

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Clackmannanshire Council to relocate education provision at Abercromby Primary School and St Bernadette's RC Primary School to a new campus in Tullibody South and to consult on the most appropriate site for the campus.

1. Introduction

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 Clackmannanshire Council's proposal to relocate education provision at Abercromby Primary School and St Bernadette's RC Primary School to a new campus in Tullibody South and to consult on the most appropriate site for the 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.

1.1 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.

1.2 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance at the public meeting held on 15 March 2016 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 Abercromby Primary School and Nursery Class and St Bernadette's RC Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 Clackmannanshire 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 Clackmannanshire Council undertook an informal consultation from 12 May to 3 July 2015 on three options in relation to a campus for Tullibody South. The analysis of responses led to the proposal to develop a campus incorporating Abercromby Primary School and Nursery Class, St Bernadette's RC Primary School and a Locality Hub which would integrate existing public services onto one site. Two alternative site options emerged from the informal consultation. Option A: a new Tullibody South Campus within the grounds of the present Abercromby Primary School and Option B: a new Tullibody South campus located within the grounds of the present Tullibody Civic Centre.

2.3 The statutory consultation ran from 22 February to 22 April 2016. Notices about the proposal were placed on the council's website and copies of the proposal were widely available to stakeholders. Children attending Abercromby and St Bernadette's RC Primary Schools were given good opportunities to give their views. As part of its consultation arrangements the council held public meetings on 15 March 2016 in St Bernadette's RC Primary School and 22 March 2016 in Abercromby Primary School.

2.4 The council received 438 responses to its proposal of which 81.8% were in favour of a Tullibody South Campus. In response to the question regarding which site option they preferred, 81.3% of those who responded were in favour of Option A, 10.8% preferred Option B and 10.3% chose not to answer the question.

2.5 The written submission from the Diocese of Dunkeld indicated that in principle it would support the creation of a joint campus provided the council adhered to the conditions and assurances laid down by the Bishops Conference of Scotland.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 This proposal offers clear educational benefits for the children of Tullibody South. As a result of the proposal, children will have access to modern school buildings which offer a range of flexible learning spaces and fully equipped to deliver Curriculum for Excellence. The council's proposal will ensure each school retains its own separate identity while offering many opportunities to work and learn together on the one campus. It will be easier for staff from both schools to work together and

to use these opportunities to develop further the curriculum and learning. The proposal has the potential to strengthen community links which already exist between the schools, the church and the various groups which access the Tullibody Civic Centre and Heritage Centre.

3.2 Most of the stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors supported the proposal and agreed that the children needed more modern school accommodation and improved outdoor sporting facilities. Almost all children who met with HM Inspectors viewed the proposal positively. They were keen to help design a new school that would include a large outdoor space where they could play and take part in a wider range of outdoor activities.

3.3 The few stakeholders who oppose the proposal were more focused on the possible loss of a community resource and were seeking assurance from the council that community groups and the Heritage Centre would be protected should the proposal go ahead. In taking this proposal forward the council should reassure stakeholders that it will, as outlined in the consultation documentation, involve them fully in the design and other aspects of the development of the campus.

4. Summary

Clackmannanshire Council's proposal to relocate educational provision at Abercromby Primary School and St Bernadette's RC Primary School to a new campus in Tullibody South on the most appropriate site has clear educational benefits. The proposal has the potential to provide the children with a high-quality learning environment. In taking this proposal forward, the council should continue, as planned, to fully involve all stakeholders, including the Diocese of Dunkeld and community groups, in the design process for the new school accommodation.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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