

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by East Lothian Council to establish a new secondary school at Wallyford, within the Musselburgh cluster 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 East Lothian Council's proposal to establish a new, additional, secondary school at Wallyford, within the Musselburgh cluster area, by August 2020, 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 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 Musselburgh cluster area; 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 30 May 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 sites of Musselburgh Grammar School and Ross High School and Campie, Musselburgh Burgh, Pinkie St Peter's, Sanderson's Wynd, Stoneyhill and Wallyford Primary Schools, including discussion with relevant consultees and representation from Loretto RC Primary School.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 East Lothian 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 statutory consultation period ran from 3 May 2016 to 15 June 2016. During this period, the council held a public meeting in Musselburgh's Brunton Hall which was attended by over 40 parents and other members of the community. As part of the consultation process, the council sought the views of a wide range of stakeholders. Information about the consultation was placed in a local newspaper, on the council's website and at various schools, libraries and other centres across the Musselburgh area.

2.3 The council provided stakeholders with a short online or paper questionnaire and also made good arrangements for receiving additional written responses. The council received over 400 responses to its questionnaire. A clear majority of respondents to the questionnaire (approximately 60%) support the proposal. Around 35% of questionnaire respondents oppose the proposal.

2.4 The council received 11 written submissions to its consultation from individuals and groups. Of those that expressed a preference, a narrow majority favoured the proposal. Written responses were received from the Parent Councils of several schools within the Musselburgh cluster area. Almost all of these Parent Councils expressed support for the proposal or were undecided. Only Musselburgh Grammar School Parent Council opposed the proposal.

2.5 During the consultation period, council officers visited several schools within the Musselburgh cluster area, providing good opportunities for pupils and staff to discuss their views. Overall, pupils, particularly at the primary stages, showed support for the proposal.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 This proposal offers educational benefits for young people of secondary school age across the Musselburgh cluster area. As a result of a significant number of planned new houses, the roll of Musselburgh Grammar School is expected to exceed the capacity of the school by the year 2020. Further increases in secondary school roll are expected beyond 2020 leading to a potential roll of over 2300. By building a new, additional, school, this proposal offers an alternative to the difficulties of overcrowding and resultant losses of space for learning and socialising. Children at Pinkie St Peter's and Wallyford Primary Schools who will move on to the new

school as a result of the proposal will benefit from learning in a modern, purpose-built learning environment. The creation of an additional secondary school within the Musselburgh area offers the potential for joint planning and greater breadth of provision in the curriculum and in wider activities which will benefit all young people within the Musselburgh learning community.

3.2 Across the primary schools in the Musselburgh learning community, most parents, children and staff who met with HM Inspectors were positive about the proposal and understood the benefits which it could bring. The same groups of stakeholders from Musselburgh Grammar School who met with HM Inspectors were less positive, with most parents and staff opposing the proposal and sharing some common concerns.

3.3 Across the Musselburgh learning community some stakeholders have concerns that the creation of a second secondary school could lead to a split within the community. The council has already indicated its commitment to ensuring that, within the proposal, both secondary schools would work strongly in partnership, for example, through consideration of joint timetabling to provide all of Musselburgh's young people with broader choices. In taking its proposal forward, the council should continue to engage with stakeholders to investigate further ways in which the schools can work together for a united community.

3.4 Parents are appreciative that the council has made necessary arrangements to allow younger siblings of pupils attending Musselburgh Grammar School, at the effective date, to have the option to attend Musselburgh Grammar School with their older brother or sister, if they wish. Most parents, too, are appreciative that young people entering Musselburgh Grammar School at S4 would be able to continue their education there throughout their senior phase (S4-S6). The council should now give full consideration to ensuring that planning for appropriate transition arrangements for affected pupils, especially the most vulnerable, takes place in good time for the expected start in August 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter.

3.5 In its proposal document, the council has committed to ensuring that the new school will have its senior management team and those staff necessary to secure a smooth pastoral and curricular transition in place three months prior to the opening of the school. The council should also develop and share its plans, in due course, for ensuring that a suitably wide range of staff is in place to deliver a broad curriculum for the first cohort of learners at S1-S3.

3.6 The proposal has the potential to reduce the level of traffic around Musselburgh Grammar School. The council should continue to work with stakeholders to establish and develop safe routes to the new secondary school.

3.7 In taking its proposal forward, the council needs to ensure that stakeholders are provided with greater detail, once this is possible, on the financial costs and implications of its proposal.

3.8 Stakeholders from Loretto RC Primary School who met with HM Inspectors were dissatisfied that the proposal did not provide any opportunity for a joint campus with denominational provision, particularly since there is currently no secondary

denominational provision in East Lothian. In its final consultation report, the council should clarify its policy for secondary denominational provision within the Musselburgh cluster area.

3.9 During the consultation period the council was notified of alleged inaccuracies or omissions in the proposal. The council will need to ensure that it takes the necessary steps to investigate these alleged inaccuracies or omissions. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies and omissions notified to it.

4. Summary

The council's proposal to establish a new, additional, secondary school at Wallyford, within the Musselburgh cluster area, by August 2020, or as soon as possible thereafter, has educational benefits for the young people within this area. Significant projected increases in the school roll will result in Musselburgh Grammar School becoming overcrowded and, eventually, well over-capacity. If the proposal is implemented, children living in the catchment zones of Pinkie St Peter's and Wallyford Primary Schools will attend the new, purpose-built school and this has the potential to address issues of overcrowding at Musselburgh Grammar School. In taking its proposal forward, the council should address the legitimate concerns of some stakeholders, including: the proposal possibly leading to an adverse 'split' within the community; ensuring that transition arrangements are well planned and implemented; providing safe routes to the new school; and providing greater clarity and detail, once this is possible, over the financial implications of the proposal. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address any alleged inaccuracies and omissions notified to it.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
August 2016**