

Agenda Item	9
Report No	HC/43/25

The Highland Council

Committee: The Highland Council

Date: 11 December 2025

Report Title: **Highland Investment Plan – Establishing the Dingwall POD and Statutory Consultation Final Report on Relocation of St Clement's Special School**

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Highland Investment Plan was launched in May 2024 and aims to transform the Council's asset base. The establishment of Community and other types of Points of Delivery (PODs) is linked to plans to modernise service delivery and will be a key driver for the future operating model of the Highland Community Planning Partnership. This model is part of a strategy to provide more integrated local services in recognition that many of our assets are in poor condition or no longer retain their prior functionality. The place-based reviews that are underway in locations such as Dingwall and Thurso involve engaging with public sector partners to explore opportunities for co-location and alignment of service delivery models. This approach represents a "once in a generation" opportunity to deliver transformational change in communities across Highland. This report links to the council paper Developing a Future Operating Model for The Highland Council (Item 6, 30 October 2025) which is the strategic blueprint for transforming how services are designed, managed, and delivered, creating an adaptive, collaborative, and community-driven organisation.
- 1.2 The Council's internal design team has been conducting work in developing these principles and these can be viewed in these images and animations:
 - [Concept - Point of Delivery \(POD\) Design Work](#)
 - [Concept Point of Delivery](#)
- 1.3 The planned capital investment in the Dingwall Community POD project is a key component of the place-based masterplan that is being prepared for Dingwall. This collaborative process has identified opportunities and potential solutions to maximise the use of assets and improve service delivery in Dingwall, thus ensuring effective and coordinated investment to meet community needs. Further community engagement is planned, and regular HIP progress updates will continue to be provided to Council meetings in 2026.
- 1.4 Hub North Scotland Ltd (HNSL) have been appointed through the partnership agreement that is now in place to deliver 7 of the capital projects in Phase 1 of the HIP, including the Dingwall Community POD.

1.5 Following conclusion of the statutory consultation process, this report seeks Members' agreement to relocate St. Clement's Special School, Dingwall, to a new site adjacent to Dingwall Primary School as part of a new Community Point of Delivery (POD), which includes a new Dingwall Primary School and is aimed at improving educational provision for pupils with additional support needs.

2. **Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the progress being made with the place-based review for the Dingwall Community POD as part of the Highland Investment Plan;
- ii. Note the opportunities that will be provided for stakeholders and partners to engage in the design process;
- iii. Note report from Education Scotland (Appendix 4) that recognises the Education benefits of locating St Clement's School and Dingwall Primary School on the same site;
- iv. Agree officers should fully discharge the recommendations from Education Scotland as set out in the Consultation Report at Appendix 2; and
- v. Agree to relocate St Clement's School to the site adjacent to Dingwall Primary School.

3. **Implications**

3.1 Resource

The Council has allocated £50 million to the proposed Dingwall Community POD project, which includes the replacement of the St Clement's Special School and Dingwall Primary School buildings and the development of community/partnership space, through the Highland Investment Plan (HIP) as set out in a series of reports to Council meetings in 2025.

3.2 Legal

This consultation is conducted in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

3.3 Risk

Failure to relocate St Clement's Special School risks continued inadequacy of facilities, limiting pupils' access to appropriate learning environments and specialist support, thereby impacting educational outcomes and wellbeing.

One of the potential risks highlighted by parents, and picked up by Education Scotland, was that the new site would not be large enough to accommodate the required range of facilities that would have been possible at the previously agreed site at Docharty Brae. Paragraph 6.5 and the consultation report at **Appendix 2** confirm that the planned site is large enough to replicate the indoor and outdoor space and facilities that would have been provided on an alternative new site.

3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)

The new facilities will meet modern health and safety standards, ensuring a safe environment for pupils and staff.

3.5 **Gaelic**
While St Clement's Special School does not currently offer Gaelic Medium Education (GME), the co-location with Dingwall Primary School, which has a high quality and expanding GME provision, may present opportunities to enhance Gaelic education.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies, or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 A further impact assessment will be undertaken once the design plans are further advanced but prior to finalisation.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening was undertaken on 10 November 2025. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval. A summary is presented in **Appendix 1**.

4.3.2 The screening process has concluded that there are positive impacts for equalities, human rights, and children's rights by providing a new special school. There are no known negative impacts for poverty, island and mainland rural communities or data protection. The design process will mitigate against impacts on climate change. The new shared facility will be built to modern environmental standards, improving long-term energy efficiency and reducing emissions compared to the existing schools.

4.3.3 Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children and Young People – <i>Positive</i>• Children affected by disability – <i>Positive</i>• Older adults –<i>no impact</i>
Socio-economic	<i>No impact</i>
Human Rights	<i>Positive</i>
Children's Rights and Well-being	<i>Positive</i>
Island and Mainland Rural	<i>No impact</i>
Climate Change	<i>No significant impact</i>
Data Rights	<i>No impact</i>

5. Statutory Consultation - Overview

5.1 The Consultation Report is at **Appendix 2**. The original proposal for consultation, and relevant documents for consideration, are all also circulated as appendices to this paper. They provide details of all consultation comments received, the note of the public meeting, the report from Education Scotland, and the Council's response to comments arising from the consultation.

5.2 The majority of written responses and public meeting contributions express strong support for a new school building, recognising the inadequacy of the current facilities and the need for a purpose-built environment tailored to the needs of pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN).

5.3 Concern has been expressed about the proposed co-location with Dingwall Primary School. Some parents and community members expressed a strong preference for a standalone school, citing the importance of preserving St Clement's unique identity, ethos, and specialist provision. Concerns include potential bullying, loss of dedicated spaces, and the risk of future overcrowding.

5.4 Pupil feedback highlights enthusiasm for modern, inclusive design features such as sensory rooms, hydrotherapy, slides, and outdoor learning spaces, while also noting dissatisfaction with the current building's condition, lack of accessibility, and limited play equipment.

5.5 Some stakeholders, including Parent Council representatives and local Community Councils, expressed conditional support for the relocation, emphasising the need for meaningful engagement, transparency in design, and assurance around future capacity.

5.6 The note of the public meeting is at **Appendix 3**. A total of 19 distinct questions were raised during the public meeting on 2 July 2025 regarding the relocation of St Clement's School.

5.7 These questions covered a range of topics including:

- The consultation process
- Co-location concerns
- School design and layout
- Capacity and futureproofing
- Management and staffing
- Educational benefits
- Impact assessments
- Early years provision

5.8 The report from Education Scotland is at **Appendix 4**. HM Inspectors support The Highland Council's proposal to relocate St Clement's School to a new site that will also accommodate a new Dingwall Primary School, recognising the need for improved facilities for learners with complex additional support needs.

The report highlights that the current St Clement's School building is in poor condition and not fully accessible, which impacts the dignity and wellbeing of pupils. A new, purpose-built facility would offer significant educational benefits, including better accessibility, flexible learning spaces, and opportunities to enhance the curriculum and inclusion.

HM Inspectors noted that concerns were raised by some stakeholders regarding the co-location of the schools on the same site and that a preference had been expressed for a stand-alone building for St Clements to preserve the school's identity and ensure adequate space. They also noted calls to reintroduce early learning and childcare provision.

5.9 HM Inspectors recommend that, should the proposal proceed, the Council should:

- Provide reassurance that the proposed site is large enough for both schools.
- Clarify how educational benefits will be realised for St Clement's pupils.
- Continue involving stakeholders in the design process to ensure the new school meets the needs of all learners.

Responses to these points are included in the Consultation Report at **Appendix 2**.

Overall, HM Inspectors consider that the proposal offers clear educational advantages, but further engagement and clarity are needed to address stakeholder concerns.

6. Highland Investment Plan

6.1 The HIP was launched in May 2024 and aims to transform the Council's asset base. The establishment of Community and other types of PODs is linked to plans to modernise service delivery and will be a key driver for the future operating model of the Highland Community Planning Partnership. The Council's internal design team has been conducting work in developing these principles and these can be viewed in these images and animations:

[Concept - Point of Delivery \(POD\) Design Work |](#)
[Concept Point of Delivery](#)

This model is part of a strategy to provide more integrated local services in recognition that many of our assets are in poor condition or no longer retain their prior functionality. The place-based reviews that are underway in locations such as Dingwall and Thurso involves engaging with public sector partners to explore opportunities for co-location and alignment of service delivery models. This approach represents a "once in a generation" opportunity to deliver transformational change in communities across Highland.

6.2 The planned capital investment in the Dingwall Community POD project is a key component of the place-based masterplan that is being prepared for Dingwall. This collaborative process has identified opportunities and potential solutions to maximise the use of assets and improve service delivery in Dingwall, thus ensuring effective and coordinated investment to meet community needs. Further community engagement is planned, and regular HIP progress updates will continue to be provided to Council meetings in 2026.

6.3 The Council appointed NORR Architects earlier this year to engage with parents, pupils, and staff of St Clement's through a series of workshops to inform the briefing and design of the new building and to ensure that the needs of every child will be met in an inclusive environment with first-class indoor and outdoor facilities. These

workshops have now been completed, and a final report is being prepared. There initial report can be found here: [Norr Report - St Clements Interim Workshop Results |](#)

6.4 NORR have also been preparing initial site layout options for the new Community POD site, and these will be finalised and shared once the outcomes of the workshops have been reported. This early work has been developed concurrently with the statutory consultation process to maintain momentum but are ultimately subject to Members approving the recommendation to relocate St Clements so that the development for Dingwall Primary School and wider community/partnership facilities can take place.

6.5 A recurring theme in the responses contained in **Appendix 2B** relates to the provision of dedicated outdoor spaces to support a range of activities that are not possible in the current school location. One of the criteria in selecting this site was to ensure that it is large enough to accommodate all the required facilities and spaces and that this would be at least equivalent to the previously proposed site at Dochcarty Brae. This has also been a key consideration in the workshops that have taken place, and the external environment will play a central role in the design of the new school, offering meaningful opportunities for both play and learning. The chosen site's natural topography could also present exciting opportunities.

6.6 Hub North Scotland Ltd (HNSL) have been appointed through the partnership agreement that is now in place to deliver 7 of the capital projects in Phase 1 of the HIP, including the Dingwall Community POD. Design teams have been appointed (including NORR as lead designers for Dingwall to ensure continuity) along with the Council's in-house project teams, and Tier 1 main contractors will be appointed early next year. HNSL are currently preparing detailed delivery programmes for all the projects, and these will be reported in due course.

6.7 The link below is to a page on the Council's website specifically relating to St Clement's that will be regularly updated. This includes the interim report from NORR linked above. An additional page will be added on the Dingwall Community POD development in due course.

[Current school consultations | School consultations and closure proposals | The Highland Council](#)

7. **Next Steps**

7.1 If approved by The Highland Council, the officers must advise Scottish Ministers of the decision reached within 6 working days of the Council meeting decision; provide them with the proposal paper and consultation report; and publish a notice stating that Ministers have been advised; and setting out the process through which representations may be made to Ministers regarding call-in of the proposal.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 27 November 2025

Author: Derek Martin, Strategic Lead – Operations
Robert Campbell, Strategic Lead – Estate and Investment Planning

Background Papers: n/a

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Integrated Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 - Consultation Report
- Appendix 2A - The Original Proposal
- Appendix 2B - Written Responses and Pupil Views
- Appendix 3 - Note of the Public Meeting
- Appendix 4 - Education Scotland Report

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

About proposal

What does this proposal relate to? Redesign or change to existing service

Proposal name: St Clement's Special School

High level summary of the proposal: The proposal is to relocate St. Clement's School—currently in unsuitable accommodation—to a new site that will host a shared facility with a primary school and other Council services. The site has sufficient space and no known new issues. This will allow the construction of a new, inclusive school building within a multi-service campus.

Who may be affected by the proposal? Children and young people with disabilities who attend the school; their parents and carers; school staff; users of the co-located primary school and Council services

Start date of proposal:

28/10/2024

Does this proposal result in a change or impact to one or more Council service? Yes

Which Council services will be impacted by this proposal? People, Place

Does this relate to an existing proposal? Yes

Provide details of the existing proposal: The Council had previously agreed to relocate St. Clement's School to a standalone site at Dochcarty Brae. The revised proposal now considers colocation with a primary school and other Council services on a shared site.

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Sign off date: 2025-11-11

Equalities, poverty, and human rights

Protected characteristics

Select what impact the proposal will have on the following protected characteristics:

Sex: No impact

Age: No impact

Disability: Positive

Religion or belief: No impact

Race: No impact

Sexual orientation: No impact

Gender reassignment: No impact

Pregnancy and maternity: No impact

Marriage and civil partnership: No impact

Protected characteristics impact details: The proposed new special needs school is expected to have a positive impact on individuals with disabilities, by improving access to tailored education and support.

There is no identified impact on other protected characteristics, poverty-related financial or locational factors, or human rights, as the development does not alter existing rights or disproportionately affect any other groups.

Any potential negative impacts have been assessed, and no mitigations are required at this stage due to the absence of adverse effects.

Poverty and socio-economic

What impact is the proposal likely to have on the following?

Prospects and opportunities: Positive

Places: No impact

Financial: No impact

Poverty and socio-economic impact details: The new special needs school will improve access to education, training, and support for learners with additional needs, enhancing life chances and inclusion.

The proposal does not disproportionately affect vulnerable areas or communities, as it is designed to serve a broad catchment without reducing services elsewhere.

There is no expected change to household resources, income, or costs for families as the school will be publicly funded and maintain current service levels.

Human rights

Which of the below human rights will be affected by this proposal? Protocol 1, Article 2: Right to education

What impact do you consider this proposal to have on the human rights of people?

Positive

Human rights impact details: A new school will provide tailored facilities, resources, and specialist staff to meet diverse learning needs, removing barriers that often prevent children with disabilities from fully participating in education.

By offering high-quality, adapted education, the school will help learners achieve their potential, improving life chances and reducing discrimination.

Access to appropriate education empowers individuals with special needs to develop skills for independence and active participation in society.

Equalities, poverty and human rights screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to equalities, poverty and human rights? Positive impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Children's rights and wellbeing

What likely impact will the proposal have on children and young people? Positive impact due to improved learning environment and access to integrated services.

Which of the below children's rights will be affected by the proposal? You are working in the best interests of the child (Article 3), Children have a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development (Article 27), Children have a right to education (Article 28)

Explain how the children's rights selected above will be affected: All identified impacts are positive, as the new special needs school enhances access to education, inclusion, and personal development opportunities.

Children's rights and wellbeing screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to children's rights and wellbeing? Positive impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Data protection

Will your proposal involve processing personal data? Yes

Is any of this data already processed by the Highland Council? Yes

What is the purpose of the personal data being processed? There will be no changes to current data processing practices, and all data continues to be handled solely for standard educational purposes in line with existing policy and legal requirements.
Is there an up-to-date privacy notice available on the Highland Council website? Yes

Data protection screening assessment

What change will there be to the way personal data is processed? No significant change to current processing

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Island and mainland rural communities

Does your proposal impact island and mainland rural communities? No

Island and mainland rural communities screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to island and mainland rural communities? No difference

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Climate change

Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO₂e)? Yes

Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity? Yes

Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate? No

Provide information regarding your selection above: The project involves activities that could influence greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., construction, transport, and resource use) and may affect the environment, wildlife, or biodiversity. However, the design and planning process will incorporate measures to minimise these impacts, including sustainable construction practices, energy-efficient building design, and biodiversity considerations. The proposal is not expected to negatively influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate; in fact, the new school will be designed to improve resilience through modern standards and robust infrastructure.

Climate change screening assessment

Have you identified potential impact for any of the areas above or marked any as not known? No

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Appendix 2

Consultation Report

Proposal to Relocate St Clement's Special School

Introduction

This report has been prepared following a review of the proposal to replace the current St. Clement's School building with a new school building located on a new site, which will also accommodate a new Dingwall Primary School.

Having had regard (in particular) to

- Relevant written representations received by the Council (from any person) during the consultation period
- Oral representations made to it (by any persons) at the public meeting held at St Clement's Special School on 2 July 2025
- The report from Education Scotland

this document has been issued by the Highland Council under the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

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1. Background

1.1 At the Education Committee of The Highland Council on 4 June 2025, it was agreed that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal to relocate St Clement's Special School from its current location to a new site adjacent to Dingwall Primary School.

1.2 The original proposal paper is at Appendix 2A.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 The formal consultation period ran from 9 June to 3 October 2025. Written representations on the proposal were sought from interested parties as defined within the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

2.2 In accordance with statutory requirements, the following were notified:

- (i) Parents of pupils attending St. Clement's School; including parents of preschool pupils
- (ii) The Parent Council of St. Clement's School
- (iii) All staff of St. Clement's School
- (iv) Parents of pupils attending Dingwall Primary School; including parents of preschool pupils
- (v) The Parent Council of Dingwall Primary School
- (vi) All staff of Dingwall Primary School
- (vii) Members of Parliament and Members of the Scottish Parliament for the area affected by the proposal
- (viii) Trade union representatives
- (ix) All Community Councils for the Highland Council wards of Dingwall and Seaforth, Black Isle and Cromarty Firth, and Strathpeffer Community Council
- (x) All Councillors representing wards in the school catchment area
- (xi) Education Scotland

2.3 The proposal document was advertised on the Highland Council website.

2.4 A public meeting was held at St Clement's Special School on 2 July 2025. The meeting was advertised in advance on the Highland Council website and Facebook page, and in the Ross-shire Journal.

2.5 Following receipt of written representations received by Highland Council and consideration of oral representations made at the public meetings, officials reviewed the proposals.

2.6 The outcome of this review process is reflected in the response, conclusion and recommendations outlined below.

3. Responses Received

3.1 The note of the public meeting is at Appendix 3. A total of 19 questions were formally raised during the public consultation meeting, with several follow-up queries and comments also recorded.

3.2 The meeting centred on concerns about the proposed relocation of St. Clement's School to a co-located site with Dingwall Primary, with parents and stakeholders present expressing strong views about maintaining a standalone identity, ensuring adequate capacity, and safeguarding specialist facilities. While Council officers outlined the consultation process, design plans, and educational benefits, many attendees voiced a preference for the previously approved Dochcarty Brae site, citing long-term vision, community support, and the need for a purpose-built ASN campus.

3.3 A list of those who responded in writing during the public consultation is at Appendix 2B along with pupil views.

3.4 Pupils at St. Clement's School expressed appreciation for outdoor spaces, sensory and nurture rooms, large classrooms, and supportive staff, in comparison to the current highlighted issues such as cramped cloakrooms, outdated toilets, poor ventilation, and limited playground equipment. Their feedback on design inspirations showed enthusiasm for features like a swimming pool, indoor slides, colourful and spacious environments, sensory and quiet zones, and dedicated rooms for music, art, and technology. They also suggested practical improvements including lifts, shaded outdoor areas, better canteen layouts, and flexible learning spaces to support comfort, inclusion, and creativity.

3.5 A total of five written responses were submitted as part of the consultation. In addition, responses were also received from the pupils of St Clement's and Dingwall Primary. Responses reflected a mix of support and concern. Some welcomed the proposal for improved facilities and potential integration with Dingwall Primary, while others advocated for a standalone school at Dochcarty Brae to preserve St. Clement's identity, protect vulnerable pupils, and ensure future-proofed specialist provision. Common themes included the need for tailored spaces, safeguarding, capacity for growth, and lifelong learning pathways for ASN pupils.

3.6 Matters raised during consultation are addressed below.

4. Issues Raised and Highland Council Response

4.1 The main comments opposed to the proposal are summarised below, together with the responses from the Council. In some cases, different responses have made the same or very similar arguments, and where this occurs these have been addressed only once.

4.2 The majority of questions raised at the public meeting were answered directly during the meeting, the note of which is at Appendix 3.

4.2.1 How are representations submitted?

Response:

Representations can be submitted by email, which allows for follow-up and ensures views are accurately captured. In-person meetings are also possible, provided the views are recorded in writing.

4.2.2 Were the schools visited in the Central Belt co-located? What specific concerns have been raised about co-location?

Response:

The schools visited included both standalone and co-located models. Approaches vary by local authority. Some councils offer specialist settings within mainstream schools, while others operate standalone special schools or have no special schools at all.

Co-location is one model used to support inclusion, allowing pupils with additional support needs (ASN) to be educated alongside their peers where appropriate.

4.2.3 How many co-located schools are there in Scotland, and are they all new builds?

Response:

There are several co-located schools in Scotland, including both new and older builds. The Council will follow up with exact numbers.

4.2.4 Will parents be invited to visit other schools and be involved throughout the process?

Response:

Due to travel challenges, the Council has shared online links to projects that were previously designed by Norr Architects to provide examples of what is possible. Parents have been involved through four design workshops, all of which have already taken place. There will be scope for further involvement as the project progresses.

4.2.5 Will the schools be managed separately and have distinct identities?

Response:

Each school will have its own headteacher, staff, and management structure.

St. Clement's will retain its name and operate independently, with its own entrance, facilities and internal and outdoor spaces.

4.2.6 Will the design be shared before the consultation ends? What if plans change after October?

Response:

Concept design layouts are being developed that will take account of the feedback obtained through the workshops, and these will be shared in due course. The Council is committed to ongoing engagement and incorporating feedback before final decisions.

4.2.7 What brief was given to the architects and what is their experience?

Response:

Norr Architects were commissioned to run workshops and develop site layouts. They have extensive experience in designing special and mainstream schools. Flexibility in classroom design is a key priority.

4.2.8 Will there be capacity for future expansion, and will this affect outdoor space?

Response:

The building is designed to allow expansion, with potential for specialised bolt-on extensions. Outdoor space will be generous, and the site plan will accommodate future growth.

4.2.9 What is the status of the impact assessment and who will carry it out?

Response:

A screening impact assessment is included in Committee papers. A full assessment will be completed after the consultation and signed off by a Chief Officer.

4.2.10 What is the capacity of the new school?

Response:

School roll projections will be a key consideration in terms of planning for the new school. Flexibility is also important and so class size and capacity will vary, based on pupil needs. The architectural design workshops that have recently been undertaken will ensure that the accommodation in the new building provides versatile teaching and support spaces with flexibility for expansion if required in the future.

4.2.11 What will the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision be for St. Clement's?

Response:

Currently, there is no nursery provision. However, the Council is actively considering future ELC provision, and this will be reflected in the developing plans.

5. Education Scotland Summary and Highland Council Response

5.1 In line with legislative requirements, Education Scotland was invited to submit comments on the Council's proposals. A copy of the report from Education Scotland is appended – Appendix 4.

5.2 In the Education Scotland report HM inspectors noted:

5.2.1 Improved Accessibility and Inclusivity:

The current school building is poor in quality and restricts movement, especially for wheelchair users. A new, fully disability-compliant building would enhance dignity, accessibility, and wellbeing for pupils and staff.

5.2.2 Enhanced Learning Environment:

Purpose-built classrooms and flexible teaching spaces would significantly improve the learning experience. The new school would support a broader curriculum and better outcomes for learners with complex additional support needs.

5.2.3 On-Site Facilities:

Currently, physical education takes place off-site, reducing learning time. A new school would allow for on-site PE and specialist facilities such as sensory rooms, hydrotherapy, and life skills areas.

5.2.4 Potential for Early Years Provision:

Stakeholders suggested reintroducing early learning and childcare (ELC) provision, which HM Inspectors agree could be beneficial.

5.2.5 Community Integration and Wider Curriculum Access:

Co-location with Dingwall Primary may offer increased opportunities for inclusion, access to mainstream experiences, and multidisciplinary support.

5.2.6 Stakeholder Involvement in Design:

Staff, pupils, and parents emphasised the importance of being involved in the design process to ensure the school meets educational and wellbeing needs.

5.3 The report highlighted the following issues:

5.3.1 Concerns about Co-location:

- Parents expressed a strong preference for a standalone school.
- There is a lack of confidence in how educational benefits will be realised if St. Clement's shares a site with Dingwall Primary.
- Fears were raised about shared facilities, which could dilute the identity and specialist nature of St. Clement's.

Response:

The Highland Council has committed that St. Clement's will retain its own name, staff, management, entrance, and facilities, even within a co-located site.

5.3.2 Site Size and Suitability:

- Parents questioned whether the proposed site is large enough to accommodate both schools with sufficient indoor and outdoor space.
- There were calls to reconsider the previously approved Dochcarty Brae site, which was seen as more appropriate.

Response:

The planned site is large enough to replicate the indoor and outdoor space and facilities that would have been provided on an alternative new site.

5.3.3 Lack of Specificity on Educational Benefits:

The Council's proposal lacked detail on how the educational benefits would impact pupils directly, especially in relation to current and future school roll.

Response:

The Council acknowledges the importance of clearly articulating the direct educational benefits for pupils, and we welcome the opportunity to provide further clarity.

The decision to relocate the school to the Dingwall POD site is underpinned by a commitment to improving educational outcomes through enhanced learning environments and integrated service delivery. The new school building will offer significantly improved accommodation compared to the existing facility, which in itself supports better learning experiences, wellbeing, and inclusion.

In addition to the physical improvements, the co-location of the two schools at the Dingwall POD site provides a unique opportunity to deliver tangible educational benefits for pupils, both now and in the future:

- Enhanced Support for Individual Needs: Co-location will facilitate improved access to specialised support services within a mainstream setting. This will enable more responsive and flexible support tailored to individual pupil needs, particularly for those with additional support requirements.
- Broader Curriculum Opportunities: Pupils will benefit from increased opportunities to engage in a wider curriculum, including shared activities, interdisciplinary learning, and access to specialist staff and resources across both schools.
- Improved Multidisciplinary Working: The shared site will strengthen partnerships with other public service providers and community based groups, allowing for more effective collaboration and targeted deployment of resources. This will support positive outcomes for pupils through integrated planning and delivery.

- Promotion of Inclusion and Community Integration: The shared location will help break down barriers between different pupil cohorts and the wider community. This inclusive approach supports smoother transitions for pupils and fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect.
- Social and Emotional Development: Opportunities to build and maintain friendship groups across the site will be enhanced, supporting pupils' social development and emotional wellbeing. This is particularly beneficial in a growing school roll context, where diversity and inclusion are key.
- Staff Collaboration and Professional Development: Co-location will enable more regular joint working between staff, including shared training and moderation activities. This will strengthen the capacity of staff to meet complex needs and ensure consistency in planning and delivery.

Importantly, while the schools will share a location, each school will retain its distinct identity, management structure, and staffing complement. This ensures continuity for pupils, families, and staff, and preserves the ethos and culture of each school community. The co-location model is designed to enhance collaboration without compromising the individuality or autonomy of either school.

The Council remains committed to ensuring that the educational benefits of the new school site are fully realised and that they directly support the needs of all pupils, both at present and as the school roll evolves. We will continue to engage with stakeholders to ensure transparency and shared understanding of the strategic vision and its practical implications.

5.3.4 Need for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC):

Stakeholders highlighted the historical provision for ages 3–18 and suggested reintroducing nursery provision.

Response:

The Council is developing plans for future ELC provision.

5.3.5 Design and Infrastructure Needs:

Requests were made for:

- Sensory rooms
- Hydrotherapy pool
- Flexible learning spaces
- Improved toilet and medical facilities
- Digital infrastructure

- Outdoor shelters
- Life skills areas
- Emphasis was placed on stakeholder involvement in the design process.

Response:

The design architect from Norr Architects is experienced in designing special schools and has already conducted a number of stakeholder workshops, engaging directly with pupils, parents, and staff to understand their needs and aspirations.

The design process is being co-developed with users, including feedback from children who have already responded to visual materials and concept ideas. For example, pupils expressed preferences for quieter spaces and disliked overly open areas due to noise concerns.

The Council have confirmed that the new school will include purpose-built classrooms, sensory and soft play areas, and flexible spaces tailored to pupil needs. The building will be fully disability compliant, with improved access and layout.

There is a commitment to flexibility in design, allowing for future expansion and adaptation of spaces, including potential out-of-hours use for community and parental engagement.

The Council acknowledges the importance of stakeholder involvement and confirms that the workshops will continue, ensuring that the final design reflects the lived experience and expectations of the school community.

6. Alleged omissions or inaccuracies

6.1 No alleged omissions or inaccuracies were identified during consultation.

7. Overall Review of Consultation Exercise

7.1 Support for the Proposal

- Recognition of the need for a new building: There was agreement that the current St. Clement's School facilities are outdated, inaccessible, and no longer fit for purpose. Stakeholders welcomed the opportunity for improved accommodation, including purpose-built classrooms, sensory spaces, and better access for pupils with complex needs.
- Educational benefits: Council officers and Education Scotland highlighted the potential for enhanced learning environments, improved access to specialist services, and opportunities for wider curriculum participation through co-location.
- Inclusive design process: The appointment of an experienced architect and the use of stakeholder workshops were positively received. Pupils, parents, and staff

were actively involved in shaping the design, with feedback already influencing early concepts.

7.2 Concerns and Opposition

- Co-location: Although a relatively small number of parents engaged with the consultation, those that did expressed strong opposition to the shared site, citing concerns about protecting the school's identity, privacy, and safety; and some also articulated a view that integration with a mainstream school was not appropriate for their children's needs. The response from the Council clearly states that the St Clement's Special School and Dingwall Primary School will operate as distinct entities with their own management, staffing and unique identities.
- Preference for Dochcarty Brae: Several respondents advocated for the previously approved standalone site at Dochcarty Brae, arguing it offered better long-term potential, fewer logistical challenges, and stronger community support. This previous site was identified prior to the development of the Council's "Highland Investment Plan" and revision of the associated capital programme. There is now an unprecedented opportunity to develop a collocated site providing enhanced integrated public services, increased opportunities for inclusion and improved value for money, far exceeding what would be possible on the Docharty Brae site.
- Lack of clarity and assurances: Concerns were raised about the absence of finalised design plans, uncertainty over capacity, and fears that specialist spaces (e.g. home economics, music rooms) could be lost if pupil numbers increased. The Council remains committed to involvement of the stakeholders in the design process and ensuring that the school is planned to accommodate future needs.
- Need for social and community space: Parents highlighted the importance of having dedicated areas for informal interaction, both for pupils and families, which they felt were lacking in the current proposal. As above, the Council is committed to involving stakeholders and design team to ensure that spaces are designed and used appropriately and well.

8. Legal Issues

8.1 Throughout this statutory consultation Highland Council has complied in full with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

8.2 As provided for in section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, it is the duty of the Council to ensure adequate and efficient provision of school education within Highland. The above, and all other legislative requirements, have been taken into account in the preparation of this Report.

9. Conclusion

9.1 The consultation demonstrated clear agreement on the need for a new school building but less consensus over the proposed location and delivery model. While

some stakeholders welcomed the investment and inclusive design approach, others felt the proposal could compromise the distinct identity of St. Clement's School. The Council will continue to pro-actively address these concerns and ensure that the final proposal reflects the diverse needs and aspirations of the school community.

9.2 The consultation process has complied fully with legislative requirements and has provided an opportunity for all parties to identify key issues of concern. These issues have been fully considered in the Council's response detailed in sections 3-5 above.

9.3 HM Inspectors from Education Scotland visited Dingwall to speak to parents, pupils and staff. They also had the opportunity to review in detail the proposal document, all written responses, and the notes of the public meetings.

9.4 The Assistant Chief Executive (People) on reviewing all of the submissions, the notes of the meeting, and the Education Scotland report; concludes that the proposal for relocating St Clement's Special School to a site adjacent to Dingwall Primary School should be implemented. The reasons for this conclusion are set out above.

10. Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Highland Council proceeds with the course of action set out in the conclusion section above.

Appendix 2A

PROPOSAL

Legislative Background

- 1.1 The proposal is advanced within the context of all applicable legislation. Amongst other duties, education authorities are required to secure adequate and efficient provision of school education (S.1 of the Education Act 1980); and to publish or otherwise make available information as to their arrangements for the placing of children in schools under their management (S.28 of the 1980 Act).
- 1.2 In common with all public bodies in Scotland, The Highland Council also has a duty to provide best value. This includes making arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance, whilst maintaining an appropriate balance between quality and cost; and, in making those arrangements and securing that balance, to have regard to economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equal opportunities requirements and to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

Reason for the Proposal

- 2.1 St. Clement's School currently suffers from poor quality accommodation. Relocating the school would permit the construction of a new build school.
- 2.2 St. Clement's School provides for some of the most vulnerable young people in Highland, and the Council has had a long-standing commitment to replace the school. A consultation was undertaken during 2022, on a proposal to relocate the school to a new site at Dochcarty Brae, Dingwall.
- 2.3 Prior to the 2022 consultation, the Council considered building a new St. Clement's School on the existing school site plus the adjacent site of a former church. The site requires flood risk assessment which may affect the developable area, contamination assessment, recreational access management plan to avoid any adverse effects on the integrity of the Cromarty Firth Special Protection Area, and a transport assessment. It's an existing school site, with the associated issues of disruption from a new build on a live school site. Existing buildings would require demolition, and the current school would need relocation. The Council would need to purchase the church, and the area available is too small.
- 2.4 In light of the above, and following consideration of a variety of other sites in Dingwall, the Council undertook a statutory consultation in 2022 on relocating St. Clement's School to the new site at Dochcarty Brae, on the edge of the town, to allow for the construction of a new school building. The Council's Education Committee agreed this recommendation at its meeting of 29th September 2022, and the proposal to relocate St. Clement's School to Dochcarty Brae was adopted by the full Highland Council on 27th October

2022. The Council agreed to include St Clements in its bid to the Scottish Government for LEIP 3 funding. However, in September 2023, in the absence of the LEIP bid being successful, plans to build a new St Clements were put on hold following a review and reduction of the then capital programme on grounds of affordability. It was stated that capital priorities, including a new St Clements, could be reconsidered if at some point in the future there was a material change of circumstances that could provide an opportunity to reconsider the Council's capital programme.

- 2.5 In May 2024 the Highland Council adopted a new Highland Investment Plan (HIP), which sets out how the Council will work over the next 10 years to optimise its investment of resources in its learning estate in a prioritised manner to meet the needs of 21st century learning and teaching. As part of this, a new generation of community facilities was envisioned for the Highlands, with Points of Delivery (PODs) providing a range of public services brought together in a single location.
- 2.6 Within the HIP, a commitment was made to rebuild St Clement's School and retain its unique identity.
- 2.7 Following the approval of the HIP approach last year, work was undertaken to identify a site that could accommodate a community POD development for Dingwall. A suitable site has been identified adjacent to Dingwall Primary School and, although it is not currently in Council ownership, positive discussions have taken place with the landowners, Albyn Housing, regarding the acquisition of the site.
- 2.8 This new suggested site was not considered to be a viable option during the original statutory consultation process for St Clement's as the introduction of a separate school campus adjacent to the primary school would have exacerbated the traffic issues and other restrictions that exist there. However, relocating the primary school to this larger site as well would allow other co-located facilities to be included as part of an overall design layout that would overcome the previously identified restrictions. Also, a new distributor road to the north of this site has recently been completed.
- 2.9 Appendix 2 identifies the location of the proposed community POD site (the lower part of Site Reference DW02) and includes the relevant land areas that would be required for each of the component parts, i.e. the Primary School, the potential co-location of St Clement's School, and other co-located community and partner facilities. Part of the existing primary school site would be retained and incorporated within the new campus development to ensure adequate road and footpath access, car parking and drop-off areas, and compensatory green space.

Informal Consultation

- 3.1 A series of engagement events have been held to consider priorities for the Dingwall and Seaforth area, as part of developing an area place plan. Included in this were views regarding the future use of buildings; the

opportunities for better use of premises for delivering services; and for co-location of various services. Council officers have also engaged directly with parent councils and specific community groups to raise awareness and understand views on the HIP approach and the potential opportunities for Dingwall. A public drop-in event was held in Dingwall in November 2024 along with an online event to engage with the local community and obtain feedback. The initial feedback has been generally supportive of the longer-term strategic approach and the concept of a community POD, but some comments were made regarding the lack of information on the significant heritage of Dingwall, facilities to support tourism and visitors and how to improve the use of premises on the High Street.

- 3.2 Within the overall place plan consultation, officers of the Council have also engaged with parents of children at St. Clement's School over the future location of the new school building. There has been ongoing engagement with the parent council, with Council staff attending meetings and contributing to the parent council's AGM. Additional officer meetings have taken place with parent council office bearers around specific issues raised. In February 2025, survey meetings were additionally offered to all parents of children at St Clements, and 15 parents met with Council staff. A survey was also sent out by email, to which an additional 13 parents responded. A number of FAQ responses were circulated in response to survey feedback. Initial concept drawings of the potential new school at the POD site have also been shared with the St Clements parent council and Dingwall Community Council Chair. Further meetings have been held with the St Clements parent representatives in April 2025.
- 3.3 It should be noted that whilst the proposal is to locate the two schools on the same site, St. Clement's School will retain its own identity. A consultant architect with extensive experience of designing new special schools and additional support needs facilities has been engaged to assist with the development of the project brief and the initial floor plans and external layouts. A series of design workshops with stakeholder groups to establish a clear vision for the new school building has commenced and this will allow the design and planning work to progress while the statutory consultation is underway. Updated information will be included on the Council's website.
- 3.4 The Council has considered the views of parents submitted during informal engagement, described above. Having reviewed the options in their entirety, it takes the view that the relocation of St. Clement's to the new Dingwall POD site offers educational benefits, due to the opportunities that arise from co-location with Dingwall Primary School and the school's proximity to the town.

St. Clement's School – Description

- 4.1 St. Clement's is one of 3 special schools run by The Highland Council and provides education to children in the 3-18 age group. It is located in the centre of Dingwall and admits pupils from a wide area of Easter Ross, with a few

pupils attending from further afield. The number attending the school fluctuates and some attend on a part-time basis, but generally there are between 48-50 pupils.

The school itself dates from the early years of the 20th century, although there have been many building modifications down the years. The current school accommodation comprises the original main building, a modular annexe building that was installed in 2015 and an older modular unit. Overall, the accommodation is currently rated “C – (Poor)” for both Condition and Suitability, mainly due to the state of the main building, having three separate buildings on the campus, and the limitations of some of the facilities, such as external areas.

There is general agreement that the accommodation does not adequately support the delivery of education for some of our most vulnerable pupils who are unable to attend a mainstream school. The proposed new build will significantly improve the learning environment for pupils. Further details on this are provided in Section 5 below.

Educational Benefits

- 5.1 The Council’s previous decision to relocate the school to Dochcarty Brae was based on the principle that a new school building offered the prospect of strong educational benefit arising from improved accommodation and Dochcarty Brae was the best available site at that time.
- 5.2 A new school located at the Dingwall POD site will offer all the same educational benefits as the Dochcarty Brae option, in terms of improved accommodation as compared to the current school building. In addition, the co-location of the two schools offers further educational benefits:
 - Improved access for specialised support and mainstream setting to support learning to meet the needs of individual children.
 - Increased opportunities for pupils to participate in a wider curriculum, where possible.
 - An opportunity for co-location with institutional partners; leading to better multidisciplinary working and increased access to services to deliver positive outcomes and for cooperation between partners, with effective and targeted deployment of resources.
 - A shared location can help break down barriers in the wider community for promotion of inclusion and making the transition to the wider world more accessible.
 - There may be opportunities to develop and maintain friendship groups across the location, building on wider community links. Integration between pupils gives mainstream pupils the opportunity to experience a more diverse cohort.
 - Staff training and moderation across the shared location can assist staff in meeting complex additional needs. The staff of the two schools already work together on child plans and have regular discussions on learning and progress. Co-location will help to facilitate this joint working.

Effects on School Transport

- 6.1 As the new school will be located less than a mile from the current site, there is not expected to be any significant effect on school transport arrangements.

Effects on Staff and School Management Arrangements

- 7.1 The relocation will have no impact on school management or staffing arrangements.

Effect on the Local Community

- 8.1 The proposal is not expected to have any negative impact on the wider local community. It will retain the traditional link between St. Clement's School and the town of Dingwall.

Integrated Impact Assessment

- 9.1 The proposal has been assessed as having no significant impacts on data handling, or on island and rural mainland communities.
- 9.2 In respect of age equality, the proposal relates to a special school and as such primarily affects children in the 3-18 age group and their parents. The proposal is advanced on the basis of educational benefit to the children in these age ranges. No negative age-related effects arise. Age is not a protected characteristic for the purposes of school provision.
- 9.3 With respect to climate change, the construction phase of the new building may result in additional CO2 emissions, the new buildings will provide a long-term benefit in being built to the most modern environmental standards. The proposal could affect an area of woodland, but the overall effect on climate change will not be significant.
- 9.4 The new buildings would have a positive impact on disability, since they will include up to date and more inclusive facilities. As such they will have a positive overall effect on equalities, human rights, and children's health and wellbeing.

Recommendation

- 10.1 Taking the above into account, The Highland Council recommends that St. Clement's School is relocated from its current site to a new school adjacent to the current Dingwall Primary School.
- 10.2 This consultation paper is issued in terms of the authority's procedures to meet the relevant statutory requirements. Following the consultation period, a report and submissions received will be presented to the Education Committee of The Highland Council.

END OF PROPOSAL PAPER

Appendix 2B Written Responses and Pupil Views

Name of consultation: St Clements School, Dingwall

Your comments: This is a fantastic idea as it will provide the opportunity for children to have contact with their peers at Dingwall Primary School. Any positive step can only improve facilities for both schools.

I am commenting as: Former parent

I am commenting on behalf of: Myself

Name of consultation: Proposal to Relocate St. Clement's Special School, Dingwall

Your comments: Marybank, Scatwell & Strathconon Community Council agrees to the proposal.

I am commenting as: Local councillor

I am commenting on behalf of: Community Council

Name of consultation: St Clement's Movement of school

Your comments: I am a parent of two boys who attend this school currently. I feel the school does definitely need a new building but would much prefer it was a stand alone school so that bullying etc by mainstream children will not take place for our kids at St Clements who are extremely vulnerable .

I am commenting as: Parent

Name of consultation: St. Clement's School

Your comments:

Over the years St. Clement's has worked hard to develop strong links with the community and this gives the children a real sense of moral purpose. This is especially apparent through the various extra curricular learning opportunities they gain in their locality and the overwhelming amount of support the community provides. This is a vital resource for the pupils and St. Clement's strives to continue to develop solid community relations to increase their sense of pride and identity.

For a new build it is vitally important that St. Clement's School retains its own unique identity, is a separate school in its own building and has its own protected staff/management structure. Designated indoor/outdoor spaces for exercise, dining, specially adapted general classrooms, subject classroom and a medical room and for all of these spaces to have specifications suited to the pupils requirements.

The whole ethos of St. Clement's is based on inspiring ambition and nurturing happiness and these kids deserve a new school that can meet their needs. For me, these needs have to be individualised and at the very core of any planning process. Every child is an individual and the educational opportunities delivered can shape their future. This is especially important for children who have additional learning needs and this has to be a priority. To 'think outside the box' and consider the pastoral, social, environmental and vocational factors to help improve the access to lifelong learning for optimum health and wellbeing in a new school environment is crucial.

Pupils at St. Clement's are encouraged to learn in a way that is adapted to suit their capabilities. The school staff are to be commended for their amazing dedication and professionalism in how they achieve this. However, at the age of 18 their options for any further education are very limited and they deserve to be afforded more rights and access to higher education. A visionary model that at the very least considers future proofing and helping these children from the age of 18 plus is the dream!

To conclude, capacity is also a concern as we live in an ever expanding community and the pupil roll will only increase with this.

I am commenting as: Parent

I am commenting on behalf of: Parent Council

Name of Parent Council: St Clement's School Parent Council

Name of consultation: Review of Proposal to relocate St Clement's Special School, Dingwall to a new site north of Ross Avenue, Dingwall

Your comments: Consultation Feedback – Review of Proposal to relocate St Clement's Special School, Dingwall to a new site north of Ross Avenue, Dingwall. The Future Capacity and Vision for St. Clement's School in support of building at Docharty Brae

Dear Highland Council Education Service,

I am writing as a parent of a child participating in the consultation for the new St. Clement's School. Please find attached my full submission, which expands on the key points outlined below.

1. Specialist Provision is Essential

Children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) require tailored teaching, small class sizes, one-to-one or small group support, and sensory-friendly environments. On-site therapies and specialist spaces are critical to their wellbeing, learning, and progress.

2. Preferred Site – Docharty Brae

I support Docharty Brae as the permanent site. It offers a standalone identity for

the school, fewer traffic and congestion concerns, community familiarity, and the potential for long-term expansion to meet future needs.

3. Capacity and Flexibility

Classroom numbers and layouts must reflect the individual needs of pupils, not standard ratios. Dedicated spaces for music, PE, art, science, cooking, and sensory wellbeing, along with ample outdoor areas, are essential. Flexible design ensures the school can accommodate both current and future demand.

4. Preserving School Identity and Ethos

St. Clement's must remain an independent specialist school to maintain the culture, ethos, and specialist approach that families rely upon.

5. Early Years and Lifelong Pathways

On-site nursery provision is vital for early intervention. The school should also provide clear pathways into further education, vocational training, apprenticeships, and structured social opportunities, ensuring children have support beyond statutory school age.

6. Social Inclusion and Extended Opportunities

Children and young people with ASN must have access to structured social and recreational activities beyond school to prevent isolation and promote inclusion, ensuring equity with mainstream peers.

7. Future-Proofing and Expansion

Docharty Brae offers the ability to integrate specialist healthcare services, additional classrooms, vocational spaces, and potential supported housing. This flexibility ensures sustainable, high-quality ASN provision for the future.

8. Key Consideration

The new St. Clement's must be ambitious, flexible, and designed around the real needs of ASN learners. Every child requiring ASN support should have timely access to appropriate education, care, and lifelong opportunities.

This brief summary highlights the key points of my full submission (attached), which provides detailed points I would like to see considered to ensure the new school is fit for purpose today and in the years to come.

To: Highland Council Education Service Email:

Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk

Subject: The Future Capacity and Vision for St. Clement's School

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to you as a parent to share my perspective on the future of St. Clement's School and the importance of ensuring that the new school is not only fit for purpose today, but also for the generations of children who will need it in years to come.

St. Clement's is more than a school to me and my family. It represents a lifeline of specialist education and care for children with Additional Support Needs (ASN).

However, the current building is outdated and does not reflect the scale of need across Dingwall and the wider Highlands. Every year, there are children who require

ASN placements who cannot be accommodated, leaving families in a state of uncertainty and children without the right support at the right time.

Key Benefits of Dochcarty Brae Site

- Approved by the Highland Council in 2022 following a full statutory consultation process. This site does not require a further consultation to proceed with the new St. Clement's School. Families have already been waiting for the promised investment and the detailed work with architects to ensure that both the building and outdoor spaces are suitable and focused on delivering the best possible educational journey our young people deserve.
- The site offers a clean-slate, purpose-built opportunity designed specifically around the needs of pupils at St. Clement's.
- It allows the new building to be a standalone school, retaining the unique identity of St. Clement's, reinforcing its specialist role, and protecting its ethos.
- The location presents fewer traffic and congestion issues compared to the POD site.
- Developing at Dochcarty Brae enables a simpler building process without the complications of shared infrastructure.
- Dochcarty Brae is already well known to and supported by parents, staff, and the wider local community.
- Constructing the school on this site avoids the disruption of live school construction or the challenges of coordinating with other educational developments. The new school must be designed with **capacity at its heart**. It must be large enough to meet existing demand and flexible enough to grow with future needs. This is not simply about avoiding shortfalls — it is about making sure that every child who requires an ASN placement has a place, without delay or compromise.

Classroom Numbers and Framework Concerns

A key issue that must be addressed is how the Highland Council will calculate the number of classrooms required for the new ASN school. If the framework is based simply on school roll numbers, in the same way it is for mainstream schools, the results will not reflect the reality of ASN provision.

Classroom Capacity and Individual Pupil Needs

A critical concern in planning the new St. Clement's School is how classroom numbers are calculated. If the Council uses standard ASN ratios for primary and secondary settings without factoring in the individual requirements of pupils, the resulting provision may be inadequate. Many children with ASN require one-to-one or small group settings, sensory-friendly environments, or low-stimulation spaces.

For example, a pupil with severe communication needs may only be able to access learning in a one-to-one setting, while another may thrive in a small group classroom with highly tailored teaching strategies. Standard ratio calculations — such as assuming 10 pupils per classroom — fail to capture these variations. The consequence is a mismatch between classroom size and actual needs, which can hinder learning, increase stress, and limit progress.

Furthermore, current evidence from the Joint Additional Needs Group (JAG) meetings indicates that there are children requiring ASN placements who cannot currently access St. Clement's due to limited capacity. This unmet demand is likely to grow as awareness of services increases and as more children are assessed. If the new school is not designed with flexibility for these additional pupils, it will replicate the same capacity issues, leaving children without timely access to specialist education.

To genuinely meet the needs of all learners, the new school must account for both the total number of pupils and the complexity of their individual support requirements. Classrooms should be designed to allow small group learning, one-to-one support, and quiet, low-stimulation spaces. Only by doing this can the school ensure a positive educational experience, enable meaningful progress for every pupil, and accommodate both current and future demand.

In addition to standard classrooms, the school must include **dedicated learning spaces for specific activities**, including but not limited to cooking, music, physical education, art, science, and sensory wellbeing spaces. These specialised areas are essential for providing a full curriculum, supporting skill development, and promoting emotional regulation and creativity for pupils with ASN.

Furthermore, **outdoor spaces must be plentiful, private and allow all pupils to maintain their dignity in a safe and welcoming setting**. Children at St. Clement's have long been limited in access to outdoor learning and recreational activities. The new school must provide sufficient playgrounds, sensory gardens, and outdoor activity areas to allow children to develop physical skills, social interaction, and wellbeing — experiences that are critical to their holistic development.

If the Council's framework does not account for these variations and dedicated spaces, there is a real risk that the new school will be under-built from the start. The result would be classrooms and facilities that are too large, too busy, or too inflexible for the pupils who need them most. This would fail to provide the supportive environment that is essential to their progress.

For an ASN school to succeed, its design must go beyond numbers on a page. It must reflect the **individual requirements of pupils**, recognising that smaller class sizes, breakout areas, sensory spaces, outdoor activity zones, and specialised learning environments are not luxuries — they are necessities for many children to feel safe, regulated, and able to learn.

Retaining the Unique Identity of St. Clement's

It is equally important that St. Clement's **retains its unique identity** in the move to a new building. The school must remain independent as a standalone facility, with its

own **dedicated teaching and management structure**. This ensures that the ethos, culture, and specialist approach developed over decades is preserved. The children, families, and wider community rely on St. Clement's distinctiveness to deliver the tailored support that mainstream settings cannot provide.

Early Years, Lifelong Pathways, and Transition

This vision must also include a **pre-school nursery provision** on-site. Early intervention is critical for children with ASN, and starting support as soon as possible gives them the best chance of thriving.

It is equally vital to think beyond the school years. A vision for the near future would be a wellplanned ASN campus that would link directly into **further education, training, and apprenticeships**. Many young people need clear, supported pathways into adulthood, where they can learn vocational skills, develop independence, and access real opportunities for employment. Without this, too many pupils finish school with no secure next step.

The Importance of Social Opportunities Beyond Education (Appendix A)

For many children with ASN, further education may not be a realistic or appropriate pathway. Yet, these young people still deserve access to opportunities for **social interaction, structured activities, and meaningful engagement** after the school leaving age and into their mid-twenties.

At present, there is **no clear provision for continued social or educational opportunities** once ASN pupils finish school, whereas their mainstream peers are supported by a wide array of options — whether through college, apprenticeships, clubs, or community groups. This imbalance leaves ASN young people, and their families isolated, with very few routes to maintain social connections or participate in age-appropriate opportunities.

It is ultimately a matter of fairness and rights. Every young person should have access to structured opportunities that support their wellbeing, social development, and inclusion within the wider community. Where further education is not an option, there must be alternative provision to ensure that no child is left behind. The Dochcarty Brae site presents a real opportunity to plan for this future — with the potential to expand onto adjacent land and develop a wider ASN campus. At this stage, it is vital that the Highland Council considers how investment in this site could provide the space and infrastructure needed for extended social programmes, supported community activities, and long-term partnerships that continue well beyond statutory school age.

Dochcarty Brae: A Site with Capacity for Expansion and Future Investment

The Dochcarty Brae site offers unique opportunities for the long-term development of St. Clement's School into a comprehensive ASN campus. Recently, it was established that **adjacent land to the Dochcarty Brae site was offered to the Highland Council for social housing**, which could be adapted to provide **sheltered accommodation for pupils with ASN**, supporting independence and transition into adulthood.

Beyond housing, this additional land creates the potential to **develop a wider campus** around the school, enabling:

- Expansion of educational facilities to accommodate rising demand for ASN placements, including pre-school, school-age, and post-16 learners.
- Creation of social, recreational, and vocational spaces for pupils who require continued engagement beyond statutory schooling.
- Integration of specialist healthcare services — such as occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, and mental health support — into a **single, co-located delivery model** that reduces travel, improves coordination, and provides consistent, accessible support for pupils.

This flexibility for **future growth and investment** is crucial for planning a sustainable, high-quality ASN provision in the Highlands. In comparison, the single POD site next to Dingwall Primary **offers no realistic opportunity for expansion**, limiting the long-term vision for St. Clement's and constraining the capacity to accommodate all children who will require ASN support in the years to come. Selecting Dochcarty Brae as the permanent site ensures that the school can **grow to meet the needs of every child**, now and in the future, while creating a truly integrated campus that delivers education, care, and wellbeing in one cohesive setting.

Why Specialist ASN Provision Matters

Evidence shows that for most children with significant and complex needs, attending a **specialist ASN school provides better educational, social, and emotional outcomes** than placement in mainstream schools. The Scottish Government (2019) highlighted that specialist schools deliver tailored teaching, smaller class sizes, higher staff-to-pupil ratios, and on-site therapies — support that mainstream settings cannot replicate consistently. The Equality and Human Rights Commission also notes that children with complex ASN are less likely to thrive in mainstream schools, where larger classes and overstimulation can create barriers to learning and wellbeing.

Families repeatedly confirm that ASN schools provide the sense of safety, belonging, and progress their children need. These schools are not “alternatives” — they are essential.

My Closing Thoughts

The size and scale of the new St. Clement's must therefore reflect not only the current unmet demand but also the **true reality of ASN education**. If the framework used to plan classrooms and capacity does not account for the diverse and individual needs of pupils, the new school will fall short of its purpose before it even opens. I urge the Council to ensure that the new St. Clement's is ambitious, future-proof, and designed to meet the **real needs** of ASN learners — from nursery, through school, and into further education, employment, and fair alternatives for those who need lifelong support. Only then can we say we have built a school worthy of the children it serves.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix A

Briefing Note: Social Opportunities Gap for ASN Young People

Briefing Note: Social Opportunities Gap for ASN Young People

Context

- Many children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) will not progress to further education or traditional vocational pathways.
- Unlike mainstream pupils, there is currently **no structured provision for continued social or educational engagement** after school leaving age.
- ASN young people are at risk of social isolation, lack of meaningful activity, and missed opportunities to develop independence.

Current Inequality

- Mainstream students have access to college courses, apprenticeships, clubs, and community programmes from school leaving age into their mid-twenties.
- ASN students often have no equivalent local provision, resulting in a **gap in rights and opportunities**.

Why It Matters • Social engagement is critical for emotional wellbeing,

confidence, and life skills.

- Without structured activities, young people with ASN face increased isolation and reduced independence.
- Families bear additional burden when provision is lacking, often providing support themselves at great personal cost.

Opportunity to Develop an ASN Campus on the Dochcarty Brae Site

- The opportunity to develop an ASN campus on the Dochcarty Brae site could provide:
 - Extended social programmes and clubs beyond school hours.
 - Structured opportunities for young people aged 16–25 who are not in further education.
 - Partnerships with community organisations, employers, and training providers.
- This ensures a **fair and inclusive pathway to adulthood**, complementing educational provision.

Call to Action

- The new St. Clement's School should be designed to provide **both educational and social pathways** for all ASN learners.
- Councillors and decision-makers should recognise that **social provision is as essential as classroom provision** for wellbeing, inclusion, and equality.

Pupil Views- St Clement's

Pupil Enterprise

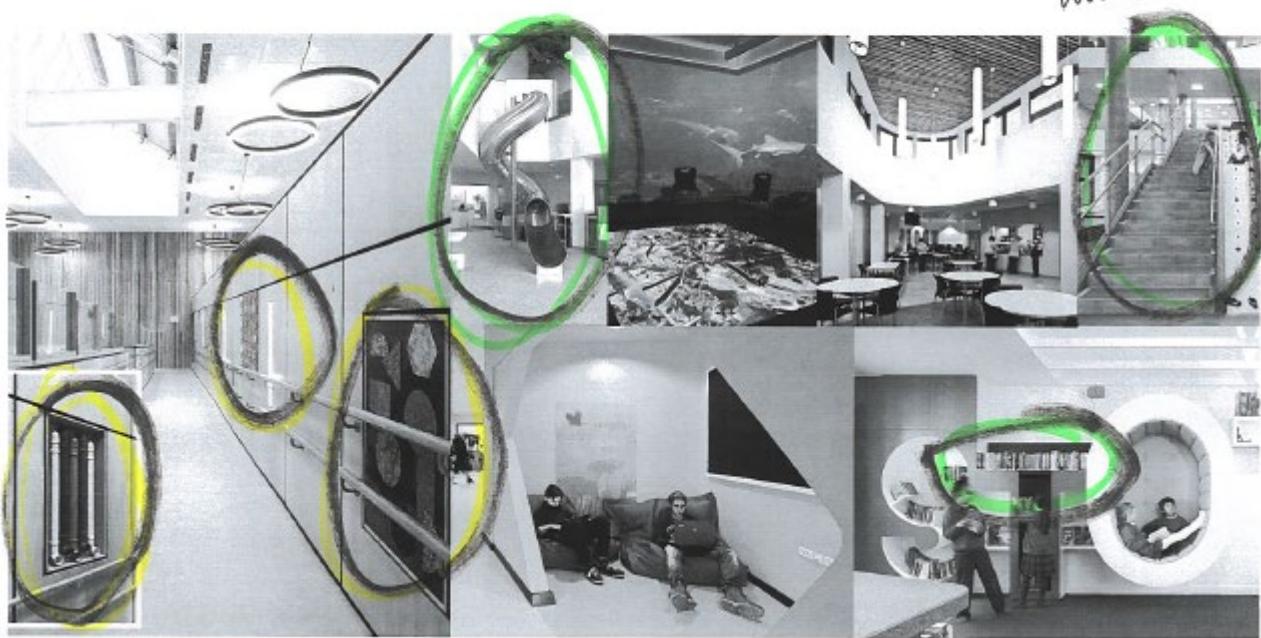


coffee + tea.

Design Inspirations

Innovative Spaces

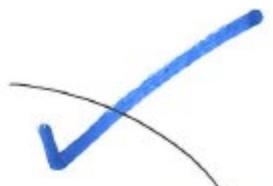
climbing
wall



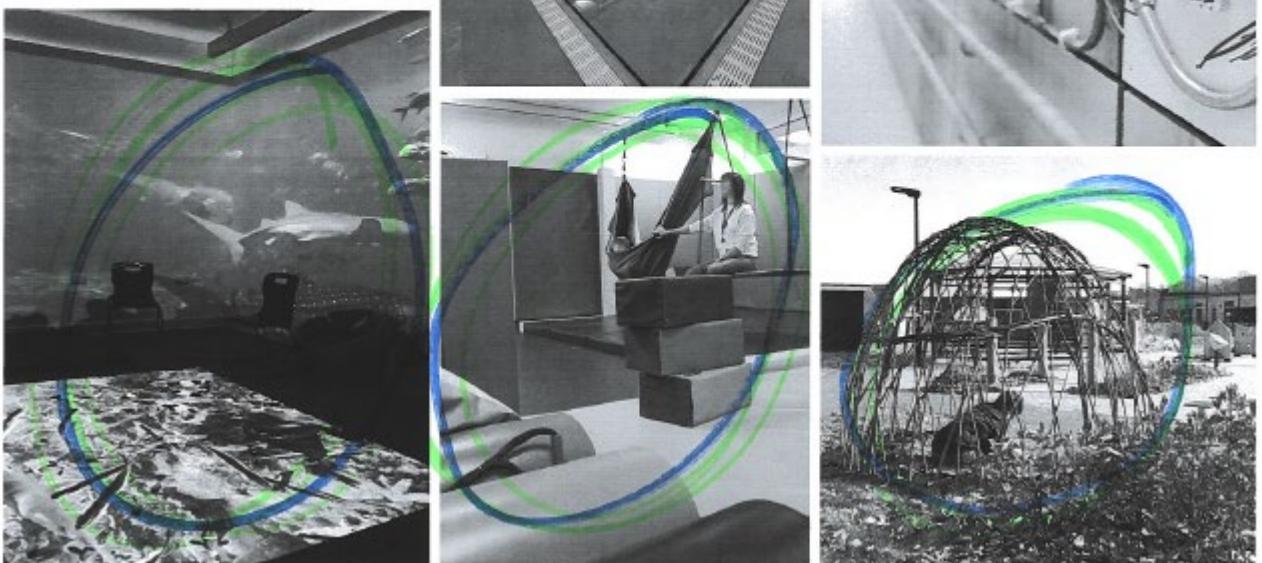
Design Inspirations

External Spaces

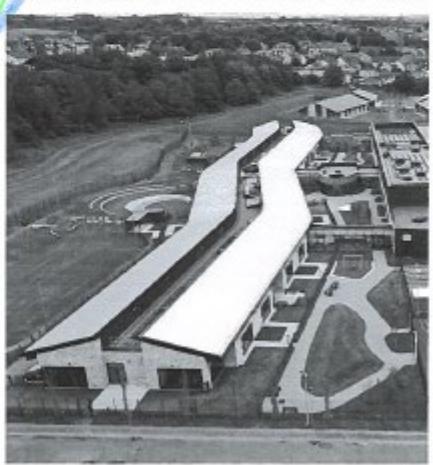
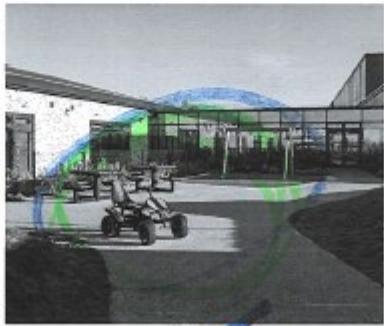
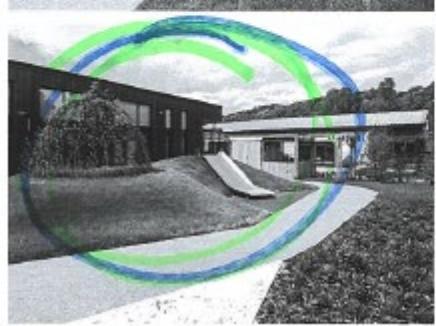
Slide
we like all of this.



Sensory Spaces



External Spaces



we like all of these.

~~Names + patterns on rooms to show what they are e.g. art, maths, P.E.~~

~~cycle track - Caleb~~

~~water slides -~~

~~Things to learn about space -~~

~~Big slide 15m!!~~

Football field

games room

Trampoline

bigger soft play

sensory rooms

BBQ area

Practical area for woodworking etc

covered area outside

nursery room

Break out areas.

running track.

library.

Nice staff room

large area for
meeting.

meeting rooms

junior common room

vending machines -

cleaning cupboard -

Science -

Soundproof walls -

Canteen -

- one we can all fit in!

Toilets -

Quiet rooms

gym hall

Swimming pool

Computer room

Sensory garden -

Big playground

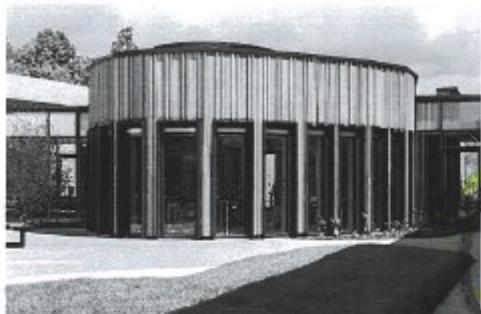
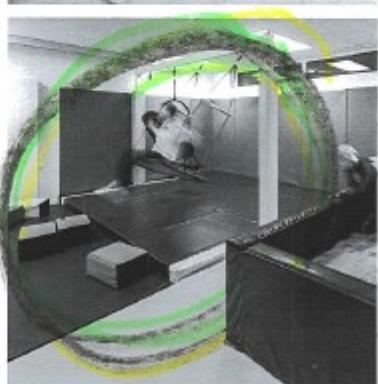
- splash pad

- somewhere shady to sit

Cooking room with all cookers, dishwasher

Different rooms for different activities -

Flexible Spaces



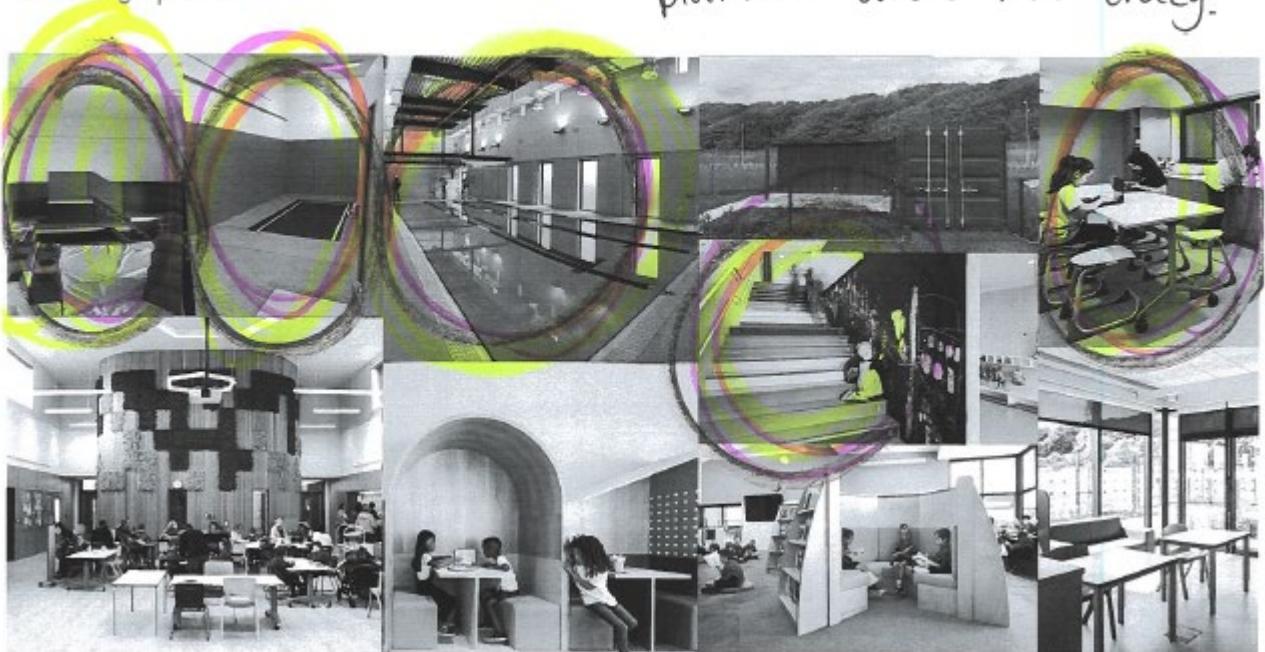
NORR's Inc



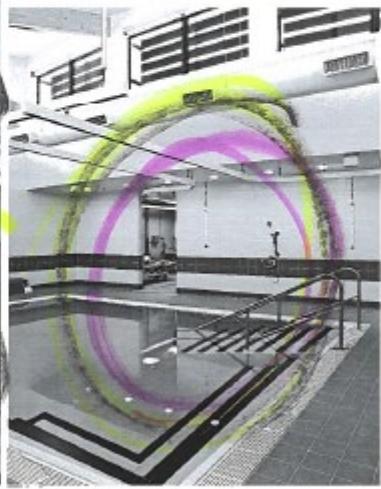
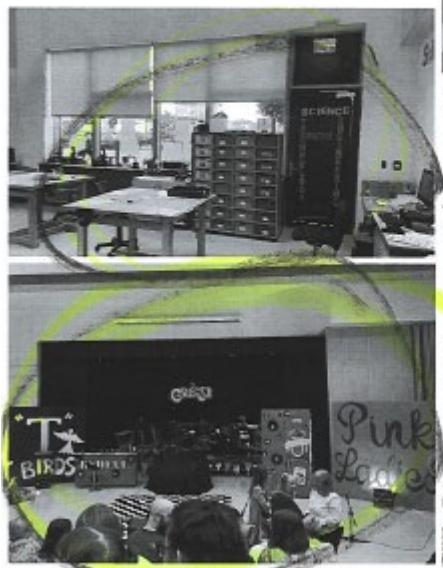
Design Inspirations

Teaching Spaces

Colour in general is good but planned and not crazy.



Learning Spaces



Stage to perform



TOO NOISEY TOO EMPTY.

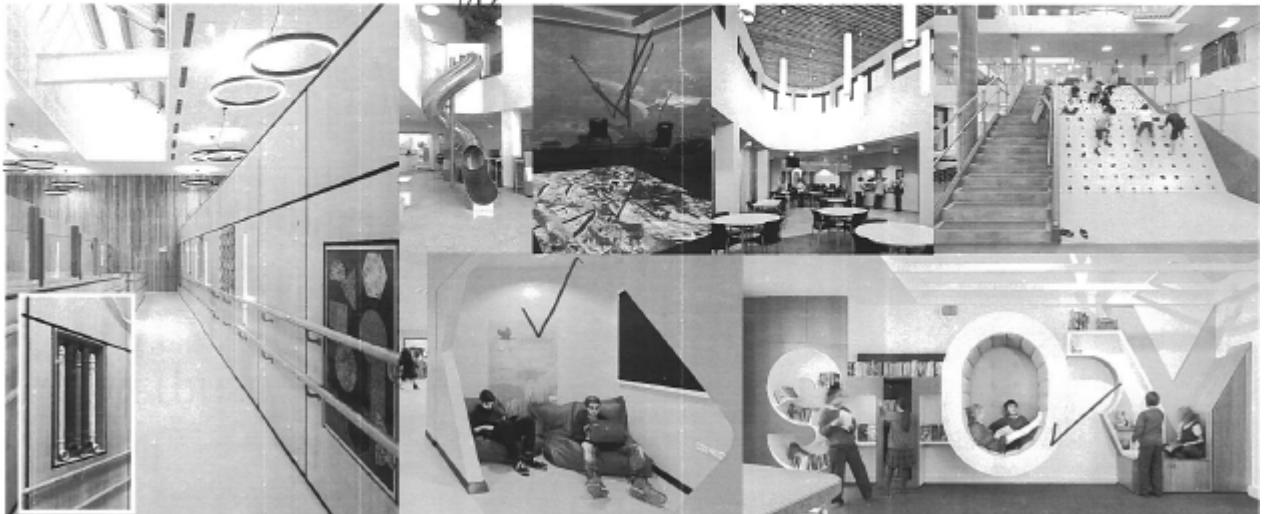


NORR's Education Estate

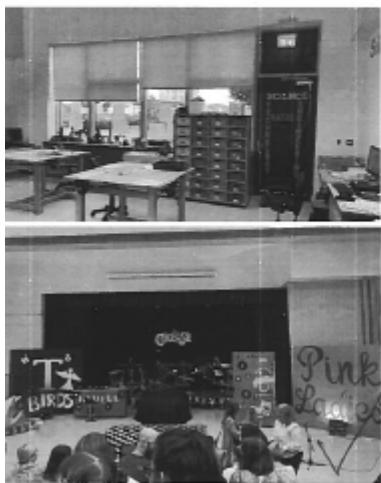
NORR

Design Inspirations

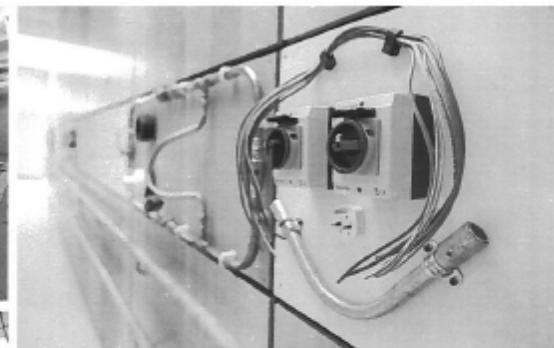
Innovative Spaces



Learning Spaces



Sensory Spaces

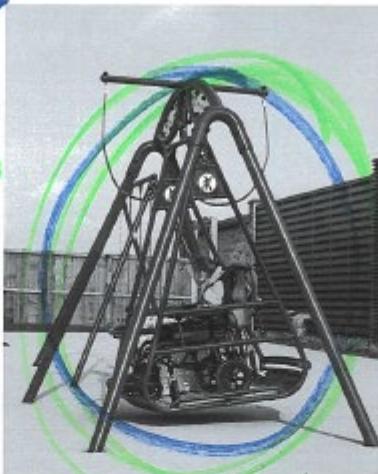


1 2 3 4 5



External Spaces

ALL!



External Spaces



Dingwall Primary Pupil Feedback- St Clement's Relocation

Timestamp	The things pupils in our class love about our current school:	Things pupils in our class don't like so much about our current school:	After looking at the design inspirations, pupils in our class wanted to note...	Other ideas pupils in our class have for our new school:
18/06/2025 09:43:24	The different libraries, having the nursery close by, there is a lot of outdoor space, two floors, the red area as a different space to do activities, there is different spaces to play outside, wallbars, lots of light with big windows, blinds in the class.	Too small, colors are dull, didn't like the use of projectors onto a the class whiteboard in the classes, the classroom doors feel unsafe, football takes up most of the outdoor space, corridors are too narrow, toilets are dated and old, not enough car park spaces, lights are dim, walls are old and chipped, plastic areas on roofs, cloakrooms are too small, not enough plugs in classrooms, no elevators for people with disabilities, no ramps for wheelchair access, bike shed is too small	having our own pool, outdoor astro, break out spaces for specific subjects, technology room for Chromebook use, baking areas, indoor slide	Different types of chairs for pupils, windows that stop classroom getting too warm, different coloured blinds, bigger whiteboards for the teacher
18/06/2025 09:55:18	Large grass area. Library. Nurture	No playground equipment. Classroom too close together. Too warm. Small classrooms. Sit	Loved: Indoor and outdoor slides. Pool.	Lifts/ elevators. Role play outside – mini houses/ sheds. Climbing area inside.

	Room. Sensory Room. Two levels. Gym Hall & Wall Bars.	on floor in assembly. No comfy/ lounge areas. Canteen too small and loud. Don't like long tables in canteen. Old building.	Comfy seating areas/ built in areas. Astro. Canteen round tables. Comfy chairs. Different levels. Stairs with climbing wall. Colourful stairs/ walls/ chairs/ tables. Big spaces. Wood. Lots of windows and doors. Playground equipment with lots to do. Didn't like no classroom doors.	Trampolines. Swings. Treehouses. Art areas. Wet break play area indoors. Soft play.
18/06/20 25 13:58:30	P4/5G - Big playing field Gardens and lots of nature Near to woods and hills Sandpit Big windpws in classroom s with nice views (mostly)	Canteen - too noisy and chaotic, long queues Can't use the obstacle trails in playground Fob doors Separate playing areas for upper and lower school Having a timetable for football - not enough pitches Dark corridors Shared cloakrooms too squashed Only one basketball court	We loved: A large slide in the school A swimming pool with diving board Lots of big low windows and glass - bring the outside in Lots of natural materials eg wood on	Clean nice bathrooms Better cloakroom areas Changinf room to change into gym kit for PE Lovely big library Games Hall Bigger PE Hall Sensory room Interactive outdoor spaces eg chalk drawing on walls/music instruments etc Lots of garden spaces each with a differecnt use eg

	Buddy benches Book trolleys Big classroom s Gaelic Medium departme nt Proper PE teacher	building Lots of green outdoor spaces where we can do our own gardening and build dens	mud kitchens/quiet garden/climbing treed garden etc Bigger classrooms but not open plan Classroom have doors that open into a garden area Skylights and low windowns with nice views Climbing wall on side of building Basketball courts Lots of football pitches but also space for other games Bigger, calmer, quieter canteen, more serving hatches to reduce queues Elevators and stairs Big sandpit Picnic bencehes and tables Outdoor obstacle trails Technology Lab Art Room Music Room Good sound proofing throught the school Lots of Time Out and calm areas After School Club space and clubs Lots of litter bins	
19/06/20 25 09:31:27	Big classroom s. TV screen. Deaf Base. Sensory Room.	Too many S/W facing windows, broken blinds. Not enough designated areas in playground, Not enough opening windows. Carpets in classrooms. Not	Slide. Hill/ mound in playground with den underneath . Running track. Astroand built in	Fixed football goals. Lift.

		enough electric sockets.	seats.. Reading pods. More colour.	
19/06/20 25 12:32:18	- When we had climbing frames in the playgroun d - The canteen - The wall bars in the gym hall - The food at lunchtime - Our teachers - Space outside the classroom to work	- The cloakrooms are too small - The bathrooms smell and there sometimes isn't soap - There are flies in the lights - The ceiling has bits coming off it - There are holes in the walls - We don't have a proper library - There's not enough to do in the playground - The desks are wobbly - Nothing matches	- A swimming pool! - It was so colourful - Slides and climbing frames in the playground look fun - The willow dome - "we could play in it and hide" - The different reading nooks and spaces in the library - How the stairs were really interesting - spaces to sit at the side of the stairs - It was all clean and bright - Round tables in the dining room look nice.	- Two gym halls with lots of wall bars - Bigger gym hall(s) - More footballs - Classrooms with more space - Better sinks in the classrooms - More colour on the walls - Proper soap in the bathrooms - A big library where it's quiet with lots of books and comfy places to read - More space in the cloakroom - A garden where we could grow things - Somewhere to be undercover in the playground if it rains - Slides and things to play on in the playground - More places to sit with our friends in the playground - A library shed in the playground (I PROMISE I didn't prompt this!!)
19/06/20 25 14:05:46	The teachers, the canteen, the size of	Lack of play equipment, the library, only one gym hall, heat in classrooms during	They would like a slide, more play equipment, garden	Large classrooms (and a large teacher cupboard in each room please!), a quiet

		<p>classroom s, the playing field and sand pit, the gym hall, the support staff and the view from some classroom s.</p>	<p>warmer weather conditions, the state of some equipment (class whiteboards, chairs etc) and more sturdy toilet doors.</p>	<p>areas outside each classroom, a swimming pool, a rock climbing wall, colourful stairs, welcoming and comfortabl e library areas, an IT area/room, greenhous es, play areas, bigger canteens and art work.</p>	<p>area for resting/naps, facilities for more after school clubs, easy access throughout the school, bigger reception area, an outdoor classroom.</p>
20/06/20 25 09:26:34		<p>Different sized classroom s with slanted ceilings Sandpit with long jump Garden areas Views of Cats Back Wooded P1 Garden area Mudshed s Flip bars Shed bit near P1 area Bike shelter</p>	<p>Drinking Taps Fobbed doors Bathrooms More ventilation in the classrooms (windows don't open) Radiators are too hot Canteen Gates, it looks like a prison No playground Change the flooring and layout of the gym CARPARK No quiet seat area in playground Grass on the pitches (gets too muddy in the winter)</p>	<p>Interal Slide New playground equipment More trees Astro for the pitch Nooks built into the wall and quiet areas Lifts (for pupils and staff with disabilities) Bigger gym Skylights Changing rooms Bigger canteen Library/qui et zone</p>	<p>Outdoor classroom Cooking space (so teachers can cook with pupils) A room to stay inside for break and lunch Art room Soundproof room/rage room Music room Quiet work space Garden Sensory room Resource room Bigger classroom Aircon/ceiling fans Science room Assembly hall/stage/performa nce space Bigger gym hall Better equiment for learning Bowling room</p>

	<p>Classroom Cupboard s Nuture Room P.E. Change rooms Outdoor shelters</p>	<p>Sports room Chill out space Swings and slides Dedicated library Computer lab Shaded areas Bike shed Basketball/netball courts Ice rink Boxing area</p>
20/06/20 25 10:12:47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good sized gym hall and cupboard - The classroom s are a decent size - Good sized pitch - Canteen is big - Good, organised corridors <p>- The playground is on a slope and there's holes in the grass. The ground is uneven.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lots of glass - Up to date desgin - Park equipment in playground - slides, climbing frame etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better toilets for P6/7 that can be kept cleaner. - Upper/lower canteen spaces. - Assembly room/theatre MPH hall. - Clear lines on field for sports pitches/Astro - Better cooking facilites - Home Economics room - Chilled water fountains in school - Lockers / PE changing rooms - Garden area with greenhouse
30/06/20 25 09:54:27	<p>Resource s in our classroom</p> <p>That there is the option to play on the grass or concrete in the playground</p>	<p>Sport facilities - swimming pool, astro, running track, gym halls</p> <p>Different types of tables and seating</p> <p>Nice library spaces</p> <p>Different types of spaces for learning</p> <p>Bright</p>

		spaces - big windows and lots of light Bigger rooms		
30/06/20 25 10:04:34	<p>we like the large grass, the woods beside the garden, the books and our library, the big screens in our classroom and areas, the big classrooms, the sandpit, drawing spaces (chalkboard wall, creation spaces) the area outside the classroom s to play in, the trays (water, sand, playdough), our red area,</p> <p>the bins outside aren't the right size/ shape, uneven surfaces in the playground, our play patio - needs updating, lack of cupboard space to store toys/ resources etc, upstairs - might not be suitable for everyone, our windows - not all of them open, our gym hall isn't big enough.</p>	<p>they loved the indoor slides, swimming pool. they notices the big windows and thought we'd need blinds, they liked the open spaces outside and inside the building, they noticed the large classroom with lots of toys, the huge gym hall for playing and learning, they liked the climbing wall in the corridor,</p> <p>Polycrub for planting and growing, big car park for cars, areas for jackets and bags (large spaces) big spaces for playing outside and inside, slides instead of steps, shed for storage outside, trees, shaded areas, technology in the building (interactive boards), circular tables for sitting and working at. shared playing areas outside classroom particularly in infants, something to help keep us cool inside in summer, plenty of storage options, somewhere for visitors to work, meeting rooms, large gym hall, GARDEN SCHOOL AREA, fruit trees, community garden area,</p>		
30/06/20 25 10:21:18	Canteen , PE, Nurture,	Gym hall is too small, Hand driers don't work in toilets, no soap in toilets,	Astroturf would be good, swimming	Art room with specialist equipment, Music

	Football League	playground has no equipment	pool would be amazing, changing rooms and toilet facilities at PE ,	room, Cookery room, IT suites
30/06/20 25 13:04:18	Large canteen space Colour blocking in the Red Area Large field space Red Area library Pictures painted on the shelter walls. Resign of the infant toilets.	horrible smell of the drains in the P2 area and the Red Area. The walls are crumbling. Lots of things are broken. Ants crawl about lots of areas. Upper school area larger than infant area. Sinks in the middle of the floor. No spare classrooms/spaces/areas	Bright colour panels used throughout new school buildings. Slide indoors. Proper library space with bookshelves. Colourful playground Swimming pool. spacious and light buildings.	Outdoor playhouse lifts plenty parking gym
30/06/20 25 13:25:48	The teachers, the canteen ladies, Mrs MacAskill, the school is sturdy, the big playground (lots of room), full of memories	Dirty walls that are falling apart with lots of holes. Holes in the corridors. Plastic bags on the roof. Old desks. Some of the classes are too cramp and get too hot. Hard, dirty carpets.	Open spaces, different seats, outdoor spaces, sports facilities	Books and new desks, tents, new resources, more technology, cosy inside

Appendix 3- Note of the Public Meeting

CONSULTATION MEETING – RELOCATION OF ST. CLEMENT’S SCHOOL **Hybrid meeting, St Clement’s School – 6.30PM, 2 July 2025** **MINUTES OF MEETING**

Panel

Cllr. Graham MacKenzie – Chairperson
Annika Jansson, Area Quality Improvement Manager
Robert Campbell, Service Lead - Capital Planning and Estate Strategy
Finlay MacDonald, Chief Officer Property & Assets

Also Attending

Cllr. Margaret Paterson
Cllr. Sean Kennedy
Cllr. Sarah Atkin
Colin Masterson – HT St Clement’s School
Sara MacAskill – HT Dingwall Primary School
Ros Bell – Policy Officer
Jack Shepherd – Dingwall Community Council
Andrew MacIvor- Dingwall Community Council
Staff from Dingwall Primary
Parents of St Clement’s School in person and online
Graeme Gordon HM Inspector

Chair Cllr. Graham MacKenzie opened the meeting.

For those who haven’t participated in a Teams meeting, could I ask that you keep your microphone muted if you aren’t actually speaking, as that reduces feedback. You should see a microphone symbol on the bar on the top of your screen, which you can toggle on and off. Secondly, Teams has a system under which anyone who wants to ask a question or make a point should “raise their hand” to attract the Chair’s attention. You do this by clicking on the hand symbol on the bar at the top of your screen. To keep the meeting manageable, could I ask that anyone who wants to ask a question alerts me by clicking on the “raise your hand” symbol, and by clicking it off once you have finished speaking.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the proposal to relocate St. Clement’s School, as set out in the recommendation to the proposal Paper.

We have a number of Council officials present tonight; Annika Jansson, Area Quality Improvement Manager, Robert Campbell, Service Lead - Capital Planning and Estate Strategy, Finlay MacDonald, Chief Officer Property & Assets, Colin Masterson, Headteacher St Clement’s School and Ros Bell, Policy Officer. Annika Jansson will now describe the consultation process and the detailed reasons for issuing the Proposal.

Annika Jansson – Highland Council is proposing to relocate St. Clement’s School, and the relocation of a school is subject to a statutory consultation process, of which

this meeting is part. We are currently in the initial phase of that consultation, which is due to end on Friday 3 October, and I would urge anyone who wants to submit views in writing to do so by that date. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to gather views, and we will try to answer any questions that are raised. We are asking for your views as to whether St. Clement's School should be relocated to the proposed site north of Ross Avenue, which will also accommodate a new Dingwall Primary School, and we would welcome expressions of opinion on that, whether for or against.

The formal process has a number of stages. Once the public consultation ends on Friday 3 October, Education Scotland becomes involved. They will look at the Proposal Paper, the note of the meeting tonight, and any written representations, and will form their own view on the educational benefits of the proposal. Education Scotland will contact St. Clement's School, and they will be keen to hear from any parents who wish to make their views known. The Council has to take account of Education Scotland's view on the educational benefits and respond to any points raised by their report, as well as any representations received as a result of the consultation process. Following Education Scotland's input, the Council will prepare a Report reviewing the consultation exercise and present it to Highland Council's Education Committee. The Review Report will be published at least 3 weeks before it is submitted to Committee, and anyone who responded in writing to the initial consultation will be invited to make "further representations" during those 3 weeks. Any further representations that are made are submitted to the members of the Committee, either in advance or tabled on the day, so that members are fully informed of any issues that may have arisen. Members will also see copies of the original responses and the note of this meeting.

In summary, I would say that the consultation process provides multiple opportunities for views to be expressed to the Council before any final decision is made.

Cllr. Atkin - When the links are sent out it is important that other local members with children attending St. Clement's School, and their communities, also need to feed into the consultation, as pupils come from all over Ross shire. I think there are four or five wards, where children attend St Clement's School. It is really important there are as many different views from this wide geographical area as possible. Members can also share this on their social media.

Q1 [Redacted] – How are representations submitted?

A1 Annika Jansson – They are usually submitted by email so we can come back to you for further comments. The important thing is to have everyone's views correctly represented. I would be happy to meet with people if they wanted to talk to me rather than email but as long as it is captured in an email so their views can then be presented accurately to members before a decision is made and I would be happy to help with that.

The Chair then invited Robert Campbell to provide an update on the project itself.

Robert Campbell – I will give you a brief outline of the design process and where we've got to and what the next steps are.

The design is progressing alongside the statutory consultation rather than waiting for the consultation to be completed, as that would delay the overall completion date. It

is obviously subject to the outcome of the consultation, but we are taking the design forward. We've appointed a specialist architect, Jennifer Freeman from Norr Architects, they were recommended to us by the Scottish Futures Trust. They have designed a number of special schools and mainstream schools with enhanced provision bases, and Finlay MacDonald and I have visited some of these schools in the central belt. We did say that we would like maybe for parents and others to visit but appreciate that it is quite difficult for parents to get away, so we are looking to get some images and some videos pulled together as well. Jennifer is going to be carrying out a series of four workshops, two of these workshops have been carried out already prior to the end of term and the next two will be carried out after the summer holidays.

The first one was a day in the life of the school, to see how the school operates and limitations and shortcomings of the current accommodation.

The second one was more about speaking to people about what they would like out of the new school. She has engaged with various user groups, pupils, parents, and staff. She also visited Dingwall Primary School and spoke to people.

We've also asked Jennifer to look at the site layout. We have a building footprint, which we use to test both of the options that were under consideration and Jennifer has taken that forward and her work will inform what goes into the building, outdoor spaces, and how it all fits together. She is also looking at arrangements for things like access, parking, and drop off, which is particularly key, for St Clement's School.

We've picked up a number of lessons learned from the school visits and it was good speaking to some staff to see what was successful in the schools that have been completed. We will get some information and circulate that. What we are trying to ensure is that the new school building is at least equivalent to what would have been provided at Dochcarty Brae which was the original option. There were a number of concerns raised by parents about the co-location challenges, but we are working through those, and I think Jennifer's the right person to bring on board at this stage to work through those. She is a passionate advocate of inclusive design, so I think it's been productive so far. We are certainly determined to get this right and make this building as good as possible. We have got a great opportunity here now that the funding is approved and we will be working closely with all the groups we're going to be engaging with. And just to clarify some of the time scales, funding was approved in March earlier this year. In relation to construction, we are looking to start early in 2027 and to be completed by the end of 2028. Up to two years with the new build, depending on the other facilities that may be co-located there. We are looking to have the new building up and running in March/April 2029.

The Chair asked if there were any questions.

Q2 [Redacted] - You said that you had visited a few schools in the Central belt. Were these schools on an integrated site, the same as the proposed St Clement's School and Dingwall Primary new build?

A2 Robert Campbell - There was a mixture, with one being a standalone new special school that did have an NHS facility adjacent to it. Others were either joint

secondary and a special school, or primary and a special school. Key question was around pros and cons of co-location with no huge negatives from any of the staff or Headteachers we spoke to. The workshops we are running are going to build on that with specific concerns for St. Clement's to be worked through.

Q3 [Redacted] – Can I ask what are these specific concerns you mentioned?

A3 Robert Campbell - These are the concerns which were raised by yourself and the other parents previously. The concerns over proximity, particularly for outdoor spaces maybe more than indoor spaces, and ensuring the school is self-contained with no privacy or any other issues. Parking and drop off was also a concern and the timing of that. Those are the main issues that came from the parents previously.

Q4 [Redacted] How many co-located schools are there in Scotland – both primary and secondary?

A4 Robert Campbell - I don't know the exact number but there are quite a few, we can come back to you on this. We saw various models which seemed to be working successfully where it has been rolled out.

Q5 (Follow on) Were they all fairly new schools?

A5 Robert Campbell - The schools we saw were fairly new. There are some historical ones and there is one that was built 20 years ago, so it's quite a mixture.

Finlay MacDonald - Would it help me to take one of the Headteachers up to speak to both schools to let you know how their experience has been?

[Redacted] – Yes but things can't be sprung on us the day before. We need time to organise these things. If we get an email on the Wednesday telling us we've got a meeting on the Friday, it is so difficult to attend. It would be helpful but it would need to be organised in advance.

The Chair commented that officers understood that adequate notice must be given going forward and that was why sufficient notice had been given for the meeting this evening.

Q6 Cllr. Paterson - This is going to be a very special school. Are you going to look at quite a number of schools and are you inviting members of the parent council to go with you?

A6 Robert Campbell – We understand it is not so easy for some parents to get away, so we are building together these images, some video or walk through 3D images would be helpful to get an idea of the space.

Q7 (Follow on) – I presume parents will be involved from start to finish?

A7 Robert Campbell – There are the 4 workshops where parents can be involved which will start the process.

Clr. Atkin – We don't have to go too far to see co-location when the Tain Campus opens. I think that might be easier to organise sooner rather than go down to the central belt. It is a co-location from 3-18 and with St Duthus School.

[Redacted] We have strong links with St Duthus parent council and we are aware of their views on how things are.

Q8 [Redacted] - How is the school going to be run and managed in terms of the existing staff from St. Clement's School and Dingwall Primary?

A8 The Chair - Each school will have its own management team, its own staff, and they will be entirely separate. The two schools will each have their own Headteacher, St. Clement's School will retain its own name, own staff and its own facilities.

Q9 [Redacted] - Will both schools be separate from each other within the campus of the new build?

A9 Robert Campbell - They will be separate. Jennifer is working on how the schools will align on the site. St. Clement's School will have its own entrance and be very much self-contained. There would be access to the primary school facilities, but only where appropriate.

Q10 [Redacted] – Will we see the design before the consultation is finished and will we know exactly what we are getting before the decision is made? We have already been told it will be two separate buildings and at another meeting we were told there was to be a walkway between the two buildings. Obviously, we don't know at this moment what we're getting, which is a huge concern. We want to see exactly what we are getting before a decision is made.

A10 Robert Campbell – We have produced a basic footprint with the rooms we think would be appropriate. What Jennifer is doing with the workshops is fleshing that out to see if it is the appropriate accommodation for St. Clement's School or not and looking at the outdoor spaces. We have seen some very good examples of those. It might not be the final sort of lay-out or floor plan, but we will certainly have something after the holidays that we can share. It's still in development at the moment.

Q11 [Redacted] - So there are conceptual drawings at the moment but no final plans?

A11 Robert Campbell - When the workshops have concluded and we've got all the feedback, we can then look to producing an initial footprint.

Q12 [Redacted] - If we are told that it's two separate units and we are happy with that and are given assurances on this. What happens come October if it is going ahead and it then turns out that is not the final plan. Is it too late by then for things to be changed?

A12 Robert Campbell- We are engaging with parents and Jennifer is leading this process.

Follow on - My son is 16 now and I've been assured in the past and been pretty confident of getting a new school. However, my son is not going to see a new school and I'd hate future children to be let down like he has.

Annika Jansson Obviously your concerns are noted in this meeting as well, that's part of the consultation process that you're voicing these concerns to us.

The Chair commented that in terms of local members, we appreciate those frustrations. Over a year ago, the notion of a new St. Clement's School had gone on the back burner, I would like to emphasise what I now see as a very positive outcome of the investment plan.

Cllr. Atkin - We have an architect who is experienced in these schools, and is totally understanding that this is a completely different kind of need from a mainstream school. I just hope everyone is really reassured. This is a specialism that we've taken the time for. So as long as everyone is completely kept in touch at every single stage, we know what we voted on. It's been said it is to be two separate schools and separate identities, so I think it is really important that everyone has confidence in that.

[Redacted] - We wanted our standalone school that we've been promised for years, and we feel that we are being railroaded into this. It is like us against Dingwall Primary, and that is the way it is being perceived in the newspapers – if you don't accept this then Dingwall Primary won't get a school. We just want what's best for our children.

The Chair commented that he would like to emphasise this whole consultation period is about the relocation of St. Clement's School only. This public consultation meeting starts off the process along with the workshops. The whole purpose of this is to ascertain the views of the community on the relocation of St. Clement's School.

[Redacted] - Integration into primary school is not relevant for our children, although there may be opportunities to visit the primary school. In respect of the argument for potential integration, we don't feel the benefit of this carries as much weight as has been suggested, and is over-riding a lot of the other benefits of the already purchased site. We never felt the plan for a new school for St Clement's had been shelved and we always believed that it would come to fruition. However with this potential POD proposition, we feel we are being shoe-horned into a new site, and not going to be given alternatives to hear our opinions or at least our conceptual ideas of what we'd like to see to futureproof our school.

The Chair confirmed he didn't mean to indicate that the build had been shelved. It was going to happen it would just have been much further down the road had this proposal not come along.

The Chair then invited Annika Jansson to describe the educational benefits of the proposal.

Annika Jansson - In the last Inspection Report into St. Clement's in 2014, Her Majesty's Inspectors were clear that the buildings do not provide the quality or range of facilities appropriate to the pupils. In a new school, we can provide a better educational experience for all. The design and layout of a new building will take account of the wide variety of needs that the children and young people have with an improved environment, with the needs of the pupils at St. Clement's School at the centre of the planning of a new building, which would include more flexible learning and teaching spaces, better facilities for visiting specialists where pupils can access a wider range of experiences, preparing them for positive destinations and life after school.

Examples of educational benefits of the new proposed school would be:

- The new school building would be environmentally efficient, with naturally lit and well-ventilated spaces. Aspects of the design will include purpose-built classrooms, with facilities such as PE and lunch, and with access to sensory and soft play opportunities. Landscaping and access to the outside around the school will also be a better environment than currently.
- Co-location of St Clements and Dingwall schools will offer improved access for specialised support and mainstream setting to support learning to meet the needs of children, with increased opportunities for pupils to participate in wider curriculum offer where possible.
- Better multidisciplinary working with increased access to services to deliver positive outcomes and for cooperation between partners promoting inclusion and transition to positive destinations.
- Improved collaboration and opportunities for staff across the schools. A shared location help breaking down barriers for promotion of inclusion and making the transition to the wider world more accessible. There will also be opportunities to develop and maintain friendship groups across the location, with wider family and community links.

[Redacted] - I was privileged to attend the leaver's ceremony yesterday for all the children who received certificates for their achievements throughout the year. It was in one of the churches in the town, and I know that some of the children couldn't attend because of the journey and the kind of upset caused, and that must change when we have our fit for purpose building. But part of why I'm mentioning the ceremony is that one of the children did a presentation on the history of St Clement's School in commemoration of 50 years. One of the key points of the bulletin I saw, was that years ago, after World War I or World War II, the building was ascertained as not fit for purpose to be a school so Dingwall Academy was relocated to a new building. This is something that is going back generations that this building should not have been repurposed.

A new building would be an educational benefit, and summarising what you said, all those benefits are going to be more of an advantage than what we have currently. However I'm going right back to what I've said about location and focussing on education we don't feel that's a strong enough argument to over-ride the original proposal. A lot of people will not be aware of the journey we've had and the repetitiveness of the consultations We feel disappointed that our points of view

haven't really been heard and our concerns and our vision for what we actually want for our children hasn't really been put forward to the same extent as the focus on the POD proposition. We feel so strongly we are being put in a very difficult position because of the newspaper articles. If we don't back this and the POD doesn't come to fruition it will not sit very well in our community and I think that's a very big concern.

The Chair thanked **[Redacted]** for expressing her views. These views are what this process is very firmly about so that everyone who has an interest in the development of St Clement's School is able to express their opinions and have them heard.

Annika Jansson - As the Chair has said this is the point of the consultation process. We are listening to everyone and taking note of every contribution to this meeting. Also after this meeting, there are opportunities for all to share their views.

Q13 [Redacted] - The physical space is going to be really important. Also I would like to know what brief the architects have been given, and what portfolio they have previously so we could see examples?

A13 Robert Campbell - In terms of the brief, initially, they were appointed to carry out the series of workshops. We have extended their commission to look at the site layouts as well, and also take the initial floor plan that our in-house architects did and develop that. Norr Architects and Jennifer have a wide experience in schools generally, but also special schools and mainstream schools with enhanced provisions. We could probably share that information through the Chair of the parent council. They did do a presentation for us, so we'll probably need to check it's all okay to share. In terms of spaces, there are metrics that we use in terms of floor areas for pupils and for capacity, but I think we do appreciate the key thing really is flexibility as well. How individual classrooms are used will vary from year to year, depending on the needs of the pupils and the number of pupils that are required. It's not just going to be a cellular row of identical classrooms but will be different size classrooms and classrooms with different facilities inside them as well.

Annika Jansson - In terms of the physical space, Headteacher Colin Masterson has started to engage with the young people as well to see how they feel and what space they think would be meaningful.

Colin Masterson - We can see what the young people did with the materials shared by Norr Architects. They used pictures for one of the workshops and children across the school had a look and highlighted what they would like. Also quite interesting, there is one particular room they don't like. It's the wide open space, as they felt it was going to be too noisy.

Robert Campbell - Something that was mentioned in the March Committee report was maybe working with Highlife Highland and Sports Scotland on some sort of Centre of Excellence for disability sports.

Q14 [Redacted] - In terms of space on the campus what capacity will there be for future expansion?

A14 Robert Campbell- From the brief we have it is a rectangular building so it be designed that if there was a need for further facilities or classrooms that would be almost a bolt on at the end of the wing, and that will be factored in for both schools. We do that for all our schools now, to make sure we have got scope for expansion if required.

Q15 (Follow On) - Will that impact on the outside space?

A15 Robert Campbell- The outdoor space will be generous. It might result in a loss of space, but we will make sure that the site plan takes account of potential future expansion.

Q16 [Redacted] – Do you have further details on the impact assessment?

A16 Annika Jansson – Every Committee paper has to include an impact assessment.

Follow On – The Committee report said it has not been completed yet.

Robert Campbell – There is different levels of impact assessment. There's a screening one and then there is a full impact assessment which will be done on completion of the consultation.

Q17 (Follow on) - Who will carry that out?

A17 Annika Jansson – The impact assessment will be carried out by an officer and then signed off by Chief Officer.

Q18 [Redacted] - What is the capacity of the new school?

A18 Robert Campbell - We are not actually obliged to report on capacity to the Scottish Government for special schools although it is something we are looking at. We do need a capacity or some sort of measure that gives us an idea of the number of pupils which can be contained in the school. At the moment, it's based very much on the size of a school, but with a bit of growth. We have six standard classrooms, one larger classroom, a complex needs classroom, and then a life skills room. The actual capacity does vary from year to year depending on who is using the rooms. We touched on that earlier that there are staffing entitlements for different types of needs and limits as to the number of pupils that can be in certain types of classes.

Annika Jansson – Staffing entitlements are set nationally depending on the needs of the children in a class and this determines how many pupils you can have in a class. As Robert said, they will be varied depending on the needs of pupils coming through the school as well.

Robert Campbell - By the time we get to concluding the consultation, we will have an idea of how we're going to calculate the capacity of the school.

[Redacted] - We have asked in the past how big the school is going to be and how many places we're going to be able to have. We need to say, we're going to be able

to cover all of the current intake and potential development in the area, if nothing else. It can't just be of a similar capacity, the basic argument is that it needs to be bigger.

Robert Campbell – We have 9 classrooms and with even an average of six pupils per classroom, this would give us 54. I think it'll be higher than that when we set the capacity.

[Redacted] - That's not really increasing our accommodation, is it?

Robert Campbell – It is not just the classrooms to consider as there are also the other spaces within the school.

[Redacted] - We said we really didn't want to have a dedicated home economics classroom turned into a standard classroom and taking that positive away from the children because we couldn't accommodate all the pupils, that's where our concerns lie. You have delivered a school and it has a classroom dedicated to home economics, dedicated music classroom etc, and then, 6 months down the line the intake is so much that we're having to give up this dedicated space and these pupils are back to not having that, they have been 20 years now without that dedicated space. This isn't mainstream and for a lot of pupils this is all they have. I won't go into the details of it, but sometimes school is it, you know, and there's not much beyond that for these children. They don't have further education or opportunities for employment. So to get it right and get as much in there that they can experience is so important, and they have been without that for so long. You just don't want a school in say six months time that can't accommodate them.

Robert Campbell - I think that's something else that we've found out from our visits, what different schools are doing in terms of future opportunities for pupils. I think one or two of these schools are innovative in what they are doing with the community.

[Redacted] - It would be reassuring to know that we had another 20, 30 places going forward. I feel for the staff, and I feel for the pupils and I feel for the families who have children in the school who don't have that confidence at this stage. So it would be really good to have someone come to us and say, we are building you a big school.

Robert Campbell There's a balance to be struck between getting it big enough school on day one and also having that flexibility, but also not making it too big, so there are spaces that are not being fully utilised, so there's a balance to be sought.

[Redacted] - Going back to the fact that this is all we have, it's not just for the children, it's for the parents as we have nowhere to get together. We don't have a school bus run where we meet parents at the bus stop when we drop kids off and find out about each other. We don't have that kind of social space to meet up. We really want to know if there will be a space in the new school we can also utilise socially?

Robert Campbell - That's where the flexibility comes in as well for out of school hours use.

Q19 Sara MacAskill - When the ELC provision in the Dingwall POD idea was first put forward, there was a discussion about a lack of provision for nursery 4 year olds. How will it work for St Clement's School ELC provision, will it start at 5 or will it be earlier from birth or 6 months?

Colin Masterson – The roll is going to be 56 after the holidays with no nursery. Its nine classes.

Robert Campbell – The new school will have 9 teaching spaces

[Redacted] - It's about future proofing and protecting the spaces for the children.

The Chair commented that we want the school to be fit for purpose for opening in 2029 and it is reassuring to hear there are contingency plans for expansion, if it's required in both buildings.

Annika Jansson – There are links for responses and comments and I will send them to Colin Masterson to disseminate to parents and we will also put the links in the minute of this meeting. We will share as widely as possible, across the school community and the wider community as well. The consultation is open to everybody to give their comments and opinions.

[Redacted] - I would like to read out a small part of a letter we've prepared just to share our vision for St Clement's School: I'm here today to formally present a representation in support of retaining the previously approved site at Dochcarty Brae for the new St. Clement's School. While I do recognise the value of co-location and integrated service delivery proposed by the new POD site, I believe it's important that we fully consider the significant advantages of Dochcarty Brae — advantages that are educational, operational, and logistical. Let me outline just a few of the key reasons why Dochcarty Brae is the right choice:

- *It was approved by the Highland Council in 2022, following a full statutory consultation process.*
- *It offers a clean-slate, a purpose-built site designed specifically for the needs of pupils at St. Clement's.*
- *It provides a standalone identity for the school — protecting its ethos and specialist role.*
- *It comes with fewer traffic and congestion concerns than the POD site.*
- *The development process would be simpler, without the complications of shared infrastructure.*
- *It is familiar and supported by parents, staff, and the local community.*
- *And importantly, it avoids disruption that would come from live construction near existing school facilities.*

A Bigger Vision: A Shared ASN Campus

Dochcarty Brae isn't just a site — it's an opportunity. This location has the long-term potential to become a shared ASN campus, supporting learners from early years through to further education and employment pathways. It could deliver transformational outcomes for children and young people with ASN — and become a sector-leading facility for the Highlands.

Let me highlight the potential benefits:

- *Lifelong Learning Pathway. A shared site supports continuity — from pre-school, through primary and secondary, and into post-16. That kind of consistency reduces anxiety, supports routines, and builds relationships that help our children thrive.*
- *Holistic and Personalised Support. When therapists, educators, and support staff work together on one site, our children benefit from specialist care — without needing to be moved off-site. This means better learning, better wellbeing, and better behaviour regulation.*
- *Open Campus Culture. We want a school that's open, welcoming, and visible. A place where parents, professionals, and local employers feel invited — just like at the Seashell Trust in the UK. This kind of engagement reduces stigma and prepares our young people for adult life in the community.*
- *Transition to Adulthood. By co-locating with further education and training providers, we can give young people real access to life skills, vocational training, and future employment — on their terms, in a familiar environment.*
- *Efficient Transport and Accessibility. A centralised site makes transport planning easier, more cost-effective, and better suited to developing independence for pupils. That means less stress for families, better attendance, and stronger long-term outcomes.*
- *Cost-Effective and Future-Proof. By sharing infrastructure across age groups and services, we can ensure public funding is used wisely. Dochcarty Brae can grow with the needs of the community — not be limited by a shared site with conflicting priorities.*

Reaching Further

First and foremost, we need a new school for our children who attend St. Clement's School — a new school with the capacity to ensure there is a place available for every child in need of ASN provision, now and well into the future. The Dochcarty Brae site has the potential to become a regional hub — serving not only Dingwall, but the wider Easter Ross and Highland areas. Our vision of a shared ASN campus is not just about today — it's about building the capacity to support future generations of ASN pupils across the region, from early years through to adulthood. Our vision would allow our children to grow in a consistent, familiar environment, surrounded by staff and services who understand them. It would improve emotional wellbeing, behaviour, and long-term outcomes. It would allow for efficient transport, better access to therapies, and eventually, smoother transitions to further education and employment. We are not against progress — we are in favour of smart, inclusive, sustainable progress. And we believe the Dochcarty Brae site offers a better opportunity for future investment and development in ASN provision, with the potential for better outcomes — not just for St. Clement's pupils, but for the wider ASN community in the Highlands. In closing: In doing all of this — with careful consideration of our immediate concerns and our vision for the future — the Highland Council wouldn't just be meeting a need; it would be setting a standard. Dochcarty Brae gives us a chance to lead with care, with clarity, and with ambition. Please support the retention of the Dochcarty Brae site. Support the pupils. Support the families. And help us build the future they truly deserve.

There were no further questions.

Annika Jansson- I would like to encourage all parents to submit their views. I would be happy to meet with anyone if that would be helpful. It is important we gather views from everybody across the wider community.

Chair – Cllr MacKenzie thanked everyone for their attendance and advised that work will go on at pace during the course of the summer holiday period. He reminded everyone of the process to submit representations.

** Interested parties are invited to respond to the Proposals by making written or electronic submissions on the Proposals to arrive **no later than Friday 3 October 2025** to: Business Support Team Education Service County Buildings High Street Dingwall IV159QN, Email: Education.Consultations@highland.gov.uk , Online form, a link to which can be found on www.highland.gov.uk/schoolconsultations When responding, you are invited to state your relationship with the school – for example, “pupil”, “parent”, “carer”, “relative”, “former pupil”, “teacher in school”, “member of the community” etc. However, it is not compulsory to do so. Those sending in a response, whether by letter or electronically should know that their response will be open to public scrutiny and may have to be supplied to anyone making a reasonable request to see it. If they do not wish their response to be made publicly available, they should clearly write on the document: “I wish my response to be considered as confidential with access restricted to councillors and officers of The Highland Council”.*

Please note the record of the meeting will be made available at least 3 weeks before the meeting of the Education Committee where it is intended that the report of the meeting, plus any submissions/representations and the view of Education Scotland on the proposal, will be considered.



Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to replace the current St Clement's School building with a new school building on a new site, which will also accommodate a new Dingwall Primary School.

October 2025

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 The Highland Council to replace the current St Clement's School building with a new school building on a new site, which will also accommodate a new Dingwall 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 and young people 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 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 2 July 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; and
- visits to the sites of St Clement's School and Dingwall Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

Consultation process

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

2.2 The consultation period ran from 9 June to 3 October 2025. The council held a public meeting on 2 July 2025, which was attended by approximately 12 stakeholders in person and online. The council published the consultation paper on its website and provided copies to relevant stakeholders including parents and carers, staff and elected members. There were five responses to the public consultation all of which recognised the need for a new school. However, during the public meeting and responses received, stakeholders raised a range of questions and concerns. They are concerned about co-locating both schools on the same site. Parents from St Clement's School expressed the preference for a stand-alone building. They want the school to retain its own identity and asked if any new school would allow for future expansion.

2.3 The council also gathered views of children and young people who attend St Clement's School and children from Dingwall Primary School. This included views on design concepts and a helpful 'wish list' for what learners would like to be included in the design of their respective new schools. This included a sensory room, interactive outdoor spaces, a games hall and calm areas.

Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 In 2022, following a statutory consultation, The Highland Council approved plans to relocate St Clement's School to a new site at Dochcarty Brae. However, the council put this capital investment plan on hold on the grounds of affordability. As part of the new Highland Investment Plan, the council intends to create more community facilities that will provide a range of public services, in a single location. The council takes the view that the relocation of St Clement's School to the new site offers all the same educational benefits as the previous Dochcarty Brae option. It notes that whilst the site will also accommodate Dingwall Primary School, St Clement's School will retain its own identity.

3.2 HM Inspectors agree that the proposal could bring educational benefits for all current and future children and young people at St Clement's School. The current poor-quality accommodation at St Clement's over multiple buildings presents issues for the dignity of children and young people, including accessibility issues. The existing layout and design of St Clement's School can restrict the movement of children and young people, including those who use wheelchairs. HM Inspectors also agree that the co-location of the two schools has the potential to offer further educational benefits as stated within the proposal. This will improve access for specialised support and mainstream setting to support learning needs of individual children. This may also increase opportunities for pupils to participate in a wider curriculum. However, the council could be more specific about the current and future school roll and how the educational benefits would impact on children and young people from St Clement's School.

3.3 HM Inspectors agree that a new school will offer accommodation that is more accessible and inclusive. We believe that this should be of a quality that supports and improves outcomes for children and young people attending St Clement's School. Staff and learners that met with HM Inspectors see the value in the school being in one building that is fully disability compliant. They believe that a more spacious, comfortable environment would better support the wellbeing of children, young people and staff.

3.4 Parents and staff that met with HM Inspectors recognise that purpose-built classrooms and flexible teaching spaces could improve considerably the learning environment of the school. Staff highlight opportunities to enhance the curriculum and opportunities to improve children's and young people's learning experiences in the new school. Currently, physical education takes place off campus. Children and young people benefit from accessing local facilities such as the leisure centre and football club grounds. The travel time to these venues reduces the time available for children and young people to access high-quality physical education programmes, in line with national expectations.

3.5 Parents and staff highlighted that St Clement's School used to cater for children and young people 3-18 years. They believe that the council should consider the reintroduction of early learning and childcare provision at St Clement's School. HM Inspectors agree that this may be an important consideration.

3.6 All parents that met with HM Inspectors do not agree that the proposed site is large enough to accommodate both schools. Parents from St Clement's School expressed a lack of confidence in how the educational benefits may be realised. They believe it is important that there are no shared facilities or resources with any other school. Most parents are of the firm belief that the council should reconsider building St Clement's School on the previously identified site at Dochcarty Brae. HM Inspectors recommend that if the proposal is agreed the council should reassure parents that the proposed site is large enough to accommodate sufficient indoor and outdoor spaces for both schools. It should also provide reassurance on how the educational benefits will impact on the children and young people of St Clement's School to help address their concerns.

3.7 Children, young people, staff and parents highlighted the importance of involving them in the design of the new school. Staff expressed the need for appropriate digital infrastructure, sensory rooms, flexible spaces and improved toilet and medical facilities. They would welcome the inclusion of a small hydrotherapy pool to support wellbeing and outdoor shelters to ensure that all pupils can access outdoor learning in the new school. Children and young people look forward to accessing better sports facilities and specialist areas for art, music and cooking. HM Inspectors agree with stakeholders that the council should consider the development of spaces to support the development of life skills in the design of the new school building. It will be important that children and young people can continue to access local facilities and be part of the local community.

Summary

HM Inspectors believe there are educational benefits in the proposal to replace and relocate St Clement's School. However, we believe the council could be more

specific about the current and future roll and how the educational benefits would impact on children and young people from St Clement's School. All stakeholders that met with HM Inspectors agree there is a need to build a new school and that the existing school is in poor condition. They recognise that a new school would provide significantly improved facilities to support learners with complex additional support needs. They believe that the council should consider reintroducing early learning and childcare provision at St Clement's School. It will be important to consider the needs of all children and young people in the design of the new school. The council should continue to involve stakeholders, where appropriate, in the development of the new school. However, parents from both schools do not agree that the proposed site is big enough to accommodate both St Clement's School and Dingwall Primary School. Parents from St Clement's School believe that the council should consider building the new school at the previous site of Dochcarty Brae. If the council proceeds with the proposal, HM Inspectors recommend that it works with parents to reassure them on the size of the prosed site. It should also provide reassurance on how the educational benefits will impact on the children and young people of St Clement's School to help address concerns raised by parents.

HM Inspectors
October 2025