

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

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 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.

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 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.

3. 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 Docharty 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 Docharty 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 Docharty 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.

4. 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 Docharty Brae. If the council proceeds with the proposal, HM Inspectors recommend that it works with parents to reassure them on the size of the proposed 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