

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Dundee City Council to close St Luke's and St Matthew's Primary School and St Vincent's Primary School, establish a new Roman Catholic Primary School on a new campus and relocate Longhaugh Primary School (including Longhaugh Support Group) and Longhaugh Nursery School to that campus.

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 close St Luke's and St Matthew's Primary School and St Vincent's Primary School, establish a new Roman Catholic Primary School on a new campus and relocate Longhaugh Primary School and Longhaugh Nursery School to that campus. 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 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:

- 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;

- consideration of further representations made directly to Education Scotland on relevant educational aspects of the proposal;
- visits to the sites of St Luke's and St Matthew's Primary School, St Vincent's Primary School, Longhaugh Primary School, Longhaugh Nursery School and including discussion with relevant consultees;
- visit to Rowantree Primary School and discussion with members of its community; and
- discussion 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*.

2.2 The formal consultation on the proposal ran from 9 January 2015 to 27 February 2015. Details of the consultation were notified directly to parents and on the council's website and responses in either written or electronic format were invited. As part of its arrangements for consulting on the proposal, the council held public meetings on 27, 28 and 29 January 2015. The council received four written responses to the proposal. Records of public meetings and written responses indicate that, whilst there is overall support for the proposal, there are concerns about the potential challenges it will pose for families who are currently zoned for St Vincent's Primary School and for the community currently served by the school. There are also concerns about the logistics of managing and meeting the needs of the large number of children who will be brought together on the campus and about the challenges of road safety.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 Dundee City Council's proposal to close St Luke's and St Matthew's Primary School and St Vincent's Primary School, establish a new Roman Catholic Primary School on a new campus and to relocate Longhaugh Primary School and Longhaugh Nursery School to that campus has a number of potential educational benefits for children who may attend the campus in future. It will also assist the council to make efficient and effective use of its resources by addressing significant under-occupancy issues in each of the three primary schools concerned.

3.2 The council has set out a clear statement of the educational benefits should the proposal go ahead. The proposal takes good account of the entitlements of Curriculum for Excellence and rightly cites the provision of a high-quality digital learning environment and appropriate space for outdoor learning as aspects of the proposed campus which will widen the range of opportunities to help children develop the skills to succeed in learning, life and work. The statement specifies

separately the anticipated benefits for different groups of children, including those who attend the Longhaugh Support Group, and gives a broad outline of the council's intended approach to managing the transition to the new campus.

3.3 The proposal paper states that before proceeding to formal consultation, the council appraised a total of three options. St Vincent's Primary School community believes that further options, which they regard as more suitable, have not been given due consideration. In taking forward its proposal, the council will need to work with St Vincent's Primary School community to clarify its reasons for believing the current proposal is the most reasonable and viable option open to it.

3.4 The council rightly acknowledges that its proposal will impact on transport and travel arrangements for families of children currently attending St Vincent's Primary School. Accordingly, it has committed to a review of controlled crossings and school crossing patrols in the area. It has also given a commitment to ensuring that footpaths are suitably maintained and lit. This will help to promote the wellbeing of children and families whose route to school will become more challenging as a result of the location of the proposed new campus.

3.5 HM Inspectors met with school staff, representative groups of pupils and parents from all establishments affected by the proposal and a number of residents of the local community. Most of those who met with HM Inspectors were positive about the proposal and were optimistic that the council would take into account their concerns about the need for very effective traffic management arrangements to be put in place should the proposal go ahead. The communities of St Luke's and St Matthew's Primary School and St Vincent's Primary School expressed a number of reasonable concerns about the challenges of re-creating the strong caring ethos of the existing schools and of ensuring that children's needs will continue to be met as well as at present within a much larger school population. The council will need to clarify for members of the schools' communities how it will ensure that the size of the proposed campus will not be detrimental to children's experiences and how their learning needs will continue to be met. The communities of St Luke's and St Matthew's Primary School and St Vincent's Primary School were justifiably keen to eliminate uncertainty about the leadership of the new Roman Catholic Primary School which will be formed if the proposal goes ahead. The council will need to ensure that it puts arrangements in place for very effective management of the transition of four existing establishments to a single campus. In doing so, it will be particularly important to clarify arrangements for the leadership of the new Roman Catholic Primary School.

3.6 The Diocese of Dunkeld has submitted a response to the council stating that it is broadly supportive of the proposal. The Diocese also welcomes the continuing commitment of Dundee City Council to the improvement of the city's Roman Catholic School Estate. However, in its response to the council, the Diocese is seeking clarification on a number of issues of concern. These include the council's reasons for focusing on this particular option to address under-occupancy of the Roman Catholic School Estate in the north east of the city, the impact of the size of the proposed campus on meeting children's needs and the actions that the council will take to mitigate the impact of its proposal on the community served by St Vincent's

Primary School. In taking forward its proposal, the council will need to engage with the Diocese to address these concerns.

4. Summary

The proposal has a number of potential educational benefits for children who may attend the campus in future. These include the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence within modern, purpose-built accommodation and a rich digital learning environment with appropriate outdoor learning spaces. It will also assist the council to make efficient and effective use of its resources by addressing significant under-occupancy issues in each of the three primary schools concerned. In its final consultation report, the council should clarify its reasons for focusing on the three options cited in the proposal paper and why it believes the current proposal is the most viable and reasonable option. Early clarification of arrangements for the leadership of the new Roman Catholic Primary School will eliminate uncertainty and facilitate a smooth transition to the new campus. Should the proposal go ahead, the council should demonstrate to families whose routes to the new campus will be more challenging than at present how it has fulfilled its commitment to review road crossings in the area and to ensure that footpaths are suitably maintained and lit.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
March 2015**