

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dundee City Council to change the catchment areas of St Paul's RC Academy and St John's RC High School to make St John's RC High School the associated secondary school for St Clement's RC Primary School.

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 change the catchment areas of St Paul's RC Academy and St John's RC High School to make St John's RC High School the associated secondary school for St Clement's RC 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' 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 three schools; 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 29 January 2015 in connection with the council's proposal;

- 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 site of St Clement's RC Primary School, St John's RC High School and St Paul's RC Academy, including discussion with relevant consultees;
- meeting with the representative of the Diocese of Dunkeld.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Dundee City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. St Clement's RC Primary School currently lies within the catchment area of St Paul's RC Academy. Dundee City Council proposes to move this part of St Paul's RC Academy catchment area to St John's RC High School with effect from August 2016.

2.2 Dundee City Council undertook consultation on its proposal from 12 January to 27 February 2015. A public meeting was held in St Clement's RC Primary School on 29 January 2015. Meetings were held with staff, Parent Councils and pupils in the affected schools. The pupil council at St John's RC High School met all class representatives and asked them to discuss the proposal with their peers. They then conducted an electronic survey to gather views. A majority of those consulted were in favour of the proposal. The Diocese of Dunkeld was formally consulted and responded by welcoming the proposal. The council did not receive any written submissions on the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal has clear educational benefits. St Clement's RC Primary School is geographically closer to St John's RC High School than to St Paul's RC Academy. In 2014, 79% of parents with P7 pupils at St Clement's RC Primary School made placing requests to attend St John's RC High School. The proposal, if implemented, will enable St Clement's RC Primary and St John's RC High schools to enhance school and community links to the benefit of children and young people at both schools. This has the potential to increase opportunities for the schools to work together more to develop the curriculum ensuring continuity in learning for children making the transition from primary to secondary school.

3.2 Almost all parents, children, young people and members of staff at all three schools, who met with HM Inspectors, supported the proposal. The Diocese of Dunkeld welcomed the proposal on the basis that it had requested such a review for some considerable time. All could see benefits arising from the shorter travelling distance and the improved links between St John's RC High and St Clement's RC Primary schools. Parents of P7 children who had made placing requests were

concerned about the proposed implementation date of August 2016 and wished to receive assurance that their children would secure places at St John's in August 2015.

3.3 A few parents had concerns over losing their current entitlement to free transport to school as a result of the reduced distance, including parents who wished to continue to send their children to St Paul's RC Academy. Council representatives at the public meeting had indicated that where there were older siblings at St Paul's RC Academy this would be considered sensitively and that transport could be provided in such circumstances on a temporary basis. Those parents affected wished to receive more firm assurances of the actual position.

3.4 A few parents, who attended the public meeting and who spoke with HM Inspectors, had concerns on the status of their placing requests for St Paul's RC Academy should the proposal be implemented. Council representatives who attended the public meeting indicated that consideration could be given to providing priority one status for families with siblings at St Paul's RC Academy. In its final consultation report, the council will need to clarify the arrangements it plans to put in place to address these concerns.

3.5 Staff at St Paul's RC Academy and the Diocese of Dunkeld were concerned that implementation of the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the future roll of St Paul's Academy. This proposal is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the future roll of St Paul's RC Academy since the majority of children at St Clement's RC Primary School currently move from P7 to St John's RC High School through placing requests.

4. Summary

Dundee City Council's proposal is of clear educational benefit. The majority of pupils from St Clement's RC Primary School already move by parental choice to St John's RC High School. If implemented the proposal will enable improved links and better planning for transition in learning between the two schools. Dundee City Council will need to consider its position for those parents who wish their children to continue to move from St Clement's RC Primary School to St Paul's RC Academy because they have older siblings attending St Paul's RC Academy. In its final consultation report, the council will need to make clear its position regarding entitlement to school transport and levels of priority for placing requests. Dundee City Council will need to provide clarification to parents of children currently in P7 at St Clement's RC Primary School who have made a placing request to St John's RC High School of the arrangements that will operate for August 2015.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
March 2015**