

**Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The City of Edinburgh Council to relocate Victoria Primary School to a new building in the Western Harbour and to realign school catchment zones for that area.**

**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 The City of Edinburgh Council's proposal to relocate Victoria Primary School to a new building in the Western Harbour and to realign school catchment zones for that area. 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 affected 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 27 February 2017 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 site of Trinity Primary School and Victoria Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees; and
- discussion of the proposal with headteachers of Holy Cross RC Primary School, St Thomas of Aquin's RC High School and Trinity Academy by telephone.

## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 The City of Edinburgh 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 consultation process ran from 30 January 2017 to 17 March 2017. During this period, the council held public meetings at Trinity Primary School and Victoria Primary School which were well attended by parents and other interested stakeholders. Statutory consultees, including Parent Councils of the schools directly involved were informed of the consultation in writing. Consultation documentation was published on The City of Edinburgh Council website and copies were available for public consultation at several venues during the consultation period, including local libraries and the schools concerned. A proforma questionnaire and an email address were made available for responses. The council received 163 questionnaire responses and a further nine submissions by email. Over three-quarters of responses indicated support for the council's proposal. Most stakeholders who met with HM Inspectors felt that the council had provided good opportunities for being consulted and for giving their views. Workshops held prior to the statutory consultation period provided stakeholders with helpful opportunities to shape and influence the council's eventual formal proposal paper.

## **3. Educational Aspects of Proposal**

3.1 This proposal involves the relocation of Victoria Primary School to a new site in the Western Harbour area of Edinburgh. Part of the proposal includes realigning the North Leith area of Trinity Primary School's catchment zone to that of the new Victoria Primary School. The proposal also involves minor catchment changes to Holy Cross RC Primary School, St Thomas of Aquin's RC High School and Trinity Academy to incorporate fully all of the reclaimed land in the Western Harbour area.

3.2 The planned new building for Victoria Primary School has the potential to provide children who will attend the new school with a purpose-built learning environment well-suited to their learning needs. At the same time, the proposal will help to ensure that the increasing roll at Trinity Primary School is kept manageable, reducing the possibility of overcrowding. As a result, the proposal offers clear educational benefits to children in both of these schools.

3.3 Realigning the catchment zones of Holy Cross RC Primary School, St Thomas of Aquin's RC High School and Trinity Academy will help to provide parents and pupils with greater certainty about their catchment status and should reduce any anxieties resulting from the placement process.

3.4 Almost all parents, pupils and staff who met with HM Inspectors support the proposal. There is a clear understanding that projected housing developments in the area would result in the school rolls of both Trinity Primary School and Victoria Primary School exceeding capacity. Parents of children at Trinity Primary School welcome the arrangements being proposed for the younger siblings of any children living in the affected area of land which would, under the proposal, transfer from Trinity Primary School's catchment to that of Victoria Primary School.

3.5 Parents of children at Victoria Primary School who met with HM Inspectors did not fully support the proposal. They identified a number of concerns, including, the size of the new school site, transitional arrangements and safe routes to school.

3.6 The council should continue to engage with stakeholders regarding the design of the new school building and its site. In doing this, the council should clarify further its projections for the new school's roll and how it will monitor the possible need for additional classroom space. The council should take the issues raised by parents, including concerns over possible traffic congestion, into account when it draws up a strategy for safe routes to school.

3.7 In taking its proposal forward, the council should continue to work with parents, pupils and staff at Victoria Primary School to ensure that the best possible transitional arrangements are in place for the period before the new school building is in operation.

3.8 Stakeholders at both Trinity Primary School and Victoria Primary School have reasonable concerns over how the projected rise in pupils numbers at these schools will subsequently affect existing capacity at Trinity Academy. The council should continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to outline roll projections and possible future strategies which it may implement to tackle any overcrowding.

3.9 The Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh supports the proposal. It welcomes the realignment and expansion of the catchment areas of Holy Cross RC Primary School and St Thomas of Aquin's RC High School to include the Western Harbour area.

#### **4. Summary**

4.1 The City of Edinburgh Council's proposal to relocate Victoria Primary School to the Western Harbour and to realign catchment zones in the area has clear educational benefits for children and young people. The proposal has the potential to provide pupils of Victoria Primary School with a modern, fit for purpose learning environment. The proposal will also help to ensure that the roll of Trinity Primary School does not exceed its capacity. Clarification of catchment zone status for the Western Harbour area will also benefit pupils and parents at Holy Cross RC Primary School, St Thomas of Aquin's RC High School and Trinity Academy.

4.2 In taking its proposal forward, the council should continue to engage with relevant stakeholders and give consideration to their concerns over the size of the new Victoria Primary School site, its projected roll and how it will plan for safe routes to the site. The council should also work with all stakeholders at Victoria Primary School to make appropriate arrangements for the period of transition prior to the new school being fully operational.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
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