning opportunities for their children. To address these concerns, the council should continue to engage parents fully in further discussions about the site and layout of the proposed campus and the arrangements for sharing resources if the proposal is taken forward.

3.5.1 HM Inspectors engaged with a group of children from St Joseph's and St Margaret's associate primary schools, as well as a group of associate primary headteachers. Most children who spoke to HM Inspectors were positive about the potential benefits of a new school building. They welcome particularly the opportunity to learn with high quality, modern resources with effective information communication technology provision and connectivity. A few children welcome the opportunity to attend secondary school with friends they currently have at Woodmill

High School. They also feel that both schools on a shared site has the potential to reduce rivalries across communities. Most children's concerns centre around busy roads at times of arriving and leaving the campus, as well as supervision to make them feel safe, in and around a large, busy campus. It will be helpful if the council continues to involve children and young people fully in the development of the campus. All children would welcome opportunities for the associated schools with St Columba's RC High School and Woodmill High School to have opportunities to become familiar with each other before starting at the campus.

3.6 HM Inspectors engaged with a sample of teaching staff and senior leaders at St Columba's RC High School. Overall, staff are very positive about the possibilities a shared, modern campus could offer to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. They believe this could enhance wider, more bespoke opportunities for young people's choices – initially through the senior phase. Staff are also very positive about the collaborative working possibilities a joint campus with both schools and the college could offer. A few staff have expressed concerns regarding the supervision and safety of young people moving around such a large campus. They welcome regular opportunities to work with staff at Woodmill High School in advance of a move to a joint campus, to agree shared approaches to supervision and ensuring the safety of young people and staff around the campus and across the community. Overwhelmingly, staff at St Columba's RC High School wish to retain the strong Catholic ethos upon which the school community prides itself. In a new shared campus, staff wish to see its context and environment continue to be one which is unique as an RC secondary school in the community.

3.6.1 Teaching staff at St Columba's RC High School are positive about the potential benefits of having both schools on a shared campus. They welcome the wealth of modern facilities that will support improved experiences for young people at the school. They are unanimous in their desire to retain the unique ethos and surroundings that underpin the strong Catholic faith of the school. Staff highlight particularly the potential benefits of new sports facilities, partnership working and greater learning and socialising spaces for young people. A few staff did, however, raise concerns regarding the use of shared spaces, such as the assembly hall, and how this may be a challenge during particular times of the year. A few staff also had concerns regarding the provision of suitable spaces for staff and young people to pray and worship. In preparation for a move to a shared campus, there is a clear need to have robust, jointly planned and agreed arrangements in place across both schools to ensure the safety of young people and staff at peak times of arriving and leaving the site, and during breaks and lunchtimes.

3.6.2 Associate primary headteachers who engaged with HM Inspectors were extremely positive about the new shared campus and agree with the benefits as outlined in the proposal. They particularly highlighted that the new school will offer greater flexibility in supporting children with additional support needs. They all agreed that the consultation with them as headteachers has been regular and open. They feel valued and believe they have an authentic voice in the consultation process. They are aware that there already strong links between St Columba's RC High School and Woodmill High School which they hope will be strengthened further in a shared campus. All associate primary headteachers emphasised the importance of maintaining suitable surroundings to promote a strong ethos for Catholic education at St Columba's RC High School in a shared campus.

3.7 The council received a written submission from the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. It is supportive of the proposal to relocate St Columba's RC High School with Woodmill High School and the college, to the proposed shared campus. The Archdiocese welcomes the potential for young people and staff to work more collaboratively across a new, more integrated campus. It is the wish of the Archdiocese that Fife Council in considering the plans for the new campus, takes into account the mission, vision, aims and values of each school. The Archdiocese hopes that this will help to ensure that the architecture allows each to express their distinctive

cultures and identities. This includes retaining a suitable designated point of worship for staff and young people of St Columba's RC High School and maintaining the overall Catholic identity of the school in its ethos and surroundings, which celebrate the school's unique identity as a Catholic secondary school. The Archdiocese welcomes regular opportunities to continue to engage with Fife Council as plans for the new campus progress.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors believe Fife Council's proposal to relocate St Columba's RC High School and Woodmill High School from their existing sites to a single site which will also encompass a new Fife College Campus, is of educational benefit. The relocation of both schools will provide more suitable accommodation and significantly updated facilities for young people and staff across the proposed campus. 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 reflect on the feedback from stakeholders throughout the consultation period, including the Archdiocese of St Andrew's and Edinburgh. The council should continue to involve stakeholders in the design process of the campus and gather their views, to address key concerns and ideas highlighted as a result of the consultation process.

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