

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to establish a new primary school to serve the Tornagrain housing development.

December 2024

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of a proposal by The Highland Council to establish a new primary school to serve the Tornagrain housing development. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' view. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it alongside any relevant considerations the council received and then prepare its consultation report. The council's consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its consultation report at least three weeks before it takes its final decision. With all proposals the council needs to follow all statutory obligations set out in the 2010 Act.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the 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 8 October 2024 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 site of Croy Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. 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 public consultation ran from 23 September to 22 November 2024. Copies of the proposal were made available to stakeholders and on the council website. A public meeting was held on 8 October 2024 at Croy Primary School. Twenty stakeholders attended the public meeting and three written responses were received. Stakeholders asked a range of questions including about timescales for building a new school, the arrangements to manage capacity at Croy over the next few years and the routes children would take to any new school. Concerns about the safety of walking routes children currently take from Tornagrain to Croy were also raised. A few stakeholders queried the proposed catchment area and whether the Old Tornagrain area, which is currently in the Balloch school catchment area, would be better zoned to the proposed new school.

2.3 The Highland Council also consulted children at Croy Primary School. The majority agreed with the proposal to build a new school. Children were asked whether there should be two schools or one larger school that covers Croy and Tornagrain. Eighty children thought that keeping Croy Primary School and building a new school was the best option, and 22 would prefer one new school that covers both areas. Children thought travel to school would be easier with two schools but a few were concerned that having two schools may split up friendships.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 The council are proposing to address the capacity issues at Croy Primary School following a new housing development being built at Tornagrain. Croy Primary School has a capacity of 100. Its current roll exceeds this and is projected to increase to 200 by 2029 without the planned new school being created. A modular two classroom unit has been installed at Croy Primary School to address capacity issues in the short term. HM Inspectors agree with the educational benefits as set out by The Highland Council in the proposal. There is a clear need for The Highland Council to address the rising roll at Croy Primary School and the existing schools in the area do not have the capacity to accommodate this. A new school in Tornagrain should provide a modern learning environment in the community children live in.

3.2 All staff at Croy Primary School who met with HM Inspectors agree with the proposal to build a new school at Tornagrain and to retain Croy Primary School. They consider this to be the best option to address the rising number of children living in both of these communities. They are confident that they can provide support to children and their families through any changes that result from this proposal. The council are currently adapting Croy Primary School site to address the rising school roll through further modular units. Staff expressed the view that while this will provide an adequate solution in the short term, the proposal to build a new school is required to meet rising school rolls in the longer term.

3.3 Children who met with HM Inspectors had mixed views about the effect of building a new school at Tornagrain. Most agreed that having two schools, the existing Croy Primary School and a new one at Tornagrain, was the best option. However, they are concerned about the potential loss of existing community and play areas at Tornagrain to accommodate a new school site. They all support retaining Croy Primary School, with a few feeling it should be expanded rather than a new school built. They are all interested in being involved in the design of any new school. If the proposal is agreed, they think it will be important that both schools work together to enable friendships to continue for any children attending Croy Primary School who move to Tornagrain school. Children from the Tornagrain area raised the current challenges they experience with active travel to school. They would like the council to look again at the routes they use to see if they can be improved.

4. Summary

HM Inspectors agree there are educational benefits to this proposal. A new school should address the current and increasing capacity issues at Croy Primary School. If this proposal is agreed The Highland Council should work with stakeholders to address the concerns they have raised. This includes in regard to safe routes to Croy Primary School during the interim period whilst any new

school is built. If the proposal is agreed, The Highland Council should also consider the suggestions raised by stakeholders about the catchment area for the proposed new school.

HM Inspectors
December 2024