

APPENDIX 3



CONSULTATION REPORT

- This Consultation Report has been compiled in response to the recent public consultation on the proposal to relocate St. Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School to the existing Riverbank School building, after the new replacement Riverbank School has opened. The document summarises the responses received on the proposal set out below and Aberdeen City Council's response to the verbal and written comments submitted by interested parties, in compliance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended.

Proposal:

- **To relocate St. Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School to the existing Riverbank School building, after the new replacement Riverbank School has opened, with effect from August 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter.**

A Map illustrating the St. Peter's Roman Catholic (RC) School catchment zone boundaries is included at Annex A of this report.

1. METHODOLOGY

This consultation was conducted in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended. All requirements of the legislation have been met.

2. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

2.1 Public Events

A number of public events were held during the consultation period (February 4th to March 22nd 2019) to discuss the proposal. The table below details the number of attendees at each public meeting:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Venue</i>	<i>Recorded Attendees</i>
4 th March	2-3pm	St. Peter's School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 parents/guardians • St. Peter's School Head Teacher • 6 pupils • Representative from Education Scotland • Bishop's representative for Education matters • Roman Catholic Diocese Rep • MSP • 5 Aberdeen City Council officers
12 th March	7- 8 pm	Riverbank School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 parents/guardians • St. Peter's School Head Teacher • 3 Parent Council members • 2 members of school staff • Parent Council Church Representative • 1 Community member • 3 Councillors • Bishop's representative for Education matters • 5 Aberdeen City Council officers
13 th March	7- 8 pm	St Columba's Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 parents/guardians • Head Teacher • 3 Councillors • Ex-Chaplain • Parishioner of St. Columba's Church • Parent Council Church Representative • RC Diocese representative • 4 Aberdeen City Council officers

2.2 Comments Received

The following written submissions were received:

<i>Format</i>	<i>Number of submissions</i>
E-mail	2
Comment Forms (hard copy)	4
Comment Forms (online)	34
Submissions from Pupils	57

The submissions, anonymised as necessary, are available on the Council's website: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/schoolsconsultations

2.3 Issues Raised

Comments received and the main issues raised on this proposal at the public meetings and through written submissions are summarised below.

2.3.1 Comments Received in Support of the Proposal

Respondents who supported the proposal included pupils, school staff, the Roman Catholic Diocese, parents/carers and residents. There was a general recognition and agreement regarding the constraints of the current site and how the current and future pupil roll requirements need to be addressed long term with the least amount of disruption to parents, pupils and staff. Some respondents whilst supportive of the proposal did stipulate that their preference would be for a new build school for St. Peters.

Supportive comments highlighted the following benefits of St Peter's School moving to the Riverbank site:

- having all teaching spaces within one building
- access to large green space and playground for outdoor learning and varied play areas
- bigger and brighter classrooms
- separate dining and gym hall providing more flexibility and access to physical activities
- room for St. Peter's to grow and expand
- new location could attract more local pupils and provide wider choice of local schools
- the Diamond Bridge would provide easy access to the Riverbank site for families living in the north of the St. Peter's RC catchment school zone.
- dedicated early learning and childcare provision for St. Peters
- opportunities for collaborative working with the new replacement Riverbank School.

Although respondents were supportive of the proposal, there were several points raised in the consultation feedback and at the public meetings, with respondents seeking assurance around the proposed investment to improve the condition of the Riverbank building to a category A (Good) status, before the relocation takes place. Many respondents felt that this investment was required in order to provide the necessary long-term educational provision for St. Peter's pupils and staff. There were several concerns raised regarding the possibility that the relocation proposal may be approved by Committee, and the risk that subsequently the proposed investment works would not be taken forward prior to the relocation of St. Peter's RC school.

Stakeholders stipulated this very clearly in their comments and at the public meetings, and a significant number of questions were raised about the likelihood of future investment in the Riverbank building, given Aberdeen City Council's current financial situation.

2.3.2 Response from St. Peter's School Parent Council:

In its response to the consultation, St. Peter's School's Parent Council stated that it was broadly in agreement with the proposal, but made it clear that this would be conditional on the proposed investment works taking place at Riverbank School prior to the St. Peter's relocation.

2.3.3 Response from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Aberdeen City

In its response the Roman Catholic Diocese indicated that it is supportive of the Council's proposal. However it emphasised that this support is for the proposal in its entirety, including the improvements to the Riverbank building described in Section 3.14 of the proposal document.

2.3.4 Comments from St. Peter's School pupils:

Eleven pupils from the Primary 3 and 4 year groups from St. Peter's visited Riverbank School on March 14th with their Head Teacher and a Pupil Support Assistant. Pupils comments focused around the variety and size of outdoor spaces available to play and learn in. The pupils liked the idea of a special and separate playground for the nursery and P1 children and having direct access to the playground from the classrooms. They liked the variety of spaces on offer to carry out different activities.

The pupils fed back their views and experience from the visit to the wider St Peter's School which allowed further comments from the pupils regarding the proposal to relocate to the Riverbank building. Overall, the majority of the pupils surveyed were supportive of the proposal. However concerns were raised about moving to a bigger school, how pupils would travel there and whether the current teachers would move with the children.

Whilst the pupils' views were varied, 63% of the pupils who gave feedback recognised and liked the additional space on offer both within the Riverbank building and the external grounds.

2.3.5 Comments received which were unsupportive of the proposal:

Several respondents disagreed with the proposal, due to the fact that there were no guarantees at this stage of the process regarding the investment to improve the condition of the Riverbank building to a category A status. They felt that the Riverbank school environment and surroundings were inferior to the current St. Peter's site. It was suggested that if the required investment in the Riverbank building was approved in advance, it could balance this aspect and lead to additional stakeholders being more accepting of the proposal.

Reference was made to the significant difference an upgrade in resources would bring to both teachers, staff and the school community; however concerns were highlighted regarding the prospect of moving into the Riverbank site without any investment having been made. It was suggested that St. Peter's children and staff deserve a complete upgrade, due to the fact that they have had to teach and learn in a building for many years that has been rated as category C (Poor) for its condition. It was felt by some that the Council needs to demonstrate equity to the St Peter's community by approving future investment to the upgrade of the Riverbank building.

Comments were also received regarding the impact the proposal could have on local residents who work full time, and how the new proposed location wouldn't be feasible for drop off and

pickups. It was suggested that the current location of St Peter's School had historically attracted many local families and university staff due to its accessibility, location and school ethos; changing the location would impact on these attributes. It was stated that the proposed new location would impact negatively on attracting new families to Old Aberdeen and subsequently the future roll of St. Peter's RC school. It was felt that whilst vehicle access to the school was not ideal, the currently location was in close proximity to major public transport links. A request to preserve and adapt the heritage building (Old Aberdeen House) was received.

Some respondents stated that St Peter's School was originally promised a new building and that the Council had not delivered on that promise. It was felt that previous engagement and input from the community was ignored which left stakeholders feeling frustrated and not listened to. It was suggested that the proposal to relocate the school to an existing building was giving a faith school second best. Reference was made to the fact that non-denominational schools in the area have been or will be provided with purpose-built, state-of-the-art facilities and therefore the St. Peter's School community were being discriminated against.

2.3.6 General Comments:

A number of comments were received indicating how St. Peter's current location felt safe and secure, and that it was felt that if the proposal was to go ahead, careful forward planning and engagement with both the St Peter's and Riverbank school communities from the outset was required to ensure a smooth transition.

Concerns were raised regarding the proposed new surroundings, culture, attitudes and acceptance of a catholic school in Tillydrone and the general safety of the area. It was also felt that there were some parents/carers who had expressed a desire to remain at the current site but who had not necessarily engaged or participated in the consultation.

Some concerns were raised regarding the current parking / entrance arrangements at Riverbank School and how the current design of the Riverbank building would not be conducive to the requirements of St Peter's staff, pupils and parents, recognising the larger geographical area that the school zone covers and the requirement to provide bus/car zone drop off on site.

Road safety concerns were also raised as it was felt that additional traffic would be generated in the area of Dill Road as a result of the proposed relocation.

Comments were raised regarding the distance pupils from Seaton would have to travel if the relocation went ahead and how currently there were no direct bus routes from Seaton to the Riverbank site. Concerns were also raised regarding pupils currently receiving free school transport and how the proposed relocation could affect their future eligibility.

Consultees asked whether this would be the last consultation regarding St. Peter's future accommodation, as there was a feeling that stakeholders' participation in the public meetings and their overall input had been low this time due to the number of previous consultations carried out in the past which hadn't contributed to a satisfactory outcome. It was felt that this had had an impact on consultation numbers and general engagement with stakeholders.

There were general concerns regarding the time that it would take to implement this proposal and the impact on pupils and staff during the interim period. A query was raised as to what would happen if the proposal didn't go ahead and, whether there was a Plan B.

2.4 Education Scotland Report

An essential element of the statutory consultation process is the involvement of Education Scotland, whose report is provided as Annex B of this Consultation Report. In its report, Education Scotland noted that a number of educational benefits would result from proceeding with the proposal to relocate St Peter's RC Primary School to the existing Riverbank School building.

The report detailed how children will benefit from a more flexible, modern and healthy learning environment. It noted how the Riverbank accommodation will provide a significantly improved education environment for children from St Peter's, with the potential for flexible use of space which is not possible in their current establishment. It was also noted that the accommodation at Riverbank will help the school to support pupils with additional support needs as there are dedicated areas for this purpose.

The report noted that parents who spoke to HM Inspectors agree that the Riverbank building has better facilities, but that support for the proposal is dependent upon the renovation work taking place to improve the building to a category A. Inspectors also noted that concerns were expressed by parents about moving to a different area of the city and how the distance could affect some pupils and families.

St Peter's School staff who spoke to HM Inspectors highlighted many advantages to the proposed relocation but strongly believed that the renovation work to improve the Riverbank building to category A needs to take place before a move takes place. Staff requested to be involved in decisions regarding how the new school building is laid out, organised and refurbished.

The Education Scotland report recommended that the Council should address the issues raised by children, parents and staff relating to changes in travelling distances and safe routes to school. In taking its proposal forward, it suggested that an effective communication strategy and an action plan would be essential for the Council to keep all stakeholders informed and engaged, given the length of the project.

The Council's response to the points raised by Education Scotland is set out in Section 3 of this document, below.

3. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED DURING THE CONSULTATION PERIOD AND CONTAINED WITHIN THE EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

3.1 The following paragraphs provide responses to the significant points raised at consultation meetings and in written submissions received during the consultation period.

3.2 Issues Raised

Proposed Investment Works to Riverbank building

- Following a committee instruction in November 2017, officers reported on proposed improvements to the existing Riverbank School building and the associated costs, including the costs of bringing the condition of the building up to an A rating, with a view to St Peter's School relocating to this building after it becomes vacant, and after improvement works have been carried out (subject to the outcomes of the statutory consultation).
- After considering the report, the Committee instructed officers to formally consult on the proposal to relocate St Peter's RC School to the current Riverbank School, after the new replacement Riverbank school is operational, and agreed the recommendation to refer the proposals for improving the Riverbank School building to the budget process.

- Any decision regarding an investment proposal for the Riverbank building being taken in advance of the statutory consultation being completed could be seen as pre-empting the decision regarding the relocation of the school.
- The proposal for this consultation therefore did not include any reference to the investment proposals.
- Officers clarified at the public meetings that future investment decisions regarding the Riverbank building would need to be considered by elected members following the outcome of the statutory consultation.

Travel distances to the Riverbank site

- It is acknowledged that as a result of the proposals there would likely be an increase in the travel to school distance for some pupils. However, travel distances for other zoned pupils living nearer to the Riverbank site would be decreased. The Council's school transport policy continues to support those pupils living out with two miles' safe walking distance to their zoned primary school, and provides a degree of flexibility regarding any other pupils who for example have a medical condition and do not have access to a transport service. Pupils who live within 2 miles of their school but who do not have a safe walking route to the school will also be supported. Should the proposal be approved, officers would work with the school and any affected parents and pupils to provide support and advice with regards to arrangements for travel and transport to the new site.

Road Safety and Safe Walking Routes to School

- As part of any proposed relocation, the Council will ensure that a safe walking route is identified for all pupils walking to school. An updated school travel plan will be produced in close collaboration with the whole school community.

Alleged Inequality of Provision

- The Council remains accountable and responsible to ensure it can deliver a high quality schools estate which supports the best quality of education and learning for all pupils.
- The suggestion that non-denominational schools had been favoured and that the St Peter's School community has been discriminated against is strongly refuted. The Council strives to achieve the best solutions and outcomes for all communities, taking cognisance of available resources and budgets.

Links with Old Aberdeen and Aberdeen University

- The long-established links between St Peter's School and the University and Old Aberdeen are recognised. Should the proposal be approved, St. Peter's School will continue to welcome and promote its close links with the University.

New Build Proposal

- Several comments suggested that the Council had proposed a new build school for St. Peter's but had since reneged on this.
- Following a committee instruction in 2017, a full appraisal was carried out which explored all possible options for the future of St. Peter's School. This work included the option for a new build replacement two stream school building. The outcome of this study was reported to the Education and Children Services Committee in November 2017, when it was agreed by the

Committee that the current Riverbank School building was the most suitable location for St Peter's School and its long-term delivery of Roman Catholic education.

- Prior to the feasibility study in 2017, the St. Peter's subgroup was established to ensure transparency, collaboration and engagement between ACC, St. Peter's school community and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Aberdeen. The St Peter's subgroup worked collaboratively and successfully with officers during this feasibility stage of the process.

Pre-planning, Transition and Post Project Arrangements

- Should the proposal be approved, a communications strategy and plan would be developed in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders from both communities to ensure collaboration and engagement are firmly rooted in the project from the outset.
- Officers will continue to engage and communicate with the St. Peter's sub-group to ensure an ongoing dialogue in the interim period.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 9(1) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 AND CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSALS

4.1 Following the conclusion of the consultation period, Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, requires the Council to review the relevant proposal, having had regard to: the written representations that have been received by it during the consultation period; oral representations made to it at the public meetings in February and March 2019; and Education Scotland's report.

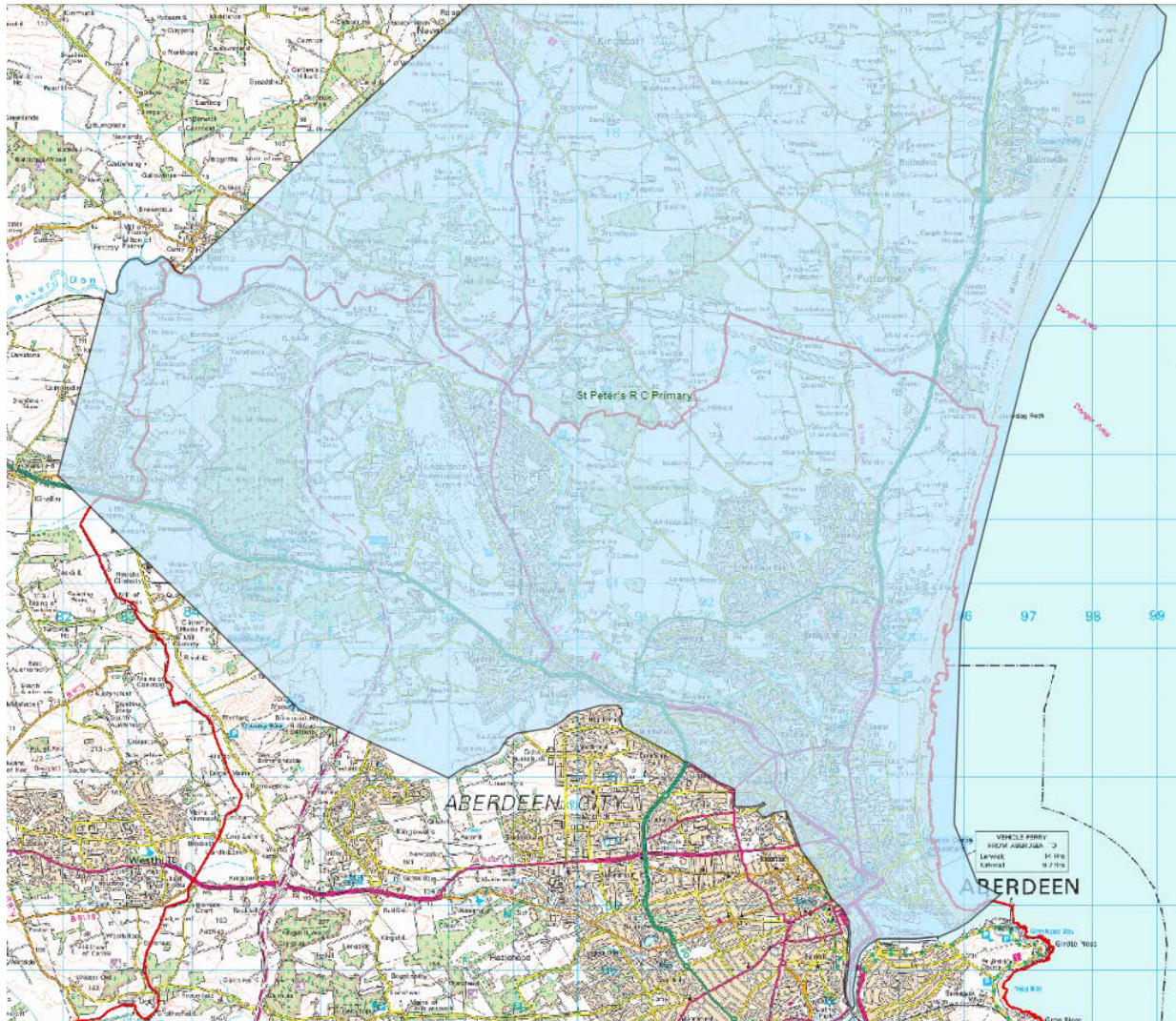
4.2 In terms of Section 10(2) (e) of the said Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Consultation Report requires to contain a statement explaining how the Council complied with its duty under the above Section 9(1) of the Act. With relation to Section 9(1) of the 2010 Act and having considered all of the information received during the consultation process, officers have revised the original proposal which was issued for public consultation with the revised proposal set out in the Recommendation Section (below).

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 It is recommended that the Education Operational Delivery Committee agrees to:

- relocate St. Peter's Roman Catholic Primary School to the existing Riverbank School building, after the new replacement Riverbank School has opened, with effect from August 2022 or as soon as possible thereafter, subject to the condition of the Riverbank building first being improved to a category A status; and:
- refer the proposal for investment works to improve the condition of the Riverbank building to a category A status to the Council Budget meeting in March 2020.

Annex A : St Peter's RC School Catchment Zone





Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to relocate St Peter's RC Primary School to the existing Riverbank School building with effect from August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter.

April 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Aberdeen City Councils proposal to relocate St Peter's RC Primary School to the existing Riverbank School building after the new replacement Riverbank School has opened, with effect from August 2022, or as soon as possible thereafter. 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 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 statutory 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 of the school; any other users; and children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper;
- 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 4 March 2019 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 sites of St Peter's RC Primary School and Riverside School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Aberdeen City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal with reference to the [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#).

2.2 The number of pupils attending St Peter's RC Primary School currently exceeds the capacity of the building and the roll is forecast to remain over capacity until at least 2024. The condition and suitability of the school building are both rated as C (poor).

2.3 The consultation ran from Monday 4 February 2019 to Friday 22 March 2019, representing 32 school days. Public meetings were held on Monday 4 March 2019 in St Peter's RC Primary

School, Tuesday 12 March 2019 at Riverbank School, and on Wednesday 13 March 2019 in St Columba's Church, Bridge of Don. Overall, 20 members of the public attended these meetings. The council placed documents relating to the consultation on a dedicated area of its website and invited interested parties to respond to the consultation through the online Consultation Hub. Comments were also encouraged by email or by post. Thirty-four written responses were received from members of the public. Of these, 16 supported the proposal and 18 were against the proposal. A group of children from P3 and P4 visited Riverbank School on Thursday 14 March 2019 and reported back to the rest of the school at assembly.

3. Educational aspects of proposal

3.1 A number of educational benefits would result from proceeding with its proposal to relocate St Peter's RC Primary School to the existing Riverbank School building.

3.2 Children will benefit from a more flexible, modern and healthy learning environment. The condition and suitability of St Peter's RC Primary School buildings are both rated as C (poor), whereas Riverbank School is currently rated as B (satisfactory) and the council proposes investment works which would improve it to A (good) before the proposed relocation. The improved Riverbank School will provide a significantly improved education environment for children from St Peter's, with the potential for flexible use of space which is not possible in their current establishment. This includes provision for meeting additional support needs, as the Riverbank building has dedicated areas for this purpose. The greater flexibility also has the potential to allow the curriculum to be enhanced through increased space for activities and group work. There are clear educational benefits relating to the improved learning environment and provision for children with additional support needs. There are potential educational benefits for the curriculum.

3.3 There will also be improved outdoor learning spaces with opportunities for physical education. There is significantly more outdoor space available around the Riverbank building, with more than ten times the amount of hard landscaping and nearly 80 times more soft landscaping than is available at the St Peter's site. Where St Peter's has a multi-purpose gymnasium, Riverbank has an assembly hall, which is also used for dining, and a separate games hall, doubling the available area and increasing the opportunities for physical education. There are potential educational benefits related to improvements in health, wellbeing and fitness due to this increase in available space.

3.4 There will be a further benefit to having early learning and childcare facilities on site, leading to smoother transitions from nursery into primary. St Peter's RC Primary School is currently the only primary school in Aberdeen City Council without provision for early learning and childcare closely associated with the mainstream P1 to P7 provision. School staff currently link with at least 12 city nurseries every year to make appropriate transition arrangements for children who will subsequently be attending St Peter's. An onsite nursery will enable the school to develop earlier relationships with parents and help children to become familiar with the school buildings. It will also improve opportunities for joint working between the nursery and P1 classes. There are clear educational benefits for transitions from nursery into primary.

3.5 Children from St Peter's RC Primary School who spoke to HM Inspectors would welcome the increased space and improved condition in the Riverbank School building. Those who had visited Riverbank were impressed with the indoor and outdoor facilities which they felt were a significant improvement on what is currently available to them. They have some concerns about the change in travelling distance for some children and about safe routes to the proposed new school. Overall, they would welcome the implementation of the proposal.

3.6 Parents who spoke to HM Inspectors are clear that the Riverbank building has better facilities than are available at St Peter's RC Primary School, but that their support for the proposal is dependent upon the renovation work taking place to improve the Riverbank building to category

A. They have concerns about the move to a different area of the city and the distance that some children might have to travel to get there. They would also have preferred a new-build replacement for St Peter's, which was previously consulted upon. They feel that the council should have a plan to support parents, pupils and staff through a managed transition to the proposed new building. They are also keen to be involved in discussions about facilities and renovation should the proposal be approved.

3.7 St Peter's staff who spoke to HM Inspectors see many advantages to the proposed relocation but strongly believe that the renovation work to improve the Riverbank building to category A outlined in the proposal paper needs to take place before a move to the Riverbank building. They have some concerns about the change in travelling distance for some children and about safe routes to the proposed new school, noting that it is more than one mile away and takes over 20 minutes to walk to. They would like to be involved in decisions regarding how the new school building is laid out, organised and refurbished.

3.8 The Diocese of Aberdeen is generally in favour of the proposal, as long as it is adopted in its entirety, including the improvements to be made to the Riverside School building. Its preference would be for St Peter's RC Primary School to receive a new building, given the quality and suitability of facilities available to pupils and staff over a number of years which have been rated as 'poor' by the council. However, it understands that there is not currently funding available for a complete new-build and is of the view that the proposal should provide a significant improvement in both facilities and available space.

4. Summary

This proposal has clear educational benefits for children who currently attend St Peter's RC Primary School and who would have access to a more flexible, modern and healthy learning environment, with improved outdoor learning spaces and early learning and childcare facilities on site.

In preparing its final report, the council should address the issues raised by children, parents and staff relating to changes in travelling distances and safe routes to school. In taking its proposal forward, an effective communication strategy and an action plan will be essential for the council to keep all stakeholders informed and engaged, given the length of the project. The council should include details of these in its final report.

HM Inspectors

April 2019