

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by East Lothian Council to relocate Wallyford Primary School and consult on changes to the catchment 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 relocate Wallyford Primary School and consult on changes to the catchment 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 school; 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 24 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 site of Wallyford Primary School, Sanderson's Wynd Primary School, Musselburgh Grammar School and Ross High School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 East Lothian Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*.

2.2 The public consultation period ran between 3 May and 15 June 2016. The council posted the consultation document on its website. Information leaflets and paper copies of the consultation were made available at 18 locations throughout the communities. The council made suitable arrangements to gather the views of children currently attending Wallyford Primary School about the proposal. The council placed advance notice of a public meeting in the local newspaper. The public meeting on 24 May 2016 was attended by officers from the council, a local councillor, three members of the public and three members of the Wallyford Community Council.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 It is the view of HM Inspectors that the proposal to relocate the school has the potential to bring about a number of educational benefits. The improved facilities will provide more flexible spaces which will enhance opportunities for active, interdisciplinary and outdoor learning. A modern learning environment will provide greater opportunities to develop children's digital skills. Children's educational experiences will be enhanced through improved and purpose-built recreation and dining areas and learning spaces which will provide new possibilities for drama and the arts. The location of the community library and a hub for sporting facilities has the potential to bring benefits to the children, to support the work of the school and make a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of the children and members of the wider community. The proposal will assist East Lothian Council to make effective and efficient use of its resources and takes into account expected increases in population in the next ten years.

3.2 The council received 72 responses to its online questionnaire and a written response from the Parent Council of Wallyford Primary School. Parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the proposal to relocate Wallyford Primary School. Only a few respondents disagreed with this aspect of the proposal. The majority of stakeholders also agreed with the proposal to change the catchment area. Children were keen to have better places to play and learn outdoors and better facilities in classrooms and learning areas.

3.3 Almost all stakeholders, including parents, children and staff who met with HM Inspectors, reported that they had been kept well-informed and consulted about the proposal. Parents and children who met HM Inspectors expressed their appreciation for the educational service that Wallyford Primary School has provided over the years. Staff and other stakeholders are keen to keep the community feel of

Wallyford Primary as the school grows in size. The community is pleased that the new school will be fully accessible and more inclusive.

3.4 A small number of concerns were raised relating to both aspects of the proposal. A few parents and representatives of the community raised concerns over traffic management and safe routes to school. A minority also disagreed with the proposed changes to the catchment area citing the negative effect this might have on Sanderson's Wynd Primary School pupil numbers.

3.5 Helpfully, the council has provided re-assurance to parents of children living in the Dolphinstone area with regard to the continuity of their children's education. The council has made it clear that children currently attending, and any future siblings of those currently attending, Sanderson's Wynd Primary School and Ross High School will have the right to attend these schools in the future.

3.6 At the start of the consultation period the council omitted Wallyford Community Council from its list of consultees in the original consultation proposal documentation. The council had notified Wallyford Community Council of the consultation. The council has now addressed the omission in the original documentation. Officers of the council met with Wallyford Community Council as part of the consultation process. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address this omission.

4. Summary

East Lothian Council's proposal to relocate Wallyford Primary School and make changes to its catchment area has the potential to deliver clear educational benefits for children and the local community. The improved accommodation and facilities will bring about an enhanced environment for learning for children attending Wallyford Primary currently and in the future. In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address the omission notified to it. In taking forward the proposal, East Lothian Council should work with stakeholders to address their concerns over safe routes for walking and traffic management in the area.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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