

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HM Inspectors of Education addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to replace and relocate St Clement's School.

May 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of The Highland Council's proposal to replace and relocate the current St. Clement's School in Dingwall. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the 2010 Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school; any other users; children and young people 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 virtual public meeting held on 10 March 2022 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;
- visit to the site of St Clement's School, including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- visit to the proposed new site of the new school at Docharty Brae in Dingwall.

2. Consultation process

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

2.2 The statutory consultation period for this proposal ran from 2 March 2022 until 29 April 2022. Copies of the consultation proposal were made available to statutory consultees. This included copies being available at local public buildings and on the council website. Council Officers conducted extensive informal consultation with the headteacher and Parent Council. They also gathered the views of children and young people who attend St Clement's School. This includes a helpful 'wish list' for what learners would like included in the design of their new school.

2.3 The council held a public meeting virtually, in response to ongoing public health advice, on the 10 March 2022. This was advertised in the local press and on social media. It was attended by a total of 21 people, including 11 parents and other members of the local community, and seven members of the school staff.

2.4 The council received no written responses or objections from parents or other members of the public about this proposal. Stakeholders are in favour of a new school. A few parents raised concerns about the proposed location on the edge of the town. They are keen to ensure that children and young people can continue to access local facilities and be part of the local community. Parents also suggested that they would like a small pool for hydrotherapy in the new building.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 HM Inspectors believe that the proposed new building could bring considerable educational benefits for all current and future children and young people at St Clement's School. We agree that the new building should be of a quality that supports and improves outcomes for learners placed at the school. The current poor quality accommodation at St Clement's can pose issues for the dignity of children and young people, as well as accessibility issues.

3.2 Purpose-built classrooms and flexible teaching spaces could enhance considerably the learning environment of the school. The movement of children and young people in wheelchairs is currently restricted due to the existing layout and design of St Clement's. Having more space and touch-pad doors would provide more equitable access for all learners to move throughout the school. Improved acoustics could support the dignity of individuals and help children and young people to maintain focus on their learning. Sensory rooms, improved medical and toilet facilities, and outdoor learning spaces will also be beneficial and support children's and young people's learning. Learners and staff highlighted the need for outdoor shelters, so that everyone can have a full experience of outdoor learning.

3.3 There is potential to enhance the curriculum and enrich children's and young people's learning experiences in a new school building. All learners, staff and parents who met with HM Inspectors welcome the improved facilities that the proposed new school might offer. Children and young people look forward to opportunities to access better sports facilities and specialist areas for art and music. HM Inspectors agree with stakeholders who feel strongly that the inclusion of areas to support the development of lifeskills should be considered in the design of the new building.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors believe there are considerable educational benefits in the proposal to replace and relocate St Clement's School. All stakeholders that HM Inspectors met support the proposal. A purpose-built school would provide significantly improved facilities to support learners with complex additional support needs. Good access to the outdoors and improved teaching spaces could improve the learning experiences for all the learners who attend St Clement's.

Whilst there have been some improvement works carried out, the current facilities are in poor condition. The new building would be fully disability compliant and there would be better heating and lighting. Current maintenance costs could reduce. A more spacious, comfortable environment would better support the wellbeing of children, young people and staff.

HM Inspectors agree with the council's desire to place the needs of every child and young person at the centre of the design of the new school. This should include consideration of facilities to support the development of lifeskills. It will be important to ensure that the capacity and design of the new school meets possible future needs of learners. Should the proposal go forward, the council should continue to work with stakeholders to address concerns about the location of the new school on the edge of town. Stakeholders would welcome more detail about how children and young people will be able to access community facilities in Dingwall.

Well-considered transition planning, involving all stakeholders, will be an important consideration in taking the proposal forward.

HM Inspectors
May 2022