

## **Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Fife Council to close Lochgelly North School.**

### **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 Fife Council's proposal to close Lochgelly North School. 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 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 22 March 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 Calaiswood School and Lochgelly High School, including discussion with relevant staff.

## **2. Consultation Process**

2.1 Fife 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 There are no children or young people currently attending Lochgelly North School and it has been 'mothballed' since July 2013. The formal consultation period ran from the 14 March 2016 until the 9 May 2016. Fife Council made the proposal available to a wide range of consultees, advertised in local press and on the Fife Council website. A public meeting was held on 22 March 2016 and was attended by Fife Council staff, Education Scotland and one other person. At the close of the formal consultation period, the council received 12 responses to the consultation questions. Less than ten respondees were not in favour of closure of Lochgelly North School for a variety of reasons. Formal consultation with children and young people was deemed not appropriate by Fife Council due to the nature of the complex needs of the children and young people. Also, only secondary age young people had been attending Lochgelly North School prior to 'mothballing' and they have since left school.

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

3.1 Lochgelly North School, which is currently 'mothballed', provided special education services to children and young people with complex additional support needs aged 3-18 years in the Lochgelly and Cowdenbeath area. By 2006, the school roll had declined to 13 and there were no primary-aged pupils attending. By session 2012/13, only three young people attended the school and they left at the end of that session. The reasons for the decline in roll are not clear. Fife Council then took the decision to 'mothball' the school.

3.2 Fife Council has set out a very strong case with regard to educational benefits for children and young people in the Lochgelly and Cowdenbeath area who have complex additional support needs. The Duloch Campus offers education provision within Calaiswood School which is modern, purpose-built and specially equipped to support the learning and teaching of children and young people with complex additional support needs. The size of the roll enables a meaningful peer group at each stage in the school and its location on the eastern edge of Dunfermline means that it is within reasonable travelling distance of Cowdenbeath and Lochgelly. Calaiswood School provides holistic specialist care, support and education for children, young people and their families. The co-location with Duloch Primary School enables children from Calaiswood School to attend lessons and activities, where appropriate, in the mainstream primary. The community resources surrounding the school provide additional rich learning experiences.

3.3 There were very limited stakeholder views regarding the closure of Lochgelly North School. Comments about the capacity of Calaiswood School are being addressed by Fife Council. Stakeholders who spoke with HM Inspectors agree with Fife Council that within Duloch Campus, the provision at Calaiswood School is high quality and meets the needs of children and young people who need specialist provision. With regard to the Lochgelly North School building, Fife Council has set

out clearly how it intends to work with the local community to establish a use for the building or make the best economic use of the site.

3.4 During the consultation period Fife Council staff identified an inaccuracy within paragraph 1.8 of their proposal which states that three pupils transferred from Lochgelly North School to the Lochgelly High School Department for Additional Support. In its final consultation report, the council will need to address this inaccuracy.

#### **4. Summary**

4.1 Fife Council's proposal to formally close Lochgelly North School is based on strong education benefits for children and young people who have complex additional support needs. Within the Duloch Campus, the quality of provision at Calaiswood School is high and children and young people clearly benefit from the co-location with Duloch Primary School and the community facilities surrounding the school. As Lochgelly North School has been 'mothballed' for some three years, there has been very limited stakeholder comment. The council has set out in the proposal and at the public meeting how it will work with the Lochgelly Community, through the statutory planning process, to consider the future of the Lochgelly North School building and site should it close formally.

4.2 In its final consultation report, the council will need to set out the actions it has taken to address the inaccuracy notified to it by council staff.

**HM Inspectors  
Education Scotland  
May 2016**