

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

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dundee City Council to close St Pius X Roman Catholic (RC) Primary School and Nursery and expand the catchment area of St Francis RC Primary School.**

March 2025

# 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 Dundee City Council to close St Pius X Roman Catholic (RC) Primary School and Nursery and expand the catchment area of St Francis RC 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, there are specific additional obligations. These include notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and 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 meetings held on 27 and 28 January 2025 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
- visits to the sites of St Pius X RC Primary School, St Francis RC Primary School, Claypotts Castle Primary School, and Rowantree Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

## 2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The statutory public consultation ran from 6 January to 19 February 2025. Prior to the public consultation, the council undertook a pre-engagement meeting with church representatives to discuss potential educational benefits. The proposal was made available on the council website and provided to key stakeholders. The council held public meetings on 27 and 28 January 2025 in St Pius X RC Primary School and St Francis RC Primary School respectively. The council recorded a total of 91 attendees. The council received 102 written representations from parents, carers, children, staff, community members and church representatives, including the Diocese of Dunkeld. A parent also organised an online petition to save St Pius X RC Primary School, which has received support from 533 signatures. Almost all written representations received by the council do not support the proposal. During the public meetings and through written representations stakeholders raised a range of questions and concerns. Stakeholders are concerned about fewer parents choosing a denominational education. They also expressed concern about the potential negative impact the proposal may have on families if the catchment area moved to St Francis RC Primary School. These included increased traffic and congestion, the cost for additional travel and the reduction in active travel options. A few suggested that the nursery class at St Pius X RC Primary School could become a standalone facility.

2.3 The council undertook engagement sessions with children, parents and staff from the schools which may be impacted by this proposal. Children across most schools are positive about the potential for making new friendships. However, they noted concerns including additional travel and the potential for current friendship groups being split. They are also sad that St Pius X RC Primary School may close and how that would make children currently attending the school feel. A few parents noted the importance of transition arrangements in the event of the school closing. They also expressed that the school would be a loss to the community.

## 3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 Dundee City Council highlights the need to achieve best value and optimum efficiency. It notes that the school rolls for St Pius X RC and St Francis RC Primary Schools are in decline. The council believes that this may indicate there is insufficient demand for the number of denominational school places. The proposal notes the school roll for both schools is 162 and 300, respectively. The average occupancy rate of all primary schools in the North East and East End Wards of the city is 73%, the occupancy level of St Pius X RC Primary School is 64%. The council states that a small school roll can limit the ability to offer a full range of curricular and learning opportunities and restrict opportunities for team sports and active recreational activities. However, it is the view of HM Inspectors that a small school roll, in itself, does not impede the offer of curricular and learning opportunities. The council outlines educational benefits to the proposal from the planned catchment change and the closure of St Pius X RC Primary School and nursery. A catchment change would ensure an equitable distribution of children across schools and lead to viable and sustainable pupil rolls. Over time, this will mitigate any detrimental impact upon teaching and learning experiences of the children in the school. HM Inspectors agree that such a change may lead to more sustainable and stable pupil rolls in the longer term.

3.2 The council state that the condition of the current school building is rated as B for suitability and C for condition, and the increasing financial implications of ongoing maintenance. The council notes that the proposal provides educational benefits from children learning in more modern, vibrant learning environments. These will contribute to the effective delivery of pupil entitlements. It believes that this could have a positive impact on mental health and emotional wellbeing of

children and help address accessibility issues that presents challenges to children requiring additional support. The council believes that carefully planned transitions to the alternative schools will allow children to widen their network of friends. HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has the potential to provide these educational benefits. However, in its proposal the council is not sufficiently clear how their stated educational benefits will outweigh the benefits to children of remaining in St Pius X RC Primary School.

3.3 All of the stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors understand the financial pressures and the need for the council to make efficient use of resources available. All parents and most staff who met with HM Inspectors do not agree with the proposed closure of the school and nursery. All parents raised concerns about the increase in traffic surrounding St Francis RC Primary School and the North East Campus. They believe that this will lead to congestion and have negative environmental impacts. Parents and staff from St Pius X RC Primary School are concerned that the proposal may have the potential to impact negatively on the number of children attending denominational schools. Parents are concerned about the additional travel and the financial implications this will have for families. A key concern for working parents is the uncertainty over nursery placements, the availability of term-time places and how they will manage multiple drop-offs. Parents value highly the support they receive from St Pius X RC Primary School staff and believe that children currently benefit from a wide range of in class and extra-curricular activities. They believe that the school is an integral part of the community. Parents are concerned that they will lose their well-established relationships with families and the support network formed around the school and local community. They fear that if the council proceeds with the proposal, it could have a detrimental impact on mental health and wellbeing of children and families. HM Inspectors agree that should the proposal proceed, it will be important that the closure of the school and nursery is managed well, and transition arrangements are developed with stakeholders.

3.4 Almost all children who met with HM Inspectors do not support the proposal. All children attending St Pius X RC Primary School enjoy the individualised support they receive from school staff. They were able to express the advantages of the range of learning experiences, team sports and active recreational activities they currently benefit from, including afterschool clubs. Children are sad that their school may close and are worried that they will lose existing friendships. They are also concerned that they could be overwhelmed by attending schools with a larger number of children. Children from the other schools are positive about welcoming new pupils to their school and see the benefits of having larger friendship groups. However, they too expressed some concerns over busier playgrounds and less space in classrooms.

3.5 HM Inspectors met with church representatives, including the Diocese of Dunkeld. Although they understand the financial pressures the council faces, they do not support the proposal. They believe that, should the proposal proceed, it may limit choices available to parents due to circumstance such as socio-economic context, geography or employment. They note the non-denominational primary schools will now be closer to homes than relocating to St Francis RC Primary School. They highlighted the need to provide support to any children transitioning to non-denominational primary schools who are preparing for sacrament. They remain committed to having further discussions on alternatives. HM Inspectors recommend that the council continue to work closely with the Diocese and families to address their concerns.

## 4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree that the proposal has the potential to provide educational benefits regarding accessibility and modern facilities. It also presents opportunities for the council to make efficiency savings. HM Inspectors agree that such a change may lead to more sustainable and stable pupil rolls in the longer term. However, HM Inspectors consider it is not sufficiently clear that these potential benefits outweigh the challenges that would result in moving children from their current school. HM Inspectors disagree that this move is required to enable children to participate in team sports and active recreational activities. In its consultation report, the council should be clear how it will address the potential negative impacts on children and families of closing St Pius X RC Primary School and nursery. The council should also be clear about the benefits of moving children to alternative settings. Should the council proceed with the proposal, it should continue to consider the views of church representatives and work with stakeholders to address their concerns. It will also be important that the council works closely with stakeholders to support children's transitions.

**HM Inspectors**  
**March 2025**