

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dundee City Council to bring the three learning centres of the Offsite Educational Service together on a single site at the Rockwell Primary School building by 15 August 2016.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Dundee City Council's proposal to bring the three learning centres of the Offsite Educational Service (OES), Castlepark, Balerno and Connect 5, together on a single site at the Rockwell Primary School building by 15 August 2016. 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 Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of 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. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the centres; 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 Wednesday 9 December 2015 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;

- visits to the sites of Castlepark Centre, Balerno Centre, Connect 5 Centre and Rockwell Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Dundee City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The consultation ran from 30 November 2015 until 29 January 2016. The council announced the consultation in the local press and information, including the proposal paper, was placed on the council website. Copies of the paper were handed out to parents of young people being educated in the learning centres. The council advertised in advance and held a public meeting in Dundee City Chambers on 9 December 2015. This was attended by ten people, but no parents/carers were present. The council held separate meetings with staff from the learning centres on 19, 22 and 26 January 2016. It also distributed an additional paper to parents/carers setting out the proposal in plain English and offered three additional meeting dates. A total of two parents/carers attended the additional meetings. The council made appropriate arrangements to consult with young people attending the learning centres. There were two written responses to the consultation.

3. Educational Aspects of the Proposal

3.1 The three current learning centres make provision for young people assessed as having social, emotional and behavioural needs (SEBN) from secondary schools across Dundee. Those in S1 and S2 attend Castlepark Centre and those in S3 and S4 attend either Balerno Centre or Connect 5 Centre. Whilst the proposed new provision will support secondary aged pupils with SEBN, its key focus will be S3 and S4. The council is keen to improve the likelihood of young people from the learning centres attaining sustained positive destinations after leaving school.

3.2 The council outlines two options to be considered in relation to the proposal to relocate the OES. However, the proposal paper concentrates on the option to relocate and restructure the service. In its final report, the council should clarify how it has considered each of the options it has outlined.

3.3 HM Inspectors agree with the council's assertion that the proposal will improve young people's educational experiences. There are clear educational benefits for young people in having a wider range of curriculum options available in the proposed accommodation, including access to practical subjects which have until now been difficult to provide. The council has recently invested in the Rockwell building to accommodate part of Harris Academy, while its buildings are upgraded. The building is in better condition than any of those currently occupied by the learning centres, therefore the learning environment will be significantly improved for young people attending the proposed site. The council has set aside funds for further enhancement of the building in order to accommodate the learning centres.

As Harris Academy will be using the building until 1 July 2016, the council is aware of the limited time available to carry out additional building work in time for the start of the school year. Some stakeholders attending the public meeting were keen to know whether it would be possible to create facilities for young people to continue to develop their skills in gardening as this is a popular aspect of current provision.

3.4 Staff from the learning centres who spoke to HM Inspectors were looking forward to having the opportunity to visit the site of the proposed new provision and to working with the council to shape the accommodation to ensure the best use of its facilities to benefit their pupils. They were keen to know what the management structure will be, how they will be deployed and how the proposed outreach service will work.

3.5 Parents and young people who spoke to HM Inspectors identified that in some individual cases, well-considered decisions had been made to place young people in separate learning centres. They were seeking information about how the transition to the proposed single site would be managed. In its final report, it will be helpful for the council to reassure parents and young people that arrangements are in place for high-quality transition planning, including familiarisation visits to the Rockwell building if appropriate.

3.6 The proposed provision will focus on S3 and S4. It will be helpful for the council to clarify in its final report, how it will manage curricular transitions for young people attending the provision who are moving between the broad general education and the senior phase.

3.7 The council has calculated that it can make significant financial savings through rationalisation of its estate. Its proposal paper provides detailed financial information indicating that there would be a revenue saving of £430,000 and a projected saving of £80,000 in property costs. The proposal will therefore assist the council to secure best value from its resources.

Summary

The council's proposal to bring together three learning centres in an upgraded building on a single site with a wider range of curriculum options has clear educational benefits for the young people involved. Similarly, there are potential educational benefits for all young people in secondary schools across the city if educational provision is to be more inclusive and can better meet the needs of young people with SEBN. The proposal will also assist the council to achieve best value by making efficient and effective use of its resources. In preparing its final report, the council needs to show how it has taken account of any issues raised by stakeholders during the consultation, or in discussion with HM Inspectors. It also needs to fulfil its commitment to ensure that all stakeholders, including pupils, parents, learning centre staff and secondary schools, are fully involved in developing the revised service.