

26 February 2017

Convenor Angela Taylor, councillors and members of the Education and Children's Services Committee,

Re: The future of St Peter's RC Primary School

The Parent Council of St Peter's RC Primary School wish to thank you in advance for your consideration of the proposed changes to primary education in the Tillydrone/Old Aberdeen area, and your continued pursuit of the best possible outcome for St Peter's RC Primary School.

St Peter's has had a long history on its current site, having been nestled in the tiny nook between Dunbar Street and King Street for the last 33 years. During this time it has formed solid links with the Old Aberdeen Community Council, The University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen Sports Village and other local community bodies. The reputation and location of St Peter's have attracted more and more pupils, with the result that St Peter's has been operating at 130% capacity for many years now.

As you will know, our school estate is one of only two Grade C or 'Poor' condition schools in Aberdeen City. A few examples: one classroom has no natural light, no running water and limited ventilation. It used to be the library, which is now divided up and spread across the school. The gym hall is also the dining room: there is no room for storage so the tables stay in the hall, limiting space for the children to move and play. Our playground is so congested that our children have playtime in two shifts, meaning that valuable Pupil Support Assistant time is used in supervision, not learning. This is particularly wasteful given that the majority of our children start school with English as an Additional Language and really benefit from personalised support.

The contrast between St Peter's school estate and those of primary schools in other Associated School Groups in Aberdeen is stark. As the City Council has signed up to upholding the principles of Getting It Right For Every Child, we simply ask for the statutory equity for our children whose physical educational environment currently fails them in every quantifiable measure.

The ECS meeting on 1 March 2017 will have a direct impact on both where St Peter's is located and on the continuity of the community it has worked so hard to form – both within the school and with its current neighbours. For this reason the Parent Council of St Peter's RC school welcomes the revised proposal found at point 3.12 on page 21 of the Consultation Report. We feel this proposal allows for a more satisfactory long-term outcome to be sought for our school while our pressing capacity issues are addressed in the short term. Indeed, we have proactively engaged both with our school community and with Aberdeen City Council's officers since 11 March 2016 to reach this recommendation, which we feel reflects the needs of our children and school staff better than the options we were formally consulted on in Nov/Dec 2016.

However, we are disappointed with the lack of concrete detail relating to our school's future contained in the proposal, specifically about the processes needed to

make the recommendation contained therein a reality. Therefore, we urgently request more detail on how exactly the short-term capacity issues at St Peter's school will be addressed, as well as how the other structural improvements promised to us for August 2016 (but which still have not been delivered), will be in place when our children return to school in August 2017. Here we are referring to the third bullet point in section 3.12.

Your Committee recognised our need for improvements in the long term at your meeting on 8 September 2016. Point 5.3.1 on page 194 of the report from that meeting states that 'there is a strong case for the replacement of St Peter's School and to provide a bigger, improved and modern state of the art primary school for Catholic education in the north of the city.' Point 5.3.3 reflected that 'A new building [for St Peter's] would help to ensure that sufficient space is provided for the numbers of pupils expected to be attending the school in the medium to long term, and modern design principles would ensure the delivery of a school which is fit for purpose in developing a 21st century curriculum.' This is encouraging. However, we now ask that this committee swiftly address the poor state of our buildings and our overcapacity issues with a formalised commitment.

We therefore ask that the Education and Children's Services Committee commission a budget and a schedule for the necessary short-term improvements to be carried out as a matter of urgent priority. The onus is on the City Council officers, instructed by the Committee, to progress the vision laid out in this Report so that we will know by the summer term in binding detail a) the scope of the works to be completed over the summer holidays, and b) a programme for 2017 to progress the long-term plans for the delivery of a new school after 2020.

To reiterate, the Parent Council of St Peter's RC Primary School supports the revised proposal contained in this Consultation Report to remain in its current location for the time being, with improved capacity and facilities, and for a new school site to be identified during 2017. This is a solution that also has the support of St Peter's families and school staff. However, we do need our well-known overcrowding issues to be addressed in the short term with the support of your Committee, and the programme for the delivery of a future new build to be formalised in the next few weeks.

Respectfully,

Anna-Maija Rist, Co-Chair

Louise Janssen, Co-Chair

Stephanie Brock, Treasurer

Sarah Costello, Secretary